

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CHURCH AND THE INDIVIDUAL.

“Corrects the portrait by the living face,
Man's God by God's God in the mind of man.”

—ROBERT BROWNING.

THROUGHOUT the Epistle, as we have seen, one note recurs: the individual, with his fresh experience of the mercy of God, has the right to stand up boldly against any tradition or accepted theory which would bar that experience out. But the very insistence with which this idea is presented may give rise to questionings, for in matters of this kind temperament accounts for much. Mazzini said of Carlyle that he “saw only the individual man face to face with the mystery of the Universe,” and Dr. Holland Rose,¹ in his edition of “The French Revolution,” marks the same conclusion that Carlyle “felt little interest in the collective activities of our race”. Can Paul be fairly treated in the same way?

Certainly he was a man in revolt, with something of the onesidedness which that implies, and we may ask if he did not, for the moment, forget that

¹ Introduction, p. xxiv,

even a revolutionary has obligations, and that when he agitates for the dissolution of the existing order he ought to have something to put in its place. It is easy for a thinker to prove his theory, if he begins by ignoring all the conditions which do not suit him; but the real world has an awkward habit of thrusting unmanageable facts upon us, which dislocate our most ingenious combinations. Rousseau's scheme of education is worked out by a master and a solitary small boy, of which a modern critic¹ makes the reasonable complaint that "it is no more natural to treat as a typical case a child brought up in solitude than it would be to treat of the rearing of a bee cut off from the hive". The larger part of a healthy education is contributed by companions; the free play of mind on mind, the clubbing of their slender stores of knowledge and experience, the discipline imposed by the necessity of mutual consideration—it is forces like these which set the education forward, and a scheme which allows no place for these is at once suspect. In praise of Cobden's sober realism, Mr. Trevelyan² says that "books of political economy used to begin with the words, 'Suppose a man on an island'. But Cobden's thought began with visible, starving Stockport, and having put a girdle round the commercial globe, it came back with gathered treasure of

¹ Quick, "Educational Reformers," p. 247.

² "Life of John Bright," p. 56.

observation to end at Stockport again." If Paul's assertion of individuality is not to be left hanging in mid-air, we must consider its relation to the practical necessities of social life. When Coleridge¹ says, "Whatever finds me bears witness for itself that it proceeds from a Holy Spirit," he takes his stand apart, as a unit of existence, with convictions and a certitude which are his own; and from that point he might have laid out the lines of a defiantly individualist theory. But his experience of life saved him from any such extreme, and he adds, "Here, perhaps, I might have been content to rest, if I had not learned that, as a Christian, I cannot—must not stand alone." When we conceive of a man as set apart in the Divine predestination, and as travelling on towards a Judgment Seat where each shall receive for that he has done, when we mark how, in mid course between these eternities, he has for himself found God or been found of Him, we may be awed by the spectacle and conscious that we are seeing things truly; but we must not forget that there are other aspects of the situation.

A rudimentary fact, which is very relevant at this point, though Puritans have too often neglected it, is that man has a body, and, for good as well as for evil, is worked upon by influences of an external sort. Montaigne objected to the Reformed worship that it was too contemplative

¹ "Aids to Reflection," (Bell's edition), p. 295.

and immaterial for a creature so curiously entangled with a body as man is; it did not take sufficient account, he held, of "the part which the senses play in the act of adoration—the thrill which seizes on the mind at the sound of chant and organ, or at the spectacle of gorgeous ceremonial, and pictures of the Passion, and crucifixes, seen dimly in the sombre spaces of cathedrals".¹ Such appeals may be not only discounted but condemned by a multitude of spiritual thinkers; and yet many, who in themselves find no response to these, are forced to admit that in other lives they are instruments of the profoundest impression, and thus are not to be dogmatically excluded as if they had no possible place within the administration of the grace of God. In a fragment of "Autobiographic Memoir," Newman² speaks of "his conviction gained by personal experience, that the religion which he had received from John Newton and Thomas Scott would not work in a

¹ Stapfer's "Montaigne" ("Grands Ecrivains Français"), p. 88.

² "Letters and Correspondence," I. 107. With this may be compared Dr. W. P. Paterson's ("Rule of Faith," p. 260) ingenious and masterly exhibition of the Romish system as "an attempt to make Christianity more effective and useful as a working religion. . . . In its peculiar features, it is largely intelligible as an adaptation of Christianity to the very real limitations of the ordinary man." Such a description suggests the immense religious inferiority of the Roman system; it does not imply that it has no useful function in certain cases.

parish, that it was unreal . . . that Calvinism was not a key to the phenomena of human nature as they occur in the world". That is a challenge most skilfully directed, for what does an ordinary minister of Christ find *in his parish*? He may come upon a certain number of markedly individual experiences, and if he deliberately aims at such, these may be frequent; but many of those on whom he most relies in work have nothing separate to record. They are faithful, sober, reverent, and, on occasion, they may reveal depths of Christian feeling, but they have little knowledge of the solitudes of God. Their life is rooted in the community, and whatever colour and fragrance and fruitfulness it exhibits, would seem to be determined by influences which are common.

If we follow up the suggestion given in Newman's phrase, and consider what confronts an ordinary man in his parish, we must first deal with the question of *origins*,—under what influence and in what conditions the better life of men appears. There are, as I have said, cases of exception, but in the main it must be allowed that the deepest impressions are not the result of a deliberate appeal. Like wind-borne seeds, germs of truth, and ideals of character, and standards of value may touch the mind, and be blown away, perhaps, a hundred times; but in some way that looks like accident, the seed does

find a lodgment, it anchors itself, and remains. The tone of voice in which the name of Jesus is pronounced may make a mark more lasting than that of any sermon; the sense that in his mother's life prayer is as necessary and natural a part of the day's business as food or sleep, may establish in a man a certain prejudice of the mind; the perceived fact that what is mere mystery to him is not mystery to those whom he trusts most fully may draw him by infection nearer the heart of what he has not understood. Faith and the habit of a Christian life appear in ten thousand instances as the summation of a multitude of detached impressions, for all of which a man is indebted absolutely to his Christian environment. "We are born through the Gospel of that free woman Sarah, the Church, to be true heirs of the promise," says Luther.¹ "She carries us in her womb, in her lap, and in her arms; she instructs and nourishes us, and fashions us to the image of Christ until we grow up to a perfect man." From the Church's title of Mother, Calvin² bids us learn "how useful, nay, how necessary the knowledge of her is, since there is no other means of entering into life unless she conceive us in the womb and give us birth, unless she nourish us at her breasts, and keep us under her charge and government until, divested of mortal flesh, we become like the angels. . . . Moreover, beyond the pale of the

¹ "Galatians," p. 352. ² "Institutes," IV. Chap. I. 4.

Church no forgiveness of sins and no salvation can be hoped for, as Isaiah and Joel testify" (Is. 37³²; Joel 2³²). "Our first thought of God came from the Church," says Dr. Steven,¹—"that portion of it which we call the Christian home; our emotions and our actions have all been shaped and fashioned by the Church. The whole complicated fabric of our mental life has been the creation of the Christian community." Even where it might be imagined that the Church would count for least—in aggressive work in a heathen people—we are continually told of its service. "The heathen are converted not, as a rule, by the Bible, but by the Bible as interpreted by the Church," says Mr. Campbell Moody.² "We may almost say, in a far deeper sense than that originally intended, 'there is no salvation outside of the Church'." In another place³ he declares that "it is hard to say which kind of influence has the larger promise in it, whether it is a greater thing to get individuals to accept Christianity, or to persuade communities to mitigate their unfriendliness and abandon their scorn".

¹ "Psychology of the Christian Soul," p. 283.

² "Saints of Formosa," p. 244. I remember hearing Professor Luthardt preach on the Ethiopian and Philip, and his main point was expressed in the rolling sentence: "Nicht die Schrift ohne die Kirche, und nicht die Kirche ohne die Schrift, sondern zusammen sie suchen die suchende Seele".

³ *Ibid.* p. 59.

Dr. John Warneck,¹ with great frankness, discusses the same question, and he recalls how, in Tahiti, after sixteen years of patient work by the missionaries, not a single inhabitant had been baptized; that then the King, Pomare, recognised Christianity as the religion of the island, and by that act secured for the preaching a wholly different welcome. In this direction it seems as if we might easily involve ourselves in the ancient debate as to whether hen or egg came first. Men are creatures of the State which they have themselves created, and being fashioned under the constraint of its law and custom they constantly endeavour to refashion it. The child grows up into a frankly Christian life under the discipline of the Church's example and worship; and yet when his eyes are fully opened, he will look beyond these nearer influences to that discriminating, personal love of God who gathers His people "one by one" (Is. 27¹²). The sacrament of infant baptism is an enduring witness that the community is one originating fact in life. Professor Robert Mackintosh,² in his very early days, said that this is "the great rock of offence to the triumphant revival. The Church's tradition is anti-revivalist"; and though the words are needlessly polemical, the sense is discernibly sound. For the hypothesis of baptism is that the com-

¹ "Living Forces," p. 146; cf. pp. 137, 145.

² "Insufficiency of Revivalism as a Religious System," p. 27.

munity into which the child has been born contains some vital energy which the ever active grace of God can use as its instrument. In the sacrament the new-born child is regarded as a portion of the community, depending for its furtherance upon the life which surrounds it; the children of believers, says Paul, are already "holy" (I Cor. 7¹⁴). This conception has been elaborated in recent times, and Ritschl actually regards the Christian society and not the individual as "the object of justification," which "is passed on to the individual as the result of his taking his place in the Christian fellowship and sharing its life".¹ This is a position which can be maintained only by doing violence to the language of the Apostle;² but no one need hesitate to accept the conclusion of Sanday and Headlam³ that "Justification is normally mediated

¹ Paterson, "Rule of Faith," p. 375; Ritschl's own words, "Justif. and Reconc.," III. 130, are: "Justification or reconciliation is related in the first instance to the whole of the religious community founded by Christ, and to individuals only as they attach themselves by faith in the Gospel thereto".

² Sanday and Headlam, "Romans," p. 123, think that such passages as Acts 20²⁸; Eph. 5²⁵; Tit. 2¹⁴ are "quite as unambiguous" on the one side as, e.g., Rom. 3²⁰, 4⁵, 10⁴, etc., are on the other, which is to talk as dogmatists rather than as exegetes. Dr. Oman, "Church and Divine Order," p. 61, says wisely: "What is expressed collectively may derive its significance from what is experienced individually".

³ *Op. cit.*, p. 123. Some light is thrown upon the meaning of the word "normally" by an unconsciously humorous note in the

through the Church. . . . The Christian sacrifice with its effects, like the sacrifices of the Day of Atonement by which it was typified, reach the individual through the community." That is not to be understood as a dictum in theology, which is not their strong point, but an observation of experience "in a parish," and as such it is widely true. But if we follow back the Church's life to its beginnings, we come upon something which is not of the community, thoughts and sights of God which are closely individual and personal. These may have been appropriated, and embodied in form and ritual, and thus passed on to other generations; but the Church, as a corporation, has no original title to them, and they are really understood only by the men and women in whom they are renewed. When the last word has been said for the Church as the necessary channel of God's grace, the individual, mystical claim abides. As Warneck puts it:¹ "The more I come to see that the gaining of the whole people for the living God is the only basis for the training of the individual to faith, the greater is my gratitude for the

same book (p. cviii) about the present Bishop of Durham: "His point of view approaches as nearly as an English Churchman is likely to approach to Calvinism". To such writers "normally" means, if the English Church of to-day be taken as the norm; but "there are hills beyond Pentlands, and lands beyond Forth". There are other and more searching standards to be considered.

¹ "Living Forces," p. 185.

conversion of our Ama Dahambawo, who, in his inmost heart, has grasped the essence of the matter, and now is giving it forth to others. Such men are not laboriously sought and won; they are given by God, and must be prayed for as a gift from God." The society may seem indispensable for the shaping of all lives as they come, and dogmatists may find room for nothing else; but here and there a life stands out indispensable to the society, a life at first hand, an express reminder that the primary relation is with the individual.

Whatever difference there might be as to the Church's place in the origins of life, there can be none as to its value for *the support and the enriching of life*, and that in many ways. With what may seem like childish and extravagant detail, Newman presents the matter from his Romish point of view:¹ "To feel yourself surrounded by all holy arms and defences, with the sacraments week by week, with the priests' benedictions, with crucifixes and rosaries which have been blessed, with holy water, with places or with acts to which indulgences have been attached, and the whole 'Armour of God'—to know that when you die you will not be forgotten, that you will be sent out of the world with the holy unctions upon you, and will be followed by Masses and prayers: to know in short that the atonement of

¹ "Ward's Life," I. 241.

Christ is not a thing at a distance, or like the sun standing over against us and separated off from us, but that we are surrounded by an atmosphere and are in a medium through which this warmth and light flow in upon us from every side, what can one ask more than this?" There, with the elaboration of a superstitious system, the power of an embodied religion is expressed; and with varying degrees of clearness, the advocates of other forms of worship would give a similar report. Bishop Butler¹ urged upon his clergy "the keeping up, as well as we are able, of the form and face of religion with decency and reverence. . . . The form of religion may indeed be where there is little of the thing itself; but the thing itself cannot be preserved without the form." And a Protestant of a very different type—Dr. Robert Mackintosh²—has confessed that "when the hour of intellectual doubt comes, it is much if the doubter can see before his eyes the fellowship of saints. . . . The young doubter who lives under our cold order sees little in the Church of his birth except a collection of men who hold

¹ "Charge delivered to the Clergy at the primary visitation of the Diocese of Durham, 1751." Alongside of this dictum of Butler's, it may be allowable to set a caustic warning of Dr. Oman's ("Faith and Freedom," p. 57): "If there is no inward tie the institution is vital; for keeping peas together the bag is a necessity".

² "Insufficiency of Revivalism," p. 31—written in the latitudes of Scottish Presbyterianism.

barbarous and old-fashioned opinions which it is unthinkable that he should ever share. That is one reason why, as a friend once said to me, doubt 'cleans out' a man so utterly as it does. Touch his intellectual clearness, and nothing is left to him."

In considering this ministry of support and enrichment, a beginning may be made in the region of doctrine, for there any native narrowness of mind or shallowness of experience will at once bring a man to a halt. An ordinary believer, alone with his own soul and with the word of God, would never attain to the rich and various magnificence of the Catholic faith, and what he would omit would be by no means the least important parts of the creed. Principal Forsyth¹ has ingeniously suggested that "the sense for the Church idea and that for the Trinitarian idea stand or fall together. The mentality which ignores the one tends at last to ignore the other." M. Loisy,² with whom one is glad sometimes to agree, says justly that "a durable society can alone maintain the equilibrium between tradition, which preserves the heritage of acquired truth, and the incessant toil of human reason to adapt ancient truth to the new needs of thought and knowledge. It is inconceivable that each individual should recommence the interrogation of

¹ "Contemporary Review," July, 1911.

² "The Gospel and the Church," p. 223.

the past on his own account, and reconstruct for his own use an entire religion. Here as elsewhere, each is aided by all and all by each." That is written with reference to those who are actively engaged in the quest for truth, but it is scarcely less true of the plain man with his sluggish mind. In his life he does not utilize every part of the faith he professes to hold; his working creed is composed of a few very simple articles; and yet the fact that his life is so much rooted in the Church gives him a certain possession and even a certain enjoyment of truths which lie beyond his actual range, and which belong rather to the Church's faith than to his own. "The sublime and abstruse doctrines of Christian belief," says Coleridge,¹ "belong to the Church; but the faith of the individual, centred in his heart, is or may be collateral to them". So far as the individual is concerned, the relation might be turned the other way; in his faith, as life and temperament have shaped it, certain articles of the common belief stand out clearly, and it is rather "the sublime and abstruse doctrines" which are collateral to these. Obscurely, a man is conscious of things which are sure though he has not fathomed them, and that vague sense makes the world of thought in which he lives seem deeper and more wonderful. It does not extend merely to the limit of his own apprehension, there to break away, but reaches

¹ "Table Talk," p. 174.

out into other continents of which wise men have told him, and which are also for his enrichment. He may not have courage, or energy, or leisure, to traverse them for himself, but they are not, therefore, without reality for him; he has a title to them, *pro indiviso*, not as a separate person to do what he wills with his own, but as a member of a community he has a share in what is a common possession. "God gave men truths in His miraculous revelations," says Newman,¹ "and other truths scarcely less necessary and divine in the unsophisticated infancy of nations. These are transmitted as 'the wisdom of our ancestors' through men, many of whom cannot enter into them nor themselves receive them,—still on and on, from age to age, not the less truths because many of the generations through which they are transmitted are unable to prove them, but hold them either from pious and honest feeling, or by bigotry and prejudice. That they are truths it is most difficult to prove, for great men alone can prove great ideas or even grasp them. . . . Moral truth is gained by patient study or by calm reflection, silently as the dew falls, unless miraculously given, and when gained, it is transmitted by faith and by prejudice." This attitude to truths not personally explored or appropriated may be less common in the Protestant than in the Roman Communion, but its influence is by

¹ "Ward's Life," I. 45.

no means to be despised, for wherever it is found, it gives a man a confidence, even at second-hand, with regard to matters which belong to the life of God.

This element of the communal possession of truth may affect, in important ways, the life of seemingly irreligious men. There can be no doubt that the immediate tendency of Reformation teaching was to make religion more personal and individual than it had been. The conscious believer was brought into a closer personal relation with Christ than he would have found in the offices of the Church; but what was the effect of the change in a slack or negligent worshipper? In becoming a negligent Protestant, he did not stand where he did, for the lines in the new system were more distinctly drawn, and he was allowed and even warned to think of himself as an outsider. Until he had faith in Jesus Christ, no good thing was expected of him; no duties were required, no consolations were secure. He might not be left to live and die "without God and without hope in the world," but he was admonished that he was actually without God, and he readily took himself at that common valuation. Dr. Bliss¹ confesses that personal religion was greatly benefited by the Reformation, but he adds that "the common consciousness of God" seemed to suffer loss.

¹ "Religions of Syria," p. 6.

The most heedless Roman is aware that he belongs to the Church, and that to the Church are given in possession the mysteries of God, so that he has a property in these also, even though it be remotely and at second-hand. Something of the same distinction may often be observed between a well-trained English Churchman and a Scottish Evangelical; both may have become careless in the extreme, but the Englishman is not so crassly and utterly negligent as the other. The one was reared in a faith which was strongly individual, and which had nothing on which he cared to lay hold; the other grew under the constraint of a sober, communal piety, rich in traditions and in manageable duties which were not confined to the notably devout. He may be on the extreme fringe of the Church's territory, touched with almost Arctic cold, but he does not feel that he is outside of it; and he knows that that territory reaches away to sunnier and more fertile climates. Thus, in experience, he is frequently found to be less inaccessible than his Scottish neighbour; and his mere shadow of a religion may easily, in favourable conditions, take substance and become a reality in his life.

But this share in the heritage of truth is not the only treasure which the Church communicates to her members. There is also a treasure of experience and of moral attainment. I have somewhere read an imaginative description of the

feelings of a cultured Roman when he passed over into the Christian Church; in a single moment, he seemed to make an enormous experience. His own thoughts up to that point had been groping and ill assured; prayer and faith and fellowship with the Unseen had all been matters of question, but in the communion of saints, into which he was now received, the day of questioning was over. In this new relation, he found himself instinctively associated with prayers, rejoicings, certainties, which were beyond his proper measure, and yet there was nothing of insincerity or pretence. In becoming a part of this larger unit of existence he had transcended the limitations of his own being, and been made free of a different world. This is not peculiar to religion, but is a commonplace of the psychology of the crowd. A man giving himself up to the mood of the multitude loses some part of his distinctiveness of being, and is swayed by impulses and governed by ideals which are common. He is no longer a spectator judging others by standards of his own, his individuality is extended, it may even seem to be submerged. Mr. Henry Newbolt¹ elaborates this experience as it is seen in the life of a big public school: "Our character as members of a society or fellowship is something different from our individual character

¹"The Twymans," p. 100.

when we were living apart. There is a latent fire in our souls which does not burn up until it gathers an accumulated force by the contact of life with life. There is a certain infection of nature which goes from one of us to another as if by some chemical process, so that our juxtaposition and our common life give to us all some new qualities. We here are not merely the same six or seven hundred isolated souls that we should be if scattered over a wide area and unknown to one another. As we sit here side by side, with one purpose and aim, uttering the same words, thinking the same thoughts, stirred in some degree by the same impulses, and penetrated by the same influence, our spirit moves, as it were, all together, in something like a rhythmic harmony. We feel that something has been added to us, that we are not the same as before we met. For the time, at any rate, if not indeed for all time, our life is a different thing; for by merely coming together we have created a new element of life, which is reacting on every one of us with its influences, as the case may happen to be, either invigorating or fatally injurious." This enlarging of nature in the fellowship of the Church opens the way for the working of what are called "the means of grace". In the acts of common prayer and praise, if these are scrutinized, the supernatural elements are present in a far larger degree than in the ordinary moods of a

man apart. Trouble is pushing him hard, as he comes into the house of God; he is barely able to keep his feet at all in the rush and conflict, and only with an effort is he recognisable as a friend of Jesus Christ; but there is no feigning and no forcing of himself in the outflow of heart with which he joins in prayer and song. The scandal of his Christian life has been that the Lord has not been his Shepherd, but by infection, he is now drawn into participating in the Church's assurance. The common faith comes in to reinforce his struggling life, and under its influence he becomes a better, saner and more believing man. The prayer he could have imagined for himself would have been stunted, groping, despondent, whilst the prayer which is the Church's is large, sure, persistent, prevailing; and through fellowship, without any touch of unreality, he passes over from one to the other. This is even more strikingly exhibited in the service of Communion which, as Luther says,¹ is "the property of the Church," not merely of individuals. In it we have to do not merely with a service of commemoration, for the Lord Himself is present, giving of His own life to His friends; and by our participation in it, we declare that His sacrifice is for us both nourishment and reviving, that since He died and lives our sins are forgiven, and that it is our life to feed upon Him. No service of

¹ "Letters," p. 336.

the Church is so absolutely in accord with the tone of the New Testament as this, which rejoicingly proclaims a redemption complete, and a new life in the love of God. But those who share in this ordinance are not habitually of New Testament mould. Their hearts are not at all times inflamed by praise and love, at best they fain would have such hearts. But nothing could be more disastrous for them, nothing could more certainly fix them in their present conditions of penury, than for each man to order his worship accurately in the measure of his actual attainment. The common worship needs to be larger, loftier, more universal than the mood of the average individual; and this ideal and inclusive standard is maintained as the property of the Church which may serve by its fellowship to raise the standard of its members.

A lad who has been reared in Christian surroundings is often disappointed with his own lack of definite or new impression when he is formally received into the fellowship of the Church; but this disappointment is due to the fact that the Church, with all her glaring defects and weaknesses, has in a measure done her work, and has enriched him with standards of judgment, and a furnishing of hopes and ideals and aims. "One needs to go abroad," says Campbell Moody,¹ "in order to learn what an inheritance

¹"The Heathen Heart," p. 92.

we have received,—not Christianity simply handed down from our fathers, but handed down in ever-increasing wealth, like capital with accumulating interest, or like an estate fostered and improved by careful stewardship. . . . All unawares to ourselves, and sometimes in spite of ourselves, we have acquired a sublimity of thought, a tenderness of feeling, a depth of love and hate in our nature, a capacity for apprehending the preciousness of Christ such as earlier generations of the Church knew nothing of." "Not only the Christian Scotsman but even the unchristian, unconverted Scot or Englishman is in many moral and religious aspects far ahead of the Christian Chinese."¹ When a man whose standards have thus been created by Christianity comes consciously to accept the dominion of Christ in his life, he cannot know what a cultured heathen does who enters the Church by conversion; he makes a passage, as it were, *within* a kingdom, from the outskirts to the metropolis, he does not, with the same amazement, enter upon a wholly new kingdom of existence. But he will not for that reason disparage the ministry of the Church which has been God's instrument in bringing him thus to Himself.

One other aspect of life may be noted in which the individual cannot be self-sufficing; he absolutely requires the *discipline* of a society. Even

¹ "The Heathen Heart," p. 91.

so militant an individualist as Vinet confesses¹ that "isolation is not the natural condition either of a man or of a Christian. In no sense and in no sphere is it good for a man to be alone. Faith is kindled by contact with faith; and in rising from the faith in mere authority to the faith which rests on personal conviction and experience, a Christian finds himself in relations with all those who have thus risen along with him. One authority succeeds to another; it is now the authority of example and of love, or, to give it a better name, it is the Divine Spirit which makes of these gathered fidelities a sacred fire, maintained continually by his own breath." The city has been described as "the grand invention by which man emerged from his primitive savagery". Within it there are stored the discoveries and achievements of former times, and they are superstitiously preserved even by those who scarcely understand what they mean. But what is of far greater importance, the crowding together of so many diverse interests compels men to consideration of what is common, and thus it imposes even on the most assertive the lesson of self-restraint and self-sacrifice. If this constraint is refused, a prompt collapse is bound to follow. "It explains a hundred things in the French Revolution," says Mr. Hilaire Belloc,² "that

¹ "Discours sur quelques sujets religieux," p. 421.

² "Danton," p. 226 (Nelson's edition).

every successive step reduced society to a mere number of men. . . . Roland was Minister of the Interior, that is, he was responsible for order, but he had nothing with which to work. On the Tuesday he sent to Santerre and said, Call out the National Guard, but Santerre answered that he could not gather them. . . . That utter disintegration which the theories of the Revolution had produced, that purely voluntary condition of the soldier, the official, the police, was irresistible when there was spontaneity of action ; but it was useless where the conditions demanded organization and initiative." That historical note exposes the weakness of individualism as a policy, and it finds applications of the gravest consequence in the Christian life. Jesus aimed not only at individual men and women, but anticipated a kingdom with the free play of life upon life and the blending of competing claims. He spoke of an *ecclesia*, the general assembly of a new Israel, with its common life. That is to say, He looked forward to something of the nature of a society, in which man should lean upon man, and each should know the discipline of mutual reliance and service. Such a conception carries us far beyond the demands of individual religion, and offers a larger idea of what salvation means. As imagined by its Founder, Christianity pointed towards a coherent social order, with a radical transformation of the world as He saw it. Dif-

ferences of opinion may to-day arise as to what we first should aim at and what instruments and methods may suitably be employed; but there should be no division as to the necessity, for Christ's service, of some social drill to curb our native instinct for doing as we like. This should not be a discipline exercised from without by officials, however appointed, over a people undiscerning and passive;¹ the law of the new covenant is in men's hearts; each for himself should have some instinct of his Master's purpose, and each should be ready to be taught and guided by his fellows, as quick to acknowledge his neighbour's claim as his own. "Individualism for us meant muddle," says Mr. Wells;² "it meant a crowd of separate, undisciplined little people, all obstinately and ignorantly doing things jarringly, each one in his own way." That is a sorrowfully accurate description of the Church of Jesus in many of its parts. The great tasks which He has committed to His people remain undischarged,

¹ This is easily said, but the actual tracing of the lines is extremely hard. Dr. W. P. Paterson ("Rule of Faith," p. 296) notes that "the Reformers were not unaware of the limitations of human nature; and to Calvin it seemed necessary to reconstitute the Church with a system of discipline so searching and effective as to ensure that the weak and erring would be effectually tutored, governed and restrained". But that scheme, in its operation, was simply a new law, with little of the evangelical note appearing in it.

² "The New Machiavelli," p. 144.

whilst they stand apart as individuals, each soul jealous of its own rights, or customs, or inspirations, and refusing the discipline and the instruction of the common life.

The force of such considerations appears already in the earliest of Paul's Epistles (I Thess. 5¹⁴), but the impression seems to have deepened as he grew older. One of his disciples (Heb. 10²⁶) warns his readers against the danger of "forsaking the assembling of themselves together, as the custom of some is," which may point to such a bias towards separatism in religion as Luther had to contend with. Of this we have no other information; but certainly, in the Ephesian Letter, if that may be taken as authentic,¹ we find Paul attaching to the community an almost extravagant importance. The Church stands towards Christ as the bride does to her husband (5³²), no longer separable from him but "one flesh". Any progress towards a full manhood (4¹³ *εἰς ἄνδρα τέλειον*)

¹Weinel, "Paul," p. ix: "It cannot fail to strike us as curious that in this Epistle (Eph. 2²⁰), the writer speaks of the Apostles (including himself) as the foundation of the Church (no longer Christ as in I Cor. 3¹¹); nay more, that he calls them (including himself) 'the holy Apostles'. This is the language of a later age." One may be doubtful of Weinel's parentheses in this sentence. Sanday and Headlam ("Romans," p. lix) think that the contrasts between Romans and Ephesians depend "upon the amount of vital energy thrown into the two Epistles". Ephesians they understand as an old man's work, languid and laboured (cf. Philem. v. 9).

depends upon sharing in the gifts bestowed by God upon the Church, where not only miraculous gifts like tongues and healings were exhibited, but where men were born anew and cared for and built up in character. The phrases used are so strong as to suggest an actual change of front in the Apostle. Wernle¹ accounts for this by a reference to the actual conditions of Paul's work. In seeking recruits for the Church he was bound to exalt it as the one way of salvation, and even to distinguish those within from those outside of it as the saved and the lost. "On the other hand, as a true disciple of Jesus, he sought to get rid of any confidence in the Church, and to set every individual for himself in presence of eternity and of that divine judgment which is against every man that worketh evil. Since Paul was both Churchman and Christian, there came to be a wavering or even a contradiction in his utterances. . . . But this 'yea and nay' cannot be Paul's last word. Redemption as he conceives it is only found where the individual man becomes assured that he is a son of God and that nothing can separate him from God's love. This certainty is far removed both from dependence on any connexion with the Church, and from any wavering between hope and terror in the prospect of the Judgment Day. It is a purely personal thing, true for oneself alone; each must experience it

¹ "Anfänge," p. 133.

for himself as no man can give it to him." Dr. Oman¹ deals with the same problem in a rather more *a priori* fashion: "Paul is supposed to have developed this more corporate idea of the Church (Eph. 4¹³, 5²⁶ etc.) as he meditated in prison at Rome, the centre of the world. But such a change would be an abandonment of the vital things in his early faith. The process which he found so powerless when it wrought through the Jewish society, he is not likely to have turned to in his old age . . . and an experience which he had apart from the Church and by which he became a member of the Church is not likely to have been put last and the Church first. The only question is whether a figure of speech is not unduly pressed. What is expressed collectively may derive its significance from what is experienced individually."² Pascal asserts that a wise man should always have a thought in the back of his mind by which he judges of all things, even though he may talk as those about him do;³ and Paul's *pensée de derrière* was still of the individual relation to Christ, although various practical necessities were constraining him to assign an ever-larger function to the Church.

¹ "The Church and the Divine Order," p. 61.

² Cf. Eph. 4⁶: One God and Father of all, who is above all, and *in you all*. Barclay ("Apology," p. 354) speaks of "the arisings of life" in each particular man, which may "become as a flood of refreshment and overspread the whole meeting".

³ "Pensées."

It is instructive to notice how, for lack of this fundamental Pauline assumption, thinkers of various schools have been driven to surrender to the Church out and out. Many of the Modernists who have broken with their Church in matters of scientific opinion, appear still to be unable to think of religion in any way except as dependent on the fabric of a society. By the time he wrote "The Gospel and the Church," Loisy's corrosive and unsympathetic thinking had left him with a tradition of Jesus so slender as to have no attraction for the heart; and perhaps for that very reason, he falls more abjectly back upon the Church. "The Church is as necessary to the Gospel as the Gospel is to the Church."¹ "As the Kingdom of Heaven was conceived as a society not as a coalition of fervent individualists, so the Christian community naturally formed societies and confraternities. They needed the preservative element of all society—authority." Alas, for the dream which cheered Jesus and Jeremiah and Paul, of a law in the heart! "The Church is not as Protestants would have it," says Taine,² "the assembling of agitated souls, each independent of the others; nor, as the early Christians thought, is it the gathering of men united by a common ecstasy, and an expectation of the Kingdom of God. The Church is a body of ordered powers, an institution existing by itself.

¹ "The Gospel and the Church," p. 151.

² "Voyage en Italie," I. 280.

It does not dwell in its members, or depend upon them, for its source is in itself." That is the Roman theory, which has been elaborated and adorned until the Church is quite as divine as its Master.¹ And yet, when the Church is more closely scrutinized and the rhetoric is cleared away, we cannot but discern in it, along with much that is helpful and supernatural, the enormous bulk of what is purely natural and of this world. As an expedient, it has been greatly used and honoured by God in His Providence, as serving His ends, nourishing and educating His children; but it is an expedient which, like other tools and instruments, has a history, and which, even in its elaborated form, retains traces of the stages through which it has passed. However proudly the Church may erect herself, as if she were all divine, yet the chief safeguard of her pretensions is the obscurity of history and the ignorance of men. Services to which she calls her people bear traces of old pagan usage; vestments to which she clings as symbolic had a perfectly natural origin in considerations of heat and cold; in the ranks and grades of clergy, and in the forms of their consecration, it is possible still to discern nothing more divine than a series of compromises between conflicting systems. Even the arrogant

¹ Cf. Dryden's—

Such an omniscient Church we wish indeed;

'Twere worth both Testaments, and cast in the creed.

claim to judge—"Securus judicat orbis terrarum"—which so mightily affected the mind of Newman, is little able to stand investigation. "Quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus," was once jeeringly rendered by Venables: "That which in the year 325, in the insignificant little town of Nicæa, was carried by the vote of a single bishop;"¹ and though no jeer ever goes to the roots of a question, yet a very small puncture may serve to bring an inflated bladder to a quick collapse.

Grave witness of the mundane origin of the Church is furnished by the records of its swift degeneration. "One who looks at the facts," says Sir William Ramsay,² "must ask whether religion naturally develops from the lower to the higher stage, or whether Paul was not right in declaring that religion tends to degenerate among men. So far as the history of the Mediterranean lands reaches, I find only degeneration, corrected from time to time by the influence of the great prophets and teachers like Paul." In 1833, Newman³ records an impression of Rome which is so favourable as to give force to the strictures when they come. "The Roman clergy are said to be a decorous, orderly body, and certainly most

¹ With this slim jest may be compared John Selden's saying that "the Holy Ghost is the odd man," whose vote decides a division in a Church Council.

² "The Cities of St. Paul," p. 23.

³ "Letters and Correspondence," I. 316.

things are very different from Naples. There are no trumpery ornaments or absurd inscriptions in the streets, profaning the most sacred subjects, and the look of the priests is superior. But there are (seemingly) timidity, indolence, and that secular spirit which creeps on established religion everywhere." Dean Milman said that "established religions always tend to Pelagianism in doctrine," that is to say, to that type of doctrine in which God counts for least and man for most. Russell Lowell,¹ writing as a historian and critic, notes that "fanaticism or, to call it by its milder name, enthusiasm, is only powerful and active so long as it is aggressive. Establish it firmly in power, and it becomes conservatism, whether it will or no." "In prosperous times," he says again, "the faith of one generation becomes the formality of the next." This observation is by no means confined to Christian history. "All human religions," says Dr. John Warneck,² "obey the law of the attraction of the earth . . . God Himself must interpose in times of degeneration, and work against the law of gravitation;" and Dr. Warde Fowler³ remarks upon the fact that whilst as a young man, Cicero "defined *religio* as the feeling of the presence of a higher or divine

¹ "Among My Books," essay on "New England Two Centuries Ago".

² "Living Forces of the Gospel," p. 103.

³ "The Religious Experience of the Roman People," p. 460.

nature, which prompts men to worship—to *cura et caerimonia*, he came, later in life, to use it of that *cura et caerimonia* apart from the feeling". Dr. Schechter¹ actually seems to regard with complacency this replacement of feeling by ceremony in the religion of his nation. "It is a noteworthy feature of Judaism that theological speculations have never resulted in the formulation of any imposing or universal doctrine but usually in divers ceremonial practices. . . . The Rabbis speak of woman as having brought death and grief into the world; but the conclusion was that since woman had extinguished the 'light of the world,' she ought to atone for it by lighting the candles for the Sabbath." On all levels of religion when embodied in the practice of a community there is visible the same moving away from what is primary and divine to what is secondary and trivial, the doing of what is usual, the observing of the custom of the tribe; and it cannot be surprising that to many serious observers the community, in spite of its manifold service, should thus have appeared to be a dead weight, an actual hindrance in the discharge of the religious functions which, at first, it was intended to secure.

In the Christian Church this torpor of the institution may be remarked on different sides of life. For the indifferent Church member, as for

¹ "Studies in Judaism," p. 289.

Cicero, the "*cura et caerimonia*" tend to occupy the whole field of religion. Many parents in evangelical congregations are attentive to having their children baptized, but they give nothing of teaching or example, scarcely even the example of church attendance; or where that is maintained, it becomes a sort of *opus operatum*, an act complete in itself and not intended to have consequences. Their attitude as they listen is entirely detached and external, for the bare notion that the words spoken are vitally related to conduct and to feeling is not allowed to enter their minds. The story which I have elsewhere quoted of an outbursting of revival in Wales through the routine reading of the Litany is significant mainly for its uniqueness; for, if there were not a thick muffling veil tied close about ears and eyes and every sense in the ordinary congregation, such outbursting of emotion would seem normal and natural. The record to which appeal is made—"by Thine agony and bloody sweat, by Thy Cross and Passion"—is so tremendous and so moving, that the mere rehearsing of it might be expected to work for revolution. The words are spirit and life, but the Church, as constituted and maintained by long tradition, is so much a thing of this world that it is able even to blunt and deaden them so that commonly they are heard without result.

It is scarcely needful to speak of the Church's

insensibility in the field of morals. In every Christian land, the great pitiful souls to whom their fellows' wrongs first make appeal have commonly been Christians; but it is not less true that the Church, as such, has been indulgent of wrong, and has often made herself the champion of all sorts of unrighteous privilege. Drowsily and timidly, here and there, she may have hinted dissatisfaction; but no one who has learned of Jesus, whose "eyes were as a flame of fire," would ever speak of the Visible Church as a continuator of the incarnation in the region of morals. For He sought out for His protection those who had no possible claim upon Him; whilst the Church, through centuries, has shown herself indifferent to the evil conditions of those outside her borders, and has had to be goaded into action in defence even of her own poor members. It is individuals not institutions, that are the hope of all movements of reform.

Even in the investigation of truth, this torpor is seen assailing the Church. It is a familiar part of the psychology of crowds that the interests, which break down the limits of individuality and fuse the separate souls in one, are seldom brave or new ideas. As Nordau expounds it,¹ if you have ten men gathered about a table, each a master of some minor branch of knowledge, their talk

¹ Cf. Henri Bois, "Psychologie des Réveils," p. 26.

will not be briskest over any one of these, but on something in which they all may have a part. If the Church be a fallible, secondary, human expedient, it may seem natural that the same law should apply to it, and that only the commoner aspects of truth should win general assent. But that is a great *if*. For if, as is maintained by many, the Church is first of all a divine thing, it ought to have instincts and movements after the fullness of truth. We know in part, but the Church should always be reaching after the whole. Yet that has not been her attitude. Newman¹ confesses that "it is individuals not the Holy See that have taken the initiative and given the lead to the Catholic mind in theological inquiry. Indeed it is one of the reproaches urged against the Roman Church that it has originated nothing, and has only served as a sort of *remora* or brake on the development of doctrine. And it is an objection which I embrace as a truth; for such I conceive to be the main purpose of its extraordinary gift." "Why was it," he asks again² in a somewhat different mood, "that the Mediaeval Schools were so vigorous? Because they were allowed free and fair play, because the disputants were not made to feel the bit in their mouths at every other word they spoke, but could move their limbs freely and could expatiate at will.

¹ "Apologia," pp. 265.

² Ward's "Life of Newman," II. 49.

Then, when they went wrong, a stronger and truer intellect set them down,—and as time went on, if the dispute got perilous and a controversialist obstinate, then, at length, Rome interfered—at length, not at first.” That is a perfectly intelligible account of the diplomatic working of the mind of an institution, and it describes a secondary ministry by no means to be despised; but if the community is the primary fact, the proper object of justification, the body in which the Holy Spirit resides and through which alone His virtue is communicated to men and women, surely some nobler attitude to truth might have been anticipated; and since there is still so much to learn, free men, as taught by Paul, will rejoice that they are not dependent on the Church alone for their advancement in the truth.

If we look even to what is the Church’s admitted function, we shall find how vastly she is indebted to the individual experience for help in discharging it.

1. For one thing, it is that experience which brings to the Church its most essential elements. Mere numbers give no security of wisdom. “The voice of the majority is more likely to be *Vox Diaboli* than *Vox Dei*, if it be not, at bottom, the voice of individual judgment and personal conviction.”¹ That is to say, in order to secure a

¹ MacCunn, “Ethics of Citizenship,” p 116.

society able to guide itself, you must first find men who do not need to wait on the guidance of any one. The best society is like a company of friends, where all are different, and respect and welcome each other's differences, and where no one thinks of subduing his peculiarity to the dull average. A society composed of people jealous for individual liberty may freely unite in common action, and its decisions will carry all the greater force because it is the sum of so great a body of individual spontaneities. That is Paul's dream of the Christian community; each man should be in it, on the clear understanding that if all the world went away, he would remain. To home, to Church, to education, a man is indebted for bringing him so far on his way to God; but in what is determining and enduring there can be the intrusion of no third party, for that is the secret of God and the soul He has made. Passionately Paul maintained the need of individual decisions, bidding men use their own eyes and trust their own souls; and he did this even in the interest of the Church itself, for he felt that only under these conditions could its life be unfettered and rich. The Spirit of Christ, which takes any one apart and makes him a man indeed, speedily begins to affect him as a member of society. It makes him first cry (Rom. 8¹⁵; Gal. 4⁶), "Father, dear Father!" but then, says Paul (Phil. 2⁶⁻⁷), the mind which was in Christ Jesus who emptied

Himself will appear in his people, and nothing will be done through factiousness or vainglory, but each will count other better than himself. This renovation of society through the redemption of the individuals composing it has effects which lie far out. "The doctrines of the Reformation deepened the character of the people, reacted on their habits of life, and *gave a tone to their industry*," says Mr. Benjamin Kidd.¹ "Latin Christianity has always tended, as it still tends, to treat as of the first importance not the resulting change in character in the individual, but rather his belief in the authority of the Church and of an order of men, and in the supreme efficacy of sacramental ordinances which the Church has decreed itself alone competent to dispense. On the other hand, the central idea of the Reformation was the necessity for a spiritual change in the individual, the recognition, in virtue thereof, of the priesthood in his own person. As Professor Marshall (the economist) states, 'man was ushered straight into the presence of his Creator, with no human intermediary; life became intense and full of awe, and now, for the first time, large numbers of rude and uncultured people yearned towards the mysteries of absolute spiritual freedom. The isolation of each person's religious responsibility from that of his fellows was a necessary condition for his higher spiritual progress'."

¹ "Social Evolution," p. 297.

But Dr. Marshall goes on to show in detail how this creation, through a personal experience, of free men furnished the community with a new race of energetic and serviceable citizens, and thus set the world forward on the way even of material progress. For a healthy society, the awakening of the individual is indispensable.

2. A second office which the individual experience can render to the community is the securing of a standard by which to judge itself—an office most necessary if the community is to survive. "We should remember," says Lowell,¹ "that the human mind when it sails by dead reckoning, without the possibility of a fresh observation, perhaps without the instruments necessary to take one, will sometimes bring up in very strange latitudes." It is easy to assume that what has always been held may still be held without change to-day—easy but perilous; for no account is taken of the currents which have silently deflected the mind and made dead reckoning illusory. Burke has given us few weightier maxims than this, that "a State without the means of some change is without the means of conservation"; but how is the State or the Church to become aware of its need of change, unless it have at hand some corrected standard by which to judge of its position? Decay may

¹ Among My Books, "Essay on Witchcraft".

creep upon it unobserved, not only affecting the practice of the community, but the very eyes and intelligence with which that outward change might be observed. Insensibly, in point after point, the paganism which is always with us may regain its supremacy; and as Hosea¹ said of Israel, "Gray hairs are here and there upon him, and he knoweth it not". In Loisy, who represents the quite unmystical type of Roman Catholic, one sees the jaunty supposition that anything—in belief and practice—whatever its origin may have been, may become Christian simply by being adopted into the Church. "The Church can fairly say that in order to be at all times what Jesus desired the society of His friends to be, it had to become what it has become; for it has become what it had to be to save the Gospel by saving itself."² The same proposal was addressed to our Lord in the Wilderness, when it was suggested that, to keep Himself alive, He might make any use of His power He pleased; and His rejection of the proposal is conclusive. God sees no necessity for His Church to live ("out of the stones He can raise up sons of Abraham"), but He sees a tremendous necessity, if it live, that it be true to His ideals. "We boast the triumph of Christianity over paganism," says Emerson,³ "meaning the victory of the spirit over the

¹ Hosea, 7⁹.

² "The Gospel and the Church," p. 150.

³ Vol. IV, p. 318.

senses ; but paganism hides itself in the uniform of the Church. It has taken the oath of allegiance, but it is paganism still. It outvotes the true men by millions of majority ; it carries the bag, and spends the treasure, and writes the tracts, and elects the minister, and persecutes the true believer." But if that be the case, how imperative is the need of some proper court of appeal !

Newman, in his Anglican days, looked back to primitive times as giving him such a standard : "We rule ourselves by what the Church did or said before this visitation (of division) fell upon her".¹ But who will maintain that the age of the "Robber Synod" was immaculately Christian ? and even if there were accessible a primitive standard of uncorruptness, who is to guarantee the purity of intention of those who make appeal to it ? And therein consists the urgency of falling back not on ancient phrases but on the original experiences, not, with antiquarian zeal, to investigate them, but as men living under the administration of the same grace of God as those of old time knew, to repeat them. "We cannot shut our eyes to the fact," says Dr. Inge,² "that both the old seats of authority—the infallible Church and the infallible Book—are fiercely assailed, and that our faith needs reinforcements. These can only come from the depths of the religious consciousness itself."

¹ "Letters and Correspondence," II. 358.

² "Christian Mysticism," p. 329.

"This is the historical function of Mysticism," he says again;¹ "it appears as an independent, active principle, the spirit of reformations and revivals." Mr. Tyerman² was standing on the firm ground of history, when he described Wesley, Whitefield and Howell Harris as "three great reformers, because three great revivers of pure and undefiled religion". The Reformer's office is not, as Newman complained, "with antiquarian zeal" to strike back at what is obsolete; he strikes through. He sees what this religion of Jesus, in its originality, is, and thus he can judge of the vagrancies of the Church in departing from it. What shocks him is not that changes of practice have come, for these in a living society are unavoidable. "Old principles," says Newman³ justly, "reappear in new forms. The Church changes with them in order to remain the same. In a higher world, it may be otherwise; but here below, to live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often." It is not change that bewilders, but such change as overlays and obscures the principles themselves. And to judge of that, the Reformer has one sufficient standard in his continually fresh apprehension of the original experience. He

Corrects the portrait by the living face,
Man's God by God's God in the mind of man.⁴

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 5.

² "Life of Whitefield," II. 531.

³ "Essay on Development."

⁴ Browning, "The Ring and the Book," Bk. X. 1873-4.

Loisy,¹ who in the things of the soul is commonly an undiscerning creature, has been led to a generalization whose significance he, apparently, did not himself realize. "Harnack says that 'down to our own day in Catholicism, inner living piety and the manner of expressing it have remained essentially Augustinian'. How wise is the theologian to note this contrast between the most individual piety and the Church of law and imperialism! *All Catholic reformers have been Augustinians.*" That is more than a historical observation, linking Jansenius with his forerunners and his successors; it is the acknowledgment that reformation is possible only for the men of the open face. Dean Milman² supplies the negative side of this great positive assertion, when he notes that "no Pelagian ever has worked or will work a religious revolution".

Such is the second service which individual piety may render to the community, and the nature and something of the limit of it is expressed by Mr. Abrahams³ in his account of the religion of modern Israel. "Mysticism is the experience of one. Each does right in testing the corporate experience by his own; but he must not elevate himself into a law even for himself. That, in a sentence, would summarize the attitude of Judaism towards Mysticism; it is medicine not food."

¹ "The Gospel and the Church," p. 185.

² "Latin Christianity," I. 150. ³ "Judaism," p. 77.

He says again,¹ "Judaism allowed to authority and law a supreme place. The Mystic relies upon his own intuitions, depends upon his own experiences. Judaism, on the other hand, is a scheme in which personal experiences only count in so far as they are brought into the general fund of the communal experience." These sentences, with but little change, might be applied to the place which the individual religion ought to have in the life of the organized Christian Church, if its health is to be maintained.

3. But the greatest of the functions discharged by individual experience in the life of the Church is, on occasion, to give it a new beginning, for the course of Christian history is terrible in its reminders that there may be such a thing as a dead Church. Of that the Lord Himself gave warning in His message to the Church in Sardis, "Thou hast a name that thou livest and art dead". The Roman Church, under the presidency of such men as Leo X and Alexander VI was a mournful and indecent spectacle, which might have seemed to justify the fierce words in Mark's Gospel about "the abomination of desolation standing where it ought not" (Mark 13¹⁴). But the records of the English and the Scottish Churches offer illustrations of a degradation scarcely less complete. Of the "moderate" preaching in Aberdeenshire, Pro-

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 68 ; cf. "Life of Francis Thompson," p. 109.

fessor Masson¹ dryly observes that "it might have had something to say for itself, but it hardly required the events of Judæa to bring it within the reach of the human understanding". It is recorded² of an Archbishop of York in the eighteenth century that he told one of his clergy, "he would be better employed preaching the morality of Socrates than canting about the new birth," and of a later Archbishop whose charge to the first Indian bishop—Dr. Middleton—was, "You will not forget that you must do all in your power to put down enthusiasm".³ Strange pastors indeed in the Church of Him who was straitened until He had given His life! And strange Church, in which such pastors could have been nurtured and brought to prominence! This torpor, as we see it in history, has not been merely negative, it has been actively tyrannous and repressive. When men such as Fox and Wesley were sent of God, the question which they encountered was, Why should any man wish to do what every man did not wish? Originalities of character and action were scornfully repressed, and many germs of promise were trodden out. From such a situation there is no escape except by the way of individual experience. In a dead Church, a man stands forth like the Baptist, irrepressible and

¹ "Memories of Two Cities," p. 217.

² Aug. Birrell, "Res Judicatae," p. 16.

³ Balleine, "History of the Evangelical Party," p. 110.

indomitable ; when others are content with tenth-hand impressions, he insists upon seeing and proclaiming as at first hand. Beliefs which had grown old, harmless and easy of reception, are renovated in his burning heart, and by a strange infection of faith, they appear in the hearts of others. And thus the Church lives again, the Church which is the communion of holy men.

That is the moving wheel of history in the things of the Spirit. First of all is the individual experience, which has its remoter origins in some ministry of the Church in the past ; in the interests of permanence, and to make the experience transferable from man to man and from generation to generation, it is embodied in a community and a ritual in which the experience finds expression. But, in a little, men forget the meaning, and hold to the form as sufficient, and the experience thus falls out of sight, and the accepted forms may become a mere instrument of delusion. But God lives, the God who called Abraham "when he was alone" (Is. 51²) ; He speaks to the individual heart, and energy, gladness, infection are seen once more. The Church is saved from itself by the perpetual working of this individualizing grace of God. "As a branch of the Church," said Dr. Rainy,¹ "we are fallible and may go wrong, so disastrously wrong as to become, according to our Confession, no Church

¹ "Address at the opening of the New College, 1904."

but a synagogue of Satan. And there is a craving in many minds for something like a fixed external authority, to ensure our fidelity to, at least, the essentials of the faith. There is no such authority and no such security. Our only security against apostasy is to be sought in faith, in prayer, in the work of God, in the presence and power of the Spirit, in the maintenance of fellowship with our living King. That is true of Churches even as of individuals. To place our trust elsewhere is itself an apostasy."

It is thus that Paul conceived of the life of the Church. He saw with growing clearness the immensity of the service which it might render to its members ; they lived in it, and were blessed in it, and actually they appeared to have no promise of life apart from it. But he also saw that the Church itself is nothing, except as it is inhabited by the Spirit of God, which continually wakens individual men into life by that Church's teaching and fellowship. In recalling the course of his own coming to faith, he suffered the human agencies to drop entirely out of sight. "It pleased God," he said, "to reveal His Son in *me*," and the same personal illumination seemed to wait for others. And a Christian community is only of worth in so far as it gives opportunity for this quickening of life in the individual, and the unfettered development of that life in every sort of worthy service.