Chapter IX

THE RETURN OF THE MANHOOD

Voltaire had denounced the Infamy. But not Voltaire, nor a France of Voltaires, could do more than shake and anger the Infamy. They could not destroy or redeem it. For that something else was required, some movement more within Christendom than ever Voltaire could be, however he derived from Christendom, some stir in the mass of Christendom. That mass remained—the innumerable honest priests and pious laity labouring, "all and every of these in their several calling," to the glory of God and the service of the Co-inherence. Mutually guilty, mutually redeemed, they toiled and adored —stupid perhaps, but patient and believing, from the Russian peasant beyond Nijni-Novgorod to the servant-girl in a Scottish presbytery. Even among that mass the tide of Christendom was receding. In its "last and lowest ebb" it sank away into the solitary and devoted lives which were, are, and always must be, the fountains of her deeps; her spectacles and her geniuses are marvellous, but her unknown saints are her power.

Even while Voltaire, in the name of Humanity, fought for men, two of the geniuses began to unloose the fountains and call out the power. In England John Wesley, in South Italy Alphonsus Liguori, pronounced with passion to the lowest classes of that eighteenth-century world the Name of Salvation. Had they ever met—say on the deck of some small sailing-

ship in Lisbon Harbour—they would not have approved of each other. Yet they had a thing in common—at least some of the common people heard them gladly. Wesley against his will (the will of a High Church Anglican of Oxford) was to found one of the greatest of the Free Churches, one of the last and sincerest efforts to base religion on actual experience and not on formal belief. Alphonsus, against *his* will (so certain is sanctity), was to be canonized with peculiar honours by Pope Pius VII and declared a doctor of the Roman Church by Pius IX. It was certainly he who, of the two, exercised the greater influence on Christendom through his papal admirers, and the promulgation of the doctrines of the Immaculate Conception and the Infallibility derive partly from him. He was instrumental also in establishing, though he did not originate, the devotions to "the sacred human Heart of Jesus" and to the Heart of Mary. There is about such devotions a peculiar subtlety of intention and of idea which this is not the place to discuss. It seems that there had been in the seventeenth century a devotion "to the Heart of Jesus and Mary." "The extraordinary use of the singular rather than the plural suggests that *heart* was regarded primarily as a metaphorical word for love."[1] The violence of some of the pictorial representations of the Sacred Heart is not to blind us to the fact that it was in fact the human Heart of Messias, the love between himself and his mortal Mother, which was markedly to beat both in the Church and the world during the next century, when the blood of men pulsated more passionately in their own veins.[2]

[1] *Religion since the Reformation*, Leighton Pullan.

[2] It has been said that in Latin Christendom "the line of Augustinian influence continues to sink until it reaches its nadir at the canonization of Alfonso Liguori' (*The Ideas of the Fall*, Dr. N. P. Williams.) The sentence illuminates the history of the nineteenth century.

Wesley would have cared little for the Devotion of the Sacred Heart, and even less for the moral Probabilism of St. Alphonsus. Even Newman hesitated; but then Newman all his life retained something of the English gentleman. His notorious quarrel with Kingsley was on that score, and he won it because Kingsley was less of a writer and even more of a gentleman. But Wesley stirred the Evangelicals of his own land, and the result was that while Liguori began to affect, as it were, the capital of Christendom, so those renewed souls in England began to affect its provinces. The world of Voltaire, of Frederick of Prussia, of Leopold of Austria ("my brother the sacristan," as Frederick called him), was entirely ignorant of what was happening. The Deists were still arguing and the altar candles were burning. The *Theos* of the Divine Ambiguity was formally, if dubiously, adored. But the Spirit did not allow the *anthropos* to be neglected. Within and without the Church He allowed humanity to return.

In England, apart from the Methodist conversions, the revolution began at the ends of the earth. It has not been within the scope of this book to describe the missionary efforts of the Church beyond Europe. The Church in China, in India, in Africa, in the further West, has not hitherto deeply affected the central ideas and movement of Christendom; that may very well be to happen in the future. But a false limitation is set up if one does not realize that the energy of Christendom had been, through all those centuries, pushing itself continually abroad. In the earlier centuries some of the views denounced by authority in the West had spread eastward, as, for example, the Nestorian heresy. "A chain of (Nestorian) bishops and churches spread from Jerusalem to Pekin."[1] They had by no means failed when the first Fran-

[1] *Missions*, Louise Creighton.

ciscans and Dominicans appeared there in the thirteenth and fourteenth century, and the legend of Prester John reflects the dim European knowledge of the Christendom on the other side of the world. In India the same testifying, even if mistaken, body was found by Portuguese missions in the sixteenth century, and by the end of the century was re-integrated into the Roman Church. The court of the Khalif of Islam was recurrently attacked, by St. Francis, by Raymond Lull a little later, and (in 1658) by Mary Fisher, a sedate and ardent Quaker from Yorkshire. The coming of the Jesuits brought a new army to the support of doctrine and charity without as well as within Europe. Francis Xavier appeared in Japan and within fifty years there were hundreds of thousands of Christians, who were eventually destroyed by persecution. In the West the activity of the Jesuits is one of the more famous histories of the world; they reciprocated in word and action what had been always the purpose of Christendom—defence of natural human rights, assertion of free supernatural grace, the peculiar relation of every soul—Indian as European—to Almighty God. It was, some fifty years ago, the fashion in England to denigrate the Jesuits and their missions; it is now becoming more fashionable to denigrate the missions of the Reformed Churches, and in fact they were a little late. But they came; and while the Jesuits were suffering at the hands of the Indians in tortures such as even Europe had hardly rivalled, John Eliot was teaching and translating among the tribes. From Rome the Congregation of Propaganda directed everywhere their great assault; from the Protestant countries the various societies raided the continents and seas. The nature of man as well as the Name of God was declared to the whole world.

As in Europe, however, so abroad. The creed of Christ

and the greed of men ran side by side. In spite of all protests and all denunciations slavery, which had slowly disappeared from Europe, was re-established by Europe in the further lands, and showed signs of returning to Europe. The Protestant Churches and the Roman Church alike made conveniences for it, the Protestants informally, the Romans more formally.[1] It may be conceded that slavery is not, formally, anti-Christian, so long as the slave's natural and supernatural rights are preserved. But the proper preservation of those rights is apt to make nonsense of slavery.

It has always seemed impossible to prevent the English becoming more moral about distresses in Lagos than about distresses in London, and so it was at the end of the eighteenth century. William Wilberforce, the protagonist of the reform, showed no signs of knowing the horrible evils at home. He never seemed to be acutely aware of the sufferings of children in cotton mills, though he did certainly agree that children of twelve ought not to work more than eleven hours a day. He helped to found the Church Missionary Society and also the Society for the Suppression of Vice, and he had no idea of allowing mental liberty to the English poor. Still in fact, however much pity and justice he lacked, he and his friends did fight for the pity and justice they understood. They left too much of horror alone, but they did interfere with horror; pain was a little less prevalent when they had finished. Sincerely or insincerely they did maintain that barbarians must not be made slaves. And they did it with a conviction that this was their Christian duty.

Wilberforce himself had passed through a period of worldli-

[1] "A papal bull (1537) sanctioned the opening of a slave market in Lisbon, where ten to twelve thousand negroes were sold annually for transportation to the West Indies." *Missions*, Louise Creighton.

ness—he went to the theatre, dined with the Prime Minister, and enjoyed society. But he was taken by heart-searchings, "a strong conviction of my guilt,"[1] and by misery. He was recovered (by a coincidence, one would think, of the Holy Ghost) from this state by the Reverend John Newton, once a slave-trader, then an Evangelical clergyman, Rector of St. Mary Woolnoth, and a friend of Cowper's. Whatever effect Newton had had upon Cowper, his effect on Wilberforce was wholly good; he brought him out into "serenity, tranquillity, composure which is not to be destroyed." And it seems probable that it was by Newton he must have been encouraged to his mission, or at least that it was from Newton that he learnt enough to turn him to his mission. He had had predecessors—Roman, Anglican, Dissenting. The American Colonies had protested against the Slave Trade. Lord Mansfield in 1772 had laid it down that the power to own slaves "never was in use here or acknowledged by the law." On 12 May, 1789 Wilberforce in the House of Commons moved twelve resolutions for the suppression of the Slave Trade. The high humanitarian gentlemen of the eighteenth century drew up behind him, when "by divine grace" (as he wrote in his diary) he made his motions. "The House, the nation, and Europe, are under great and serious obligations to the honourable gentleman," said Burke. Pitt, on a later night, closed an all-night debate by quoting Latin verses of liberty and hope under the growing sunlight in the House. "Go on," the dying Wesley wrote to Wilberforce, "in the name of God and the power of his might." But the opposition was strong. The Earl of Westmoreland, like a less reputable pagan of the second century, declared: "Though I should

[1] *Wilberforce*, R. Coupland; from which the other quotations are taken.

see the Presbyterian and the prèlate, the methodist and the field-preacher, the Jacobin and the murderer, unite in support of it [the motion against the Trade], yet in this House I will raise my voice against it." Indeed he foresaw something not far from the truth; a movement not unlike the union of the prelate, the Methodist, and the Jacobin was to distinguish the next century. On 25 March (the Feast of the Annunciation) in 1807 the Abolitionist Bill was passed: "all manner of dealing and trading" in slaves was "utterly abolished, prohibited, and declared to be unlawful." The result was referred by Wilberforce to the "goodness and glory" of Almighty God. He pressed on to abolish it universally. He urged on Castlereagh; he was received by the Tsar Alexander. At last he succeeded; Europe forbade the Trade. He succeeded further; he destroyed the institution. On 31 July, 1834 eight hundred thousand slaves were, by the process of British law, declared free.

Meanwhile in France the mass itself had moved; the Revolution had come, and all Europe was altered. On 17 June 1789, a month after Wilberforce had moved his resolutions, the Commons of France, the third House of the States-General, joined by a few of the clergy, declared themselves the National Assembly of France and swore not to separate without giving the nation a Constitution. The history of the Revolution is no part of the present business. What is remarkable is that, just as it was Christendom which had led the attack on the Slave Trade and defeated it, at a time when it was supposed that Christendom was all but dead, so in France, at a time of the same hypothesis, it was found that Christendom was already reviving. The Revolution in 1790 decreed the Civil Constitution of the Clergy; it was denounced by the Roman See. The prim genius of Robespierre devoted the militant

crowds of Paris and the provinces to the Goddess of Reason, and the sky-blue coat he wore on the occasion flashes before us like the last gleam of a Deistic and rational heaven. The massacres of the priests showed the darker colour of Christian martyrdom.

In the last fifty years of the eighteenth century the Church had faded; in the first fifty years of the nineteenth it returned everywhere with astonishing vitality; and it returned not as morals or as humanitarianism, but as doctrine. Doctrine might or might not lead to humanitarianism, to social revolution, and it more and more tended to do so; but within the Church those things came from strengthening and not from weakening doctrine. The power of dogma returned and, on the whole, returned without individual leaders. Such leaders there were, but if they were lost the movement did not cease. There were no Calvins or Dominics or Augustines. The man who was most like those great ones was a Dane, a contemporary of Hans Andersen, but though Hans Andersen achieved world-wide repute at once, Sören Kierkegaard had to wait for his through some seventy years. It has taken Christendom that long to catch him up; it took it fifty to catch up St. Thomas, and it has not caught up Dante yet. He co-ordinated experiences in a new manner; say, using the old word, that he caused alien and opposite experiences to co-inhere. He was the type of the new state of things in which Christendom had to exist, and of the new mind with which Christendom knew them. He lived under a sense of judgment, of contrition, of asceticism; but also (and equally) of revolt, of refusal, of unbelief. Almost always before his days one of these two things had triumphed over the other; or if not, if there had been others like him, then their words had been so lightly read that it was supposed