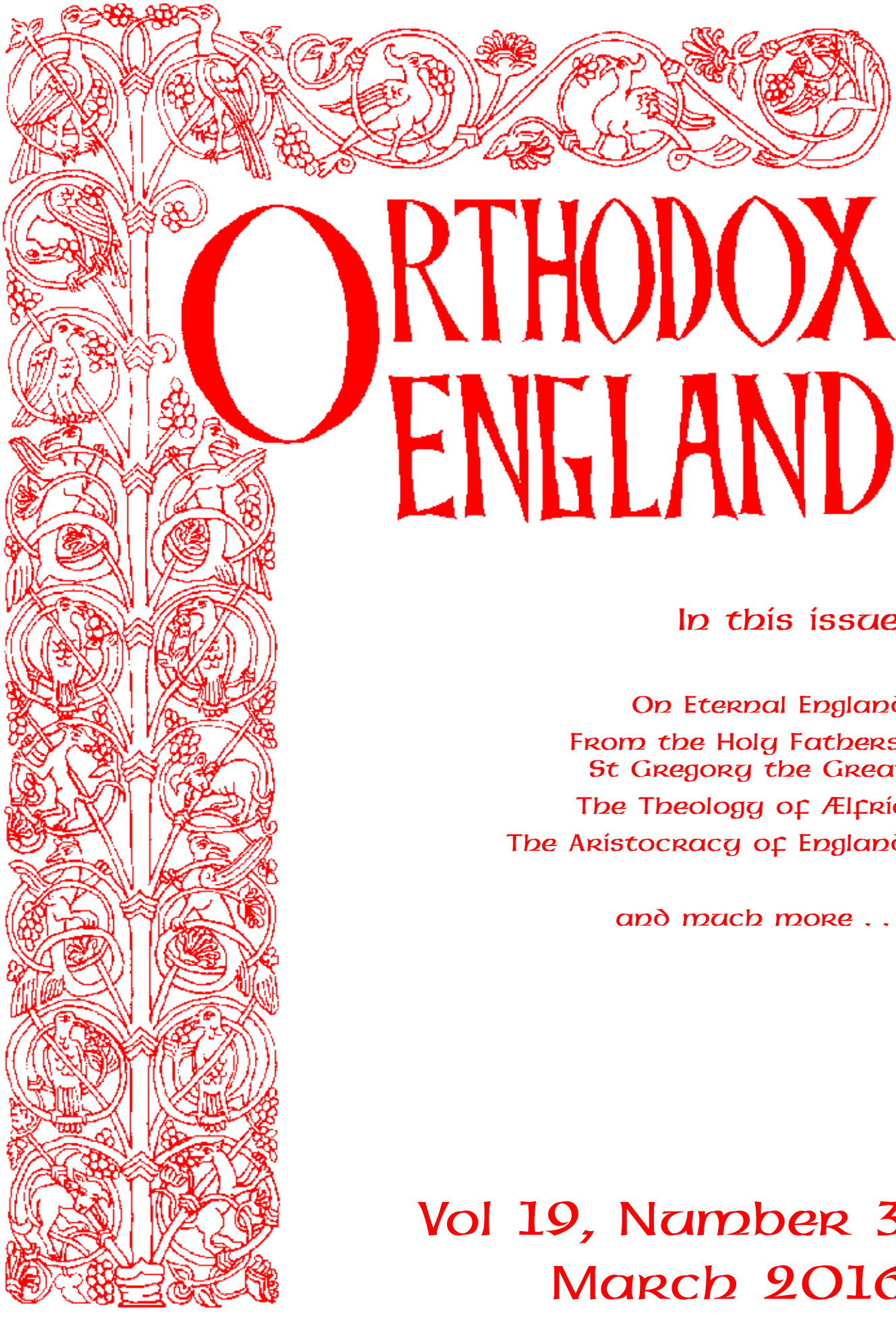

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Editorial:
ON ETERNAL ENGLAND

THROUGH the dark night of Old Britain (the compromised Protestant-Catholic past) and of New Britain (the Brave New Post-Protestant World), we believe that the values of Old England are still here and they shine through the murk. What are these values?

1. Gentle England, typified by words like:

Gentlemen, fairness, fair play, gentle, kind, sorry, queue

Old Britain, typified by words like: cad, rotter, bounder, clever (as in 'too clever by half')

New Britain, typified by words like: yobs, hooligans, louts, hoodies, whatever, can't be bovvered

2. Modest England, typified by words like:

Understatement, moderation, quite, fairly, rather

Old Britain, typified by words like: hypocrisy, lying

New Britain, typified by words like: economical with the truth, over the top

3. Calm England, typified by words like:

Keep calm, make no fuss, self-control, restrained, level-headed, sound

Old Britain, typified by words like: anger, in your face

New Britain, typified by words like: brit, brash, dosh, flash, bling, me-generation, binge the result of consumerism), rage (road rage, air rage, phone rage etc)

4. Cosy England, typified by words like:

yeoman, smallholder, rustic, home sweet home, homely, cottage, chintz, inglenook, ale, toast, crumpet, scone, tea, tea cosy, jam, doily, warmth, brass

Old Britain, typified by words like: the Establishment (from the 18th century in its imperialistic sense), urban, utilitarian, mediocre, philistine, the great unwashed, posh, nice

New Britain, typified by words like: nanny State suburban, boredom, grotty, lager (and lager louts), toffs, chavs, oiks

5. Merry England, typified by words like:

Merry England (a phrase first recorded in 1436), England's green and pleasant land, humour, eccentric, whimsical, (Kenneth Grahame and A.A. Milne), fey

Old Britain, typified by words like: killjoy, puritanical, rigid, stodgy, frump, irony, sarcasm

New Britain, typified by words like: bitterness, cynicism.

From the Holy Fathers:
PRAYER ATTRIBUTED TO ST GREGORY THE GREAT, FOUND IN THE TENTH-CENTURY OLD ENGLISH BOOK OF NUNNAMINSTER

ALMIGHTY God, Lord and Ruler of All, Trinity, Father in the Son, Son in the Father, with the Holy Spirit, forever in all things, Who art before all things, Lord blessed by all for ever: I commend my soul into Thy mighty hands, that Thou mayest watch over it by night and by day, at every moment and every hour, Lord of the Angels, have mercy upon me. Guide me, O King of the archangels, protect me through the prayers of the patriarchs, through the worthy lives of the prophets, through the supplications of the apostles, through the victories of the martyrs, through the faith of the confessors, who have pleased Thee since the foundation of the world. Turn me, O Lord, from the desire for gluttony and grant me the virtue of fasting. Drive far from me the spirit of fornication and grant me the desire for chastity. Take away from me greed and make me willingly poor. Restrain my anger and kindle within me great sweetness and love of God and of my neighbours.

Cut me off, O Lord, from the sadness of the world; increase in me the joy of the Spirit. Cast out from my mind, O Lord, the spirit of boasting and grant me the spirit of regret for wrongdoing. Lessen my pride and imbue me with true humility. I am unworthy and unhappy. I was only freed from this sinful human body by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. I am a sinner and guilty of innumerable sins and am not worthy to be called Thy servant. Awaken in me the tears of repentance and soften my hard and stony heart. And light in me the fire of fear of Thee because I am mortal ashes. Free my soul from all besetting enemies and keep me in Thy will and teach me to do Thy commandments. because Thou art my God. To Thee be all honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

THE DOGMATIC THEOLOGY OF ABBOT ÆLFRIC OF EYNSHAM (Part 2)

Repentance: Confession, Fasting, Almsgiving, Mercy and Love

IN the matter of repentance Fr Ælfric advises that a sympathetic spirit is necessary for a priest in confession, for a harsh and judgemental attitude is detrimental to the penitent's development:

> 'You are to provide counsel so that the person himself may be set right and others who hear the counsel may be guided. Anyone who is a hater of people cannot correct well, for the holy men who were teachers in former days are now praised for their gentleness'.

He recognises that love is necessary for the proper guidance of penitents. The priest is not only the instrument of God's justice, but also, and much more so, the instrument of God's love. His interest in repentance is deep and far-reaching. He concentrates on the continuity of repentance, its cyclical pattern corresponding to the inability of fallen humanity to avoid sin. Repentance is a way of life, a constant striving towards God.

God has no need of good deeds, but sees in them the signs of inward conversion: 'He seeks a good will in our deeds, not anything necessary to Him'. This recognition of the importance of good will, rather than the actions themselves, stresses the spiritual importance of these actions, and also draws attention to the assurance that in matters of will, the Orthodox Christian can rely on God to provide grace sufficient for his needs. So the movements of repentance are, in fact, signs of the acquisition of grace.

Repentance effects a healing of the sick soul which is essential for progress in the Christian. Abbot Ælfric associates repentance with other sacraments like baptism and the eucharist:

> 'God has established three supreme things as human purification. The first is baptism, the second is the eucharist, the third is repentance with the ending of evil deeds and a turning to good works. Baptism washes us clean of all sins, the eucharist sanctifies us, true repentance heals our misdeeds'.

The importance of repentance comes from its inseparable association with baptism, which is sufficient for all previous sins but cannot cleanse future sins. The eucharist provides spiritual food and repentance provides healing after sin. Even really serious sins can be dealt with by repentance. It is never necessary to resort to a second baptism:

> 'Even if someone denies Christ after his baptism or commits deadly sins, he does not need to be baptized again, but he must weep for his sins and repent with true repentance, according to the teachings of wise instructors'.

The term 'repentance' describes the necessary sorrow for sins which must precede healing.

> 'Repentance, together with abstaining from evil, almsgiving, holy prayers, faith, hope in God, and the true love of God and men, will heal and cure our sins if we use these remedies diligently'.

Above all, repentance is a continuing process of conversion. The new life is characterised by love and the actions which put this love into practice are particularly effective in providing the cleansing and renewal which are recurrently necessary.

True repentance is more important than any outward demonstration of piety, such as fasting. Abbot Ælfric does not deny the value of such things, but requires that they should be seen in the proper perspective. The Lenten fast, for example is part of a pattern of repentance in confession,

fasting, vigils, prayers and almsgiving which concentrate the Christian mind on his need of forgiveness and prepare him to celebrate Easter. Christians who are aware of the Lord's presence in the poor serve Him when they minister to the poor: almsgiving and works of mercy, which demonstrate devotion to Christ and obedience to his commands, are part of the life of repentance. However, God requires above all a spiritual fast:

> 'There is no fast so good nor so pleasing to God as that fast when a person shuns foulness, refrains from sins, forsakes strife and pleases God with good worship'.

Genuinely sorrowing for sin and afflicted by its pain, the penitent turns to God for forgiveness like the sinner in the temple. The righteous man praises his own righteousness, but the sinner prays from a true understanding of his own deep unworthiness, conscious of his great need of salvation: 'Almighty God, have mercy on me, a sinner'. Here is prayer in these words, and here is confession of sins.

In the honest appraisal of sin the penitent offers the confession pleasing to God, not the empty vanity of a worldly self-defence. Such a Christian is open to the correction and forgiveness of God. Confession with the priest enables the Christian to receive this correction. Sin is a sickness which needs the attention of a spiritual doctor. This is abbot Ælfric's interpretation of the story of the healed leper whom Christ sent to the temple:

> 'In the same way, anyone who is leprous within with deadly sins must go to God's priest, reveal his secrets to the spiritual physician and penitently heal his soul's wounds according to his advice and assistance'.

The Abbot is confident of the mercy of God, which, working through repentance, can achieve the necessary transfiguration. No sin is so serious that repentance cannot restore baptismal purity. God promises that repentance causes sin to be forgotten. This covers all sin, with the single exception of the sin against the Holy Spirit, which can never be forgiven. Because the Holy Spirit is the spirit of forgiveness He can forgive all who repent, but the unrepentant, who deny and reject the gift of this grace, sin against the Holy Spirit:

> 'The Holy Spirit has mercy on the penitent, but He never has mercy on those who despise His grace'.

The genuine penitent is guaranteed the Holy Spirit's mercy and never needs to be anxious about committing the unforgivable sin: simply to be penitent cancels the possibility. The outward signs of repentance indicate an inward contrition and the forgiveness conveyed by the priest is the sign that God has freed the Christian from the binding power of sin to stimulate a return to life. The priest 'unbinds' those who are guided and influenced by the grace of God. The effect is as miraculous as the raising of Lazarus. The stimulation by the Holy Spirit is nothing less than the gift of life to a corpse:

> 'Every sinful man who conceals his sin lies dead in the tomb. But if he confesses his sins through compunction, then he comes forth from the tomb just as Lazarus did when Christ commanded him to arise; then the preacher must unbind him from eternal punishment, just as the apostles physically unbound Lazarus'.

The disciples carry out the command of Christ and unbound Lazarus. The priest who has heard the penitent's confession is similarly charged by Christ to unbind, that is, absolve him. The Church possesses the power of the keys of the Kingdom.

> 'The power which Christ gave him, that no-one comes into God's kingdom unless holy Peter opens the entrance to him'.

Just as Lazarus, raised to life, remained captive in his tomb by the shrouds and stones and needed the apostles' assistance before his life could begin again, so Christ uses his priests of the Church in this freeing capacity. So the Church absolves those whom God has forgiven.

As for almsgiving (what may be called social justice), Abbot Ælfric says that the rich man must share the burden of his wealth with the poor man; then he will lessen the burden of his own sins and help the poor man. He suggests that there is a point when riches become sins; this is called attachment. When the rich cling to what is rightfully another's, they sin; their attachment to riches means that sin is a way of life for them. They are mistaken if they think that their almsgiving benefits only the poor. The poor are more closely associated with Christ because of their material dispossession and so they are made the channels of spiritual blessing: in serving the poor, the rich serve Christ.

To illustrate this service, Abbot Ælfric recounts a story from St Gregory the Great in which a leper, carried in pity on the back of a monk to the monastery, is revealed to be Christ. The glory of

human nature in Christ, set aside for the piteously degraded form of the leper, should inspire all Christians to pity: the Abbot finds in his example of compassion and love the pattern of Christian response to the poor. Remembering that Christ is still on earth among the poor, Christians are left in no doubt of the call to service implied by allegiance to Christ. At the moment of judgement they will discover that this service sums up all that may be attributed to them as virtue and its omission will be attributed to them as sin.

> 'Let men bear and consider as they should how great a merit it is to have fed Christ when He hungers, and how great a crime it is to have despised Christ when He hungers'.

For Abbot Ælfric those who were generous in almsgiving are to be welcomed into the kingdom. Those who had compassion on the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick and the prisoner will be surprised to hear that in serving these people they have served Christ. But this is indeed the case:

> 'This is truly to be understood thus: as often as you gave alms to one little poor man among Christian people, you did that for Christ, because Christ Himself is the head of Christian people, and again, Christians are the limbs of Christ'.

Others will be condemned because their inability to show mercy will be reckoned as sin:

> 'Then the judge will say to the wretched guilty ones: 'Truly I say to you, you denied it to me as often as you denied it to one of these little ones''.

Abbot Ælfric sees several stages in the penitent's journey to reconciliation. Compunction comes first, for the sinner needs to be forced by compunction to confess. Next confession brings the Church's power as well as guidance to bear on the penitent. A penance, the medicine for healing, is undergone for the cleansing and restoration of the soul. The participation of the community is once again asserted as the penitent is reconciled to the Church: this is the spiritual interpretation of the raising of the young man of Nain, whom Christ restored to his mother. Here Abbot Ælfric looks at each detail in turn:

> 'The one restored to life "sits up" when the sinful person is quickened by divine compunction. He speaks when he busies his mouth with the praises of God and seeks God's mercy with true confession. He is 'restored to his mother' when he is associated with the communion of Holy Church through the authority of the priest'.

The penitent is restored to the state of grace and purity given by baptism, and also to full participating membership of the community. As long as the penitent is separated from the community he is regarded as being outside the Church, Fr Ælfric has no desire to frighten people away from repentance: rather he seeks to show that it must be understood positively, as a constructive development in response to the guidance of the Church. For him, repentance is much more than simply an occasional response to sin: it is a way of life. In advocating this way of life he is not suggesting that people should necessarily spend their days fasting, reciting psalms, or depriving themselves of physical comfort. All these have their value, but only if used in the correct way.

Above all Abbot Ælfric prefers almsgiving: the daily exercise of mercy which is both a Christlike activity and an offering to Christ Himself in the person of the poor. Almsgiving for him is the embodiment of a positive life of repentance. If Christians show generosity in giving to the poor, that same merciful benevolence will be shown to them by God Himself:

> 'Show mercy to the poor with your possessions; Almighty God, Who has set you as almsgiver will not abandon you.

The rich do well to remember that before God all are alike in importance. In truth, 'We are all God's poor'. When the poor ask for alms:

> 'Who are they that ask of us? Poor, weak, mortal men. Of whom do they ask? Of poor, weak, mortal men. Except in the possessions, these who ask and those whom they ask are equal.

Riches hinder our progress. Abbot Ælfric observes that even on a practical level the rich are overburdened. They are literally weighed down with their cumbersome treasures. However, almsgiving can become a spiritual act if it is understood as mercy. The Gospel account of the Last Judgement (Matthew 25, 31–46) reveals the separation of the sheep from the goats, the merciful from the unmerciful, to be the moment when the reality of eternal life or eternal death will be blindingly clear. At that moment, nothing more can be done: the Judge's decision can never be changed.

Showing mercy is then spiritual almsgiving. Both giving and forgiving are equally necessary in the Christian life. Abbot Ælfric associates them with each other by placing together two sayings of Christ which speak of the blessings they bring:

> 'He said, 'Forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and to you will be given'.

These two kinds of alms are to be practised by us with great diligence. Giving material help will earn reward from God and the merciful forgiveness of others allows on the last day the possibility of mercy, on which all Christians utterly depend. The great sin that will be counted on the day of judgement will be the omission of almsgiving:

> 'Mercy alone will protect us at the Great Judgement, if we show it to other people in this present life; certainly he who now judges others without mercy will receive judgement without mercy'.

Mercy is the active expression of love – the love of God directed towards others in acknowledgement of a common dependence on the merciful love of God. The parable of the wedding banquet (Matthew 22, 2–14), as well as speaking about the individual's place in the Church, also speaks of what he must bring: it extols the wedding garment, without which no guest can be welcome at the wedding. Abbot Ælfric's understanding of the parable, interpreting the garment as love, places great weight upon love as the entry requirement for heaven, suggesting that even baptism might be negated by the absence of love:

> 'God's Son, who came to men out of love, indicated in the Gospel that the wedding garment signified true love. Each of those who inclines to God with faith and baptism comes to the wedding, but he does not come with a wedding garment if he does not possess true love'.

The guest wearing the wedding garment may be assured of a welcome at the banquet.

Heresy and Idolatry: The Sign of the Cross

Abbot Ælfric condemns heresy and error as well as the heretics of the past (such as Arius) and mistaken or credulous people of the present (such as those who read too much into stories about Mary the Mother of God) in the same terms. His term for heresy may describe anyone whose beliefs and practices are eccentric. There is no doubt that he is sufficiently worried by eccentricity to work hard to correct it.

He directs his energies against the non-standard, the fanciful, the excessive, the superstitious, and the truly erroneous, but he is confident that the Orthodox teaching on God is no less wonderful than the fanciful would have it and he is securely upheld by the authority of the Church. That authority is enhanced, moreover, by setting truth against the heresies and errors of the past, which, like the old paganism, may serve to define more clearly the worship of the true God.

Abbot Ælfric's campaign is against the idolatry or 'devil-worship' implied by sin. For him this is essentially insulting to God, a negative rejection of the true God rather than a positive choice for some other Divine power. The Apostle Paul includes idolatry in a list of the works of the flesh, among which are to be found adultery, witchcraft, heresy and drunkenness (Galatians 5, 19–21), and he explains that idolatry, the rejection of Christianity, dishonours the Creator. But Abbot Ælfric suggests that there is a still more insidious idolatry which equally, by implication, dishonours the Creator:

> 'A second pagan practice is injurious to the soul: when man despises his Creator's commands and practises the shameful sins which the evil spirit teaches him'.

He contrasts these 'shameful sins' with the virtues of him who truly seeks to please God, the fruits of the Spirit dwelling within him.

If real idolatry is a problem of the past and the future, the present is not without its superstitions. He advises that all superstitious practices, innocuous as they seem, are in reality deeply harmful and should be avoided. If Christians seek protection, they may pray or cross themselves. Consulting witches for prophecy or advice may produce apparent success, for they draw on the devil's wide knowledge of the world. But their advice always ends in disaster. As Abbot Ælfric proceeds, looking at practices which are identifiably non-Christian, in each case he provides an alternative Christian habit to be cultivated. The sign of the cross is a specially potent protection: He calls it 'our victory-sign against the devil'.

His unexpectedly detailed discussion of superstitious practices serves as a reminder that these aberrations were the vestiges of paganism in his time, as they still are today. The superstition he meets is mostly harmless, but even in subconscious repetition these habits always bring the danger of

becoming estranged from God. In this lies the reality of idolatry.

The Last Things

Abbot Ælfric was concerned to forestall anxiety about the tribulation to be faced at the end of the world, and he declares that:

> 'Everyone will by God's help be able to face the temptation which is to come more easily, if he is strengthened by book-learning, for those who continue in faith until the end will be saved'.

Two things here are of paramount importance. The first is that nothing anyone can do will be of any help to the soul without the grace of the Holy Spirit, which the Abbot sees as essential to every aspect of Orthodox life. But secondly, the faithful may also help themselves, with grace, by learning about their Faith so that they are equipped against temptation. Books contain a body of knowledge against the terror to come.

The greatest crisis will be that faced by all those who are still alive at the end of time, when tribulation and persecution will confound and weaken those without the strength to persevere. Then it will be essential to distinguish between the wicked inventions of Antichrist and the truth of Christ. This will be easier for those who are 'strengthened by books'. Supported by the knowledge of the true faith the faithful will be able to withstand the rigours of the last days. Our survival depends on understanding: diligent teaching to all is the way to ensure that they have the benefit of that understanding.

In the last times there will be both astronomical abnormalities and spiritual aberrations. Terrible apparitions will be accompanied by the most fearsome persecution the world has ever known, as the Gospels say:

> 'Then there will certainly be such tribulations as were never before, or will be again. Unless God shortens the sorrowful days, all mankind will surely perish together. But for the sake of his chosen, He may shorten the days'.

The evils of the last days will be a presage of the eternal evils to be suffered by the reprobate. It is possible to look at the last tribulations in another way, of course, for although those days will be fearful, they also hold the promise of great joy for those who keep the faith. Christ sought to comfort His chosen, reminding them that the signs are the assurance of salvation:

> 'Look up, and lift up your heads, because your redemption is at hand' (Luke 21, 28).
>
> 'We lift up our heads when we raise our mind to the joys of the heavenly homeland. Those who love God are exhorted that they should rejoice at the end of the world, for when he whom they did not love departs, they will certainly come upon Him Whom they loved'.

The world's destruction is a mournful prospect only to those who love the world and have much to lose thereby, but for those whose investment is in the new heaven and earth which will follow it, the disaster can only bring about long-awaited rebirth. Orthodox Christians, for whom this world is an affliction and a torment, fix their hope on the joys of the heavenly homeland.

Antichrist

Antichrist's role is to deceive those who are already dead in the first death, not those who will be raised in the second resurrection. As he observes, Antichrist's persecution is a sign that God already knows the outcome of the lives of those who are dead in the first death: their attack by Antichrist is the beginning of judgement upon them. Antichrist's name, Abbot Ælfric says, may be interpreted as 'perverse Christ'. Opposing Christ in all respects, he is Christ's mirror image. He bears a nature uniting man and a devilish spirit:

> 'Then Antichrist will come, who is 'human man and true devil', just as our Saviour is truly man and God in one nature'.

Here Fr Ælfric implies that the devilish nature of Antichrist is not due to an act of incarnation – God alone can do this – but rather to an indwelling of the devil's spirit. This evil inspiration is an act of possession:

> 'Then will come Antichrist, who is human man and true devil; he will be begotten by the fornication of a man and a woman. And he will be filled with the spirit of the devil'.

Although Abbot Ælfric wishes to provide correct information, he is less interested in the precise character of Antichrist than in the terrifying effects of the nature which he bears. Antichrist will have magical powers to enable him to work miracles imitating those of Christ; as the Gospel says, such miracles will seem dangerously convincing even to

the elect. They will increase the tribulations already being suffered by the people:

> 'And then the visible devil will perform countless miracles, will say that he himself is God and will force mankind into his error'.

The miracles of Antichrist will make his persecution worse than any previously undergone by the Church. The martyrs suffered intensely under the early opponents of Christianity, but they were granted a miracle-working power which was both an encouragement to the suffering and an effective witness to the truth. In the last days, however, such power will be the privilege of the devil, and the faithful will have nothing to reassure them in the face of his triumph.

The falsehood of Antichrist's miracles will be recognised by all who recall his past deceptions. They will know that the devil can only simulate miracles: as a spirit divorced from the life of heaven, he has none of its power, although he can make a good display out of illusion. He may even be permitted to heal where he has injured, but this is the limit of his power.

However, the miracle-working Antichrist makes more subtle assaults on Christians in the insinuation of his teaching into the Church. His character and purpose constitute true paganism: the heathen ways of the past have never been as offensive as the godlessness of Antichrist. With sorrow Abbot Ælfric records the prophecy that this cancer will reach the heart: the false Christ will rehearse his lies at the centre of Christian worship, 'such that he will sit in God's temple, and say that he is God'.

Christ warned that others would come claiming to be him, working miracles in an attempt to deceive even the chosen. Abbot Ælfric says that anyone who comes before the Day of Judgement is therefore not Christ, however convincingly the imposter may support his claim with striking miracles and appropriate words. Two things will guide and sustain the Christian in those days: the first is the conviction that when Christ comes to judge the earth there will be no shadow of doubt that this is truly Christ:

> 'Our Saviour Christ will not come to mankind, openly revealed in this world, before the Great Day when He will judge mankind'.

Christ will reveal Himself when He comes: no-one will need to point Him out or justify His claim to the title 'Son of Man': the truth will be plain. The second principle to follow is that the deeds of Antichrist will be clearly contrary to the faith taught by Christ and transmitted by the Apostles through the Tradition. Never underestimating the difficulty that Christians will experience, Abbot Ælfric proclaims that those who keep this faith will be able to see clearly through the dissembling of Antichrist and be strengthened to resist his snares.

The Abbot recognises that the pressure to conform will be strong. The Gospel prophecy means that all Christians must take seriously the threat to their salvation that the coming of Antichrist will represent. He underlines the importance of keeping the faith, even to death. The Abbot's attention is concentrated on the fear which will precede the Day of Judgement. However, even here, there is the love of Divine Providence:

> 'God also permits that His chosen servants will be cleansed from all sins through those immeasurably great persecutions, just as gold is tried in the fire'.

There are many occasions in his homilies when Abbot Ælfric says that earthly tribulations have a purifying effect which will release the sufferer from any further punishment after death. The suffering of poverty is especially noted. The poor may expect to be released from punishment because they have already suffered in this life; no further purifying of their souls is necessary. The story of Dives and Lazarus is the basis for this teaching and he tells it with little elaboration: he says the warning is clear, no exposition is necessary. The short earthly prosperity of the one is contrasted with the eternal blessing given to the other:

> 'The rich man received his happiness as a reward, for brief enjoyment, and the poor man's poverty cleansed his small sins. Poverty oppressed and purified the one, his abundance enriched and deceived the other'.

For those who have not suffered in poverty, sickness or persecution for the sake of righteousness, final purification is supplied by the suffering which will precede the Last Judgement. The persecution inflicted by Antichrist on the faithful will be brought to a sudden end by the coming of Christ in glory. Marshalling all the forces of heaven and the natural world, Christ will appear in triumph, signalling the end of Antichrist's reign of terror:

The Second Coming

> 'Immediately after the persecution Antichrist will be killed through the power of Christ at His coming, hosts of angels will be aroused and will come with the Saviour from the heavenly glory, clearly revealed, as this Gospel tells us'.

These lines are a commentary on Matthew 24, 29–30, but they make reference to II Thessalonians 2, 8, where the destruction of 'that wicked one' by the breath of the Lord's mouth is predicted. Abbot Ælfric combines the prophecy of astronomical calamity with the description of the heavenly host descending. The sun and moon darken 'before the immeasurably great light of the mighty Lord'. As Christ is the illumination of understanding, His coming in glory with angels bearing the sign of His human suffering, the Cross, reveals to those who have denied Him the darkness of their sin.

Although He comes in the glory of His Divinity, He comes also in human form, still bearing on His body the marks of torture, by which He may be recognised. This manifestation of suffering combined with glory, the union of human knowledge with Divine energy, sheds a penetrating light over all sins. As with the Orthodox understanding of hell, Abbot Ælfric explains that the light is perceived in different ways by the good and by the wicked:

> 'And He will be very terrible in the likeness of fire in the great judgement, when He will shine for the righteous and burn for the unrighteous'.

Again fire is at the centre of this Judgement, striking terror into the hearts of all those who recognise the sinfulness of their lives. All are tested by the fire, although not all will suffer in it. Indeed, a new heaven and earth are to rise like a phoenix from the ashes of the old. The purifying fire tests the 'buildings' of the faithful, according to the Apostle Paul's image of the buildings made of materials ranging from precious gold to the meanest straw or chaff.

Whatever the quality of the building, each is founded on Christ and because of that foundation it will endure. Nevertheless the superstructure is found to be more or less vulnerable depending on the building material involved. The gold, silver and precious stones are the materials used by God's best disciples, who have nothing to fear. Their buildings are constructed from faith, knowledge, sound teaching and holy virtue:

> 'The fire on Judgement Day will not be able to destroy the building of the one in God's Church who builds such a structure, for the fire will not injure the good, but it will torture the unrighteous.
>
> This meaning is derived from the physical properties of these materials. Far from being harmed by the application of fire, the precious metals and stones are made more beautiful, passing through the flame without difficulty. So it will be with the righteous who will suffer no torment, but will instead pass through the fire 'as though they were walking in sunlight'.

The poor builder who is not rich enough to use such costly metals and stones is one whose sins prevent faith and virtue from developing to this precious degree. Superstructures of wood and straw perish in fire. These are light sins which could act as kindling for the building's complete destruction: it is saved only by the quality of the foundation. The sins are not so serious that they can destroy the soul grounded in Christ, but they figure prominently in the lives of ordinary men and women:

> 'Sins like these cannot kill our souls, but they can defile them and make them hateful to God, and if we do not make amends for them of our own accord in this present life we must necessarily suffer for them'.

However, all those built on the foundation of Christ will be assured of survival, however drastically the superstructure is reduced. Abbot Ælfric's use of the metaphor broadens the meaning but the basic idea remains. The builder in precious materials, who loves the work of Christ above all things, is for him one who has faith, knowledge, sound teaching and holy virtue. The builder in mean materials, who is exposed to the temptations of the flesh and enjoys fleshly pleasures, is subject to sins which defile the soul and spoil its relationship with God.

The Resurrection

In the Resurrection all will rise from the dead. Abbot Ælfric takes time to explain the Resurrection to be expected, his interest is in the resurrected bodies of those who will live. The ideal stature is that of Christ: all bodies will be resurrected with the age and stature of Christ at the time of His Crucifixion, whether they died in old age or in childhood. This is not to say that individual

characteristics will be distorted or lost, merely that all will realise their potential according to the model of Christ. The Creator's power to raise the bodies of the dead, however they died, is undisputed:

> 'Nevertheless, the Almighty God is able to raise them again, for He created this whole world out of nothing'.

Resurrection marks a complete break with the past. All have gone through death, however momentarily, and all have passed through fire, some suffering in it, others experiencing a warm and comforting light. From the moment of Resurrection there can be no further cleansing. The risen bodies of the dead are now immutably classified.

Conclusion

For Abbot Ælfric Orthodox life is indistinguishable from repentance. His emphasis on living a life which is pleasing to God is a theme to which he has constant recourse in his homilies. No-one, however, is expected to live such a life without the assistance of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, he clearly asserts the need for the grace of the Holy Spirit for every good work, manifested in almsgiving and forgiveness, in a pragmatic and helpful way. Nothing that he asks is impossible, because sufficient grace has already been provided by God. All that we have to do, whether consciously or unconsciously, is to acquire the Holy Spirit for ourselves, co-operating with it by loving all whom the Church identifies as brothers and sisters.

It is interesting that in his theology of grace Abbot Ælfric is quite independent of the excesses of Blessed Augustine. He makes his teaching his own. Compassion is inherent in Abbot Ælfric's teaching on the grace of the Holy Spirit. He allows a gentler view of grace and freewill to come forward. His emphasis on mercy in the loving mind of God means that he can permit all of Blessed Augustine's emphasis on justice to stand, while at the same time he insists that mercy is unquantifiable, unfathomable, mysterious, beyond prying, interfering, imposing, rationalistic, human philosophy. The angel who speaks for the disputed soul, standing his ground against the devil, is right:

> 'Do not make your accusations too presumptuously, for you do not know God's secret judgements ... God's mercy is always upon the man while repentance may still be looked for ... You do not know the great depth of God's mysteries: perhaps repentance will yet be granted to him'.

In this response to a call for justice, Abbot Ælfric places the emphasis on mercy: this is the basis of every relationship with God until mercy is rejected. The only obstacles to salvation are the ones erected by mankind. God places no such difficulties in the way.

In his teaching on the grace of the Holy Spirit Abbot Ælfric is close to Blessed Augustine, but he seeks to broaden the criteria of salvation according to Blessed Augustine's own perception of the love of God, but in a way that the latter is not completely able to see. Ready though he may be to ascribe to God the love which is beyond human comprehension, Blessed Augustine was apparently not ready to allow that this love, rather than Divine justice, might be understood to be the prime mover in salvation.

Blessed Augustine's assessment of 'predestination' was characterised by a human logic pursued to its end, but that pursuit is precisely confined by the limits of human understanding. And that was precisely the error. Abbot Ælfric, on the other hand, with his simple but strong recognition that foreknowledge is totally different from predestination, is free to choose a different emphasis, which reveals that love is a stronger force than judgement. His understanding of 'predestination' thus allows that God's judgements are those in which mercy is active.

Blessed Augustine was wrong to confine his interpretation of Divine Judgement to the little room of the human mind bounded by sinful human perceptions of judgement. In this scheme of things, the merciful want God to relax the rules (as those rules were codified by Blessed Augustine). Hence the reaction of Blessed Augustine and his fall into the opposite extreme on this issue. Indeed, Abbot Ælfric rejects this idea: his merciful God is not He Who allows people to escape without doing their duty or affords entrance into heaven to those who have not been worthy of it, but it is He Who at the Last Judgement is focused on mercy through almsgiving.

Abbot Ælfric's is then the more generous view of God's desire for salvation. His teaching on God includes the idea that God responds in love to the disaster of sin. This meditating God, therefore, is not He Who can be taken by surprise or forced to change His plans, but a God who freely places the constraints of love upon His actions, for Love is His

nature. So love may also be expected to define God's Judgement. This interpretation is most clear in the Abbot's teaching on the Last Judgement and the separation of the saved from the lost.

Abbot Ælfric is ready to ascribe to God the willingness to save all men and makes the qualification for mercy not 'predestination', as Blessed Augustine might have suggested was the case. Abbot Ælfric's preferred emphasis is on almsgiving and he gives the impression that it is within everyone's God-given capacity to offer this service to God, Whom he encounters in the person of the poor. Those who fail to offer even the smallest kindness to Christ in this guise have only themselves to blame and their condemnation is just and righteous, as the salvation of the redeemed is merciful.

Such an understanding of the nature of the Holy Spirit and grace emphasises that each Christian wins mercy for exercising mercy. Thus, Christians are busy about their own salvation as they do good for others. In encouraging people to such business Abbot Ælfric is never asking them to struggle by themselves, but always to recognise the involvement of grace at every stage. He also suggests, however, that because grace is necessarily involved, then even Christians who do not understand the grace of the Holy Spirit and are not conscious of acquiring it for themselves are actually doing so all the time they are busy with good works. Whether or not they notice the Spirit's gracious bestowal of gifts is irrelevant: they are nevertheless receiving those gifts by actively making use of them.

Wearing the garment of love, therefore, they are welcomed to God's banquet and recognised as friends, even if they had not realised that they had been invited to the wedding. Wearing the garment of love, the Orthodox Christian is brought by the grace of the Holy Spirit into the presence of God. Abbot Ælfric shows how the garment fits everyone who chooses to wear it: the offering of love is one that all can make, however poor. He says that such a gift is worth incomparably more than earthly treasures: it is 'the good will, which immeasurably exceeds earthly treasures'. The good will which all can bring is shown in love for friends and enemies and in helping any neighbour. Such practical realisations of love are a spiritual offering of the highest order:

> 'What is any offering by comparison with this will, when the soul offers itself to God on the altar of its heart? Of this the Psalmist said: 'Almighty God, Thy promises are within me, which I will repay Thee in praise'.

Abbot Ælfric's use of this verse in illustration of his point makes the sacramental action of almsgiving, that is, giving in love, a gift of the same kind as the spiritual offering of the self which characterises the eucharist. In that sacrament, the sacrifice is the sign of the offering made on the altar of the heart and is purely an offering of what has already been received. In the Abbot's interpretation of the Psalmist's words, the good will's works of love are equated with the promises of God: the will offers back to God the things already possessed according to his promises. At the same time, the verse is also made to equate the good actions of the will with praises: so the gift of good works, however humble or seemingly uninspired, is itself 'a sacrifice of praise' to God.

In this way Fr Ælfric links repentance to the eucharist. Here he speaks in a way which is intelligible to all on a certain level, but which points to the depths of meaning that may be found in the verse. Any listener could hear in the verse a confirmation of what Abbot Ælfric had been saying; others might be taken beyond the use of these words and made to think both about the spiritual reality of the Christian's gift to God and of the grace present in the promises which make that gift possible.

Abbot Ælfric's teaching on grace shapes his whole response to the relationship of God and man. Although he had absorbed what Blessed Augustine taught in other spheres, in reading his teaching on grace, he makes it his own, transfiguring its deficiencies with truths that were lacking. These truths concern love and mercy, that force which is at the heart of the Godhead. Love is shown in those in whom God dwells in almsgiving. This, of all things the most pleasing to God, is drawn from grace, and is in the end rewarded by grace.

Orthodoxy Shines Through Western Myths (21)
WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR

OLDER Western scholarship on Church history is not generally of much use to Orthodox. Most of it is simply anti-Orthodox and therefore anti-authentic Christianity, even openly boasting of its 'Judeo-Christian' and not Christian civilization. The anti-Orthodox prejudices of such scholarship, when it mentions Orthodoxy at all, come simply from the fact that history is 'written by the winners', and even despite the First World War, up until the Second World War most Western scholars thought that the West had won.

It is different today, when the near-millennial crimes of the West are visible to all and nobody any longer listens to the voices of ecclesiastical institutions which moulded the last thousand years of Western history – they are clearly compromised. Interestingly, contemporary secular scholarship, which in its ignorance of Orthodoxy cannot in any way be accused of being pro-Orthodox, is an excellent source for Orthodox to understand what went wrong with the West. We can understand how, by renouncing the Orthodox Christian Faith in its anti-Trinitarian and anti-Christic *filioque* heresy, its former Church became a series of -isms, Catholicism, Protestantism, Lutheranism, Calvinism, Anglicanism etc, which have bred modern-day secularism and will eventually lead to the end of the world.

In the following article, the next in a series taken from various works of secular scholarship, we have selected extracts from *William the Conqueror* by David C. Douglas (1964). These extracts seem to illustrate abundantly the post-Orthodox deformations of Western culture, which began with the spread of the new *filioque* culture behind the Papacy. Although ominously threatened for nearly three centuries before, under Charlemagne, these deformations were not definitively implemented until the eleventh century. The date of 1054 is thus seen to be symbolic of the very real spiritual fall, which took place in Western Europe in the eleventh century. In the year 1000, the fall had by no means been certain. In 1054 it was. And it is that fall which has defined the subsequent history of not just Western Europe, but the whole world. But let the learned author speak:

p. 7. The Transformation of Western Europe in the eleventh century was led by the Normans

It is beyond doubt that the latter half of the eleventh century witnessed a turning-point in the history of western Christendom, and beyond doubt Normandy and the Normans played a dominant part in the transformations which then occurred. By the conquest of a great kingdom they effected a political regrouping of north-western Europe with lasting consequences both to France and England. They assisted the papacy to rise to a new political of political dominance, and they became closely associated with the reforming movement in the Church which the papacy came to direct. They contributed also to a radical modification of the relations between eastern and western Europe with results that still survive. The Norman conquest of England may thus in one sense be regarded as but part of a far-flung endeavour, the implications of which were to stretch even into the sphere of culture. The Normans by linking England more straitly to Latin Europe helped what may be called the Romance-speaking peoples to achieve that dominance in western culture which they exercised during the twelfth-century renaissance, so that, for example, the great monastic movements of that age, crusading sentiment and troubador song, the new universities and the learning that was fostered therein, all came from a world that was centred upon France, and which included not only the England which the Normans conquered but the Italy which the Normans helped to transform.

This transference of power and influence was a prime factor in the making of Europe, and the Norman contribution to it, though inspired by many diverse motives, was undoubtedly considerable. But it was not inevitable, and it came from a province which some forty years before the Norman conquest of England showed but few signs of its future achievement. On the day when William the Conqueror was born it could hardly have been foreseen. When he died after a career which was in every way astonishing, its results were already assured.

p. 324–325. The Immediate Normanisation and Feudalisation of the Church and the Patriotism of the English Abbots

The earlier development of the Church in Normandy we have found to have been achieved

under ducal control: the changes which overtook the church in England during his reign as king were royal in direction and Norman in inspiration.

The process was marked in the first instance by a change in the prelacy of England comparable to that which had taken place in the secular aristocracy. Stigand, who had held the sees of Canterbury and Winchester in plurality was, of course, destined for deposition, and his replacement by Lanfranc at Canterbury in 1070 might be regarded as an inevitable political consequence of the Norman conquest. But many of the other English bishops were in hardly better case. Æthelmaer of Elmham was Stigand's brother; Æthelric of Selsey had been closely associated with him; and Leofwine the married bishop of Lichfield was to be condemned by Lanfranc. It is thus hardly surprising that all three were to vacate their sees before 1070, Æthelric and Æthelmær by formal deposition, and Leofwine by resignation. In the north, Aldred of York was a prelate of a very different type, but he died on 11 September 1069, and left the way open for a new appointment, whilst the confusion of the see of Durham also invited drastic action. From the early years of his reign, therefore, William found himself in a position to begin the Normanisation of the episcopacy of England, and this policy he was consistently to pursue. By 1080 Wulfstan of Worcester was the only bishop of English birth left in England, and, of the remaining occupants, all save one were of Norman birth or training.

The same policy was adopted in respect of the English abbeys. In 1066 there were thirty-five independent Benedictine houses in England, and many of the greater abbots were to show themselves hostile to William from the start. Ælfwig of New Minster in Winchester who was Harold's uncle fell on the field of Hastings. Leofric of Peterborough, who was cousin to Edwin and Morcar, also died as a result of wounds received in the battle, and his successor Brand, who was uncle to Hereward the Wake, made immediate overtures to Edgar Atheling on his appointment. Æthelsige of Saint Augustine's, Canterbury, helped to organise the Kentish resistance, and William had good reasons for suspecting the disaffection of Æthelnoth of Glastonbury, of Godric of Winchcombe, of Sihtric of Tavistock, and of Wulfric, Ælfwig's successor at New Minster. It was natural, therefore, that within six years of William's coronation all these men should have been removed, and their places were filled in every case by men from overseas. Such acts were, moreover, part of the Conqueror's general policy. Of the twenty-one abbots who attended the council of London in 1075, only thirteen were English, and only three of these remained in office at the time of the Conqueror's death.

The Normanisation of the prelacy in England was a cardinal feature of the Conqueror's rule, and it is not difficult to assess the motives which inspired it. The prelates of England were, as of right, among the closest counsellors of the king. The bishops were great servants of state by reason of their office, and though the monasteries varied in importance many of them were extremely rich, and together they possessed perhaps a sixth of the landed wealth of England. Moreover, the prelates themselves were soon to become among the most important of the king's tenants-in-chief responsible for a large section of the feudal array. William, as has been seen, had already before 1066 subjected many, but not all, of the Norman monasteries to knight-service, and now in, or shortly after, 1070 he imposed the same tenure on the bishoprics and on most of the abbeys of England, adopting the same methods as he had employed in the case of his lay magnates. The quotas imposed varied greatly in size. The sees of Canterbury and Winchester and the abbeys of Peterborough and Glastonbury had each, for instance, to provide sixty knights, whilst the bishopric of Chichester was assessed at only two and the wealthy abbey of Ramsey at only four. These assessments were moreover to prove final; generally speaking, they were not subsequently altered.

p. 343. The Normanisation of the Church means it was brought into line with the new ideology from Rome

... William must himself be held very responsible for the ecclesiastical changes which marked his reign. As has been seen, most of those changes took place in Normandy before 1066, whilst in England they occurred after that date when the king's policy was influenced and sometimes modified by Lanfranc. It would be wrong, however, to distinguish between William's ecclesiastical policy as expressed before and after 1066. In this respect, also, it was 'regularly consistent'. William had been brought up in the midst of an ecclesiastical revival in his duchy which he had some share in promoting. He carried its principles to England to such purpose that between 1070 and 1087 the Church in England was made to conform to the continental pattern and subject to the reforming

ideas which were permeating western Europe …an emphatic and erudite protest has been made against the notion that the Church in England between 950 and 1050 was 'decadent' or that it stood in any special need of reforms imported from overseas.

p. 344. A Culture Destroyed

The feudalisation of the church in England was in the future to produce unhappy consequences, and whatever may be thought of the discipline, the organisation, and the spirituality of the late Old English church, it cannot be regarded as having been ineffective in the sponsorship of art and literature. In this respect, at least, England in 1050 was in no sense a backward country. Her metal-work was famous and her coinage was fine. English embroidery was particularly esteemed, and English book production, particularly that of the Winchester school, of outstanding excellence. It has even been asserted that in respect of the minor arts the Norman conquest was 'little short of a catastrophe', and if the glories of the Romanesque architecture which the Normans brought to England are apparent to any traveller, it would be rash to disparage the ecclesiastical building which took place in England during the earlier half of the eleventh century, most of which has failed to survive. Finally, it needs no emphasis that in the decades preceding the Norman conquest, England was continuing to produce a literature in the vernacular, which in this respect was without parallel in contemporary Europe.

This vernacular culture, between 1066 and 1087, received a lethal blow, and its place was taken in England by a culture which drew its inspiration in art and literature from the vivid intellectual interests of Latin Europe, which had already permeated the province of Rouen. Hence-forth for more than a century, with rare exceptions, whatever was thought and written by Englishmen was thought and written in Latin, and the English contributions to philosophy and theology were to form part of controversies which were common to the Continent.

The Decline of England 11: THE VIPER'S BROOD

By Eadmund

The master-race

THE Normans, a nation of uncivilized, renegade Vikings, nevertheless liked to present themselves as a master race[1] of warriors, unbeatable in war, the chosen people of God. In fact they had absolutely no right to anything in England. William the Bastard had not a drop of royal blood in his veins. Their only excuse for being here was their victory at Sandlake, which they were pleased to represent as an act of God. However there was a deep flaw in this simple formula: what God has given, God may just as easily take away, and a right based on victory was a very tenuous right indeed. Any failure might be taken as proof of the loss of divine favour, and hence lend support to rebels. Also, around the year 1000, there was a strong feeling that God would in any case imminently be closing the theatre of human history, and the Norman Conquest might be just one of the many plagues foretold in the book of Revelation. This does much to explain the disgraceful way in which candidates for the English throne behaved after 1066.

William Rufus

When William the Bastard died, his eldest son, Robert Curthose was in disgrace and thus absent from his father's deathbed. His second son William Rufus therefore immediately dashed to England, and with the assistance of Archbishop Lanfranc, seized the treasury at Winchester and had himself crowned King in Westminster Abbey. There was no serious consideration by the Witan, as had been required in Englisc times. The throne of the wealthiest kingdom in Europe was up for grabs, like a diamond lost in a gutter. Using the vastly superior resources of the treasury (the product of the toil of Englisc peasants, seized from them by ruthless taxation), William Rufus thrust his brother out of Normandy also, first by threat of military conquest, and then by a hefty bribe of 10,000 marks. Robert used the money to raise an army for the so-called first Crusade, an enterprise from which he was not expected to return. The Crusade, however, gave him enormous prestige in the West, and his return *via* the Norman colony in southern Italy brought him a wife, who in turn brought him

a considerable dowry with which he could once again finance war against his brothers, mostly carried out in Normandy.

The contemporary opponents of William Rufus branded him a sensualist and a sodomite. He has even been called a master devil by Margaret Murray, and linked with a diabolic cult. He was also reported to have mocked the Church openly. Warned that he should not cross the Channel in the middle of a storm, he replied that he had never heard of a king being lost in a shipwreck, joking that the sea and the wind would obey his royal commands. When told that a group of fifty Englisc-men had been acquitted of forest offences by the ordeal of hot iron, he declared that anyone who believed God to be a just judge deserved to be damned. It is thus no surprise that he was mercenary and unyielding towards the church in general, demanded knight service from its lands, and left vacant for long periods any bishoprics whose incumbent died, whilst diverting the revenues to his own coffers. This offence was akin to simony, which at the time was considered a worse crime than sodomy. Within the Church, Rufus' closest henchman was his confidential clerk, Ranulph Flambard, eventually promoted bishop of Durham, a sinner of such notorious lasciviousness that young girls, even those vowed to religion, were well advised to lock their doors whenever he appeared in their vicinity. To what depths had the Church descended since the days of St Cuthbert and St Dunstan!

Anselm appointed as Archbishop of Canterbury

When Rufus was lying sick at Gloucester at Easter 1093, and believed that death was upon him, he suddenly and without warning demanded that the archbishopric of Canterbury, vacant since the death of Lanfranc in 1089, should be given to the Abbot of Bec, who was then visiting his court and had recently heard his confession. There was little to qualify him for such a post: even as abbot of Bec he had struggled to supply the daily needs of his monks for food and drink. Admittedly Anselm had an idea of his own unsuitability, and literally had to be forced to accept the office, the pastoral staff being thrust into his hands, and all without any voice from the monks of Canterbury Cathedral who had the right (although this had now become more a matter of theory than of practical application) freely to elect their own archbishops. All yet might have been well if Rufus had died at the scene, but instead he immediately began to feel better, and instead of expressing gratitude to Anselm, the agent of God who had brought about his recovery, felt only annoyance at having to deal with so other-worldly and conscience-ridden an Archbishop.

The eleventh century was nearly at an end, and by this time the Church of Rome had seized absolute power for itself. By inserting the word *filioque* into the creed, the materialistic and power-hungry Popes had effectively substituted themselves for God, and the western patriarchate was now to be governed not by the Holy Spirit, but by their own 'infallible' pronouncements. The Pope now saw himself as the ultimate end of a chain of command extending via the archbishops to the bishops to the clergy. Should any of his subordinates disobey the Pope, or should the Pope himself wish to discipline anyone at a lower level, he now considered himself entitled to intervene at each level of the structure, and if necessary to stir up the lower clergy and even the faithful laity against bishops or archbishops who had enough temerity to disobey his commands.

Anselm found himself at odds with both King and Pope, resulting in two periods of exile. Between 1097 and the 1240s at least four archbishops of Canterbury, were to spend prolonged periods overseas, at odds with the king and seeking refuge either with the popes, or with the king's enemies in France. In Englisc times, the King and his bishops had spoken with one voice, but this had ended all too soon with the coming of the Normans and their introduction of the Roman Catholicism to these islands.

Anselm was also incompetent in spiritual matters. Daydreaming during matins one day, his wandering mind discovered what he believed to be an irrefutable proof of the existence of God. Of course God exists in eternity, so any 'proof' of the fact of his existence is not only irrelevant but blasphemous; however Anselm in essence argued that if 'God' is a concept that embodies the greatest thing that can be imagined, and if God exists in the imagination, then it must be greater for Him to exist in reality than merely in the mind. Therefore He must really exist. On this was built a complete philosophical-religious system called Scholasticism, one of the first '-isms' that were to plague the Western Church and were to lead to such ridiculous, self-serving debates as (for example) how many angels could dance on the point of a pin. Such nonsense might engender laughter if it

did not involve such a serious subject. It shows us that spiritual matters were considered to be no longer on a superior, theological plane, but were to be debated and pondered over as if they were amenable to human reason.

So many women fled to nunneries after the Norman Conquest that the nunneries themselves were hard put to it to cope with the influx. This was an attempt to escape from forced marriages, or worse, rape. The most famous of these reluctant nuns was a member of the West Saxon royal dynasty, Matilda, the daughter of Malcolm III, King of Scots, by the Englisc princess Margaret, a granddaughter of Eadmund Ironside. She had been entrusted to the rough discipline of her aunt, Christina, a nun at Romsey in Hampshire. Either at Romsey or at Wilton, Matilda was compelled to dress as a nun, even though she never formally took vows. Rufus soon came calling at Wilton, pretending that he had entered the cloister only to admire the rose bushes. Rufus, who never married and was not, in any case, inclined to ladies' company, noted that she had the potential advantage of dynastic links to both the Englisc and the Scottish thrones. In the end Matilda was married, after a lengthy ecclesiastical process to release her from her religious profession, to Rufus' younger brother, Henry.

Henry I

Henry was the youngest of the Bastard's children, and the only one of his sons conceived after 1066, and hence born the son of an actively ruling English king, never mind his dubious title to the honour. Henry was, as may be expected from this brood of vipers, an unpleasant, ambitious and libidinous young man. When Rufus was killed, whether accidentally or on purpose can now never be determined, by a stray arrow loosed by a fellow huntsman during a hunt in the New Forest, Henry rode straight to Winchester without waiting for the King's burial, and grabbed the Royal Treasury. He then proceeded directly to London to be crowned in Westminster Abbey, not by the Archbishop of Canterbury, as was customary, but by the relatively junior bishop of London. The speed of this coronation and the fact that he immediately issued a coronation charter, promising to revoke the more serious abuses of Rufus' regime, indicate his panic. Once again Robert Curthose was deprived of what he naturally conceived to be his right, and Henry was involved for the rest of his reign trying to protect his ill-gotten gains. He eventually managed to defeat and capture Robert at the Battle of Tinchebrai in 1106. Robert remained in captivity for the next twenty-eight years in comparative comfort, and outlived virtually every other member of his family. He died at Cardiff castle in February 1134, aged well over eighty.

Henry's progeny

Henry's marriage to Matilda bore fruit in the shape of a son, also called William, and a daughter, also called Matilda, who was eventually to marry the Emperor, Henry V. However he managed to father at least twenty-four illegitimate children by a number of women, many of them high-born ladies recruited from the neighbourhood of the royal hunting lodges at Clarendon and Woodstock: hiss lechery rivalled even that of Henry VIII and Charles II. Like Charles II, Henry did his best to promote his bastard children to high office (in the case of boys) or to prestigious marriages (in the case of girls). In the case of two of the boys, both named Robert, one was made the earl of Gloucester with control over the border region of Glamorgan and the greatest of the west-country fortresses at Bristol, and the other became an influential Devon landowner. These promotions suggest that, within a generation of the Conquest, the families granted lands by William the Bastard were now inclined to forget from whom their bounties had flowed.

Henry's 'reforms'

Henry's reforms were always calculated, not necessarily to do good to the people, but to *appear* to do good, often with a substantial profit involved for himself. In his 'coronation charter' he promised not to keep churches vacant or seize their revenues during vacancies. This was fulfilled more in the letter than the spirit, by filling poor bishoprics with commendable speed, but leaving the greater ones vacant for long periods. He also sent justices into the English counties to dispense royal law at a local level. As the principal authority for the regulation of disputes, the King could hope to collect the fines and profits inevitably arising from the multiplication of suits. It has been estimated that more than 50% of the profits of the annual harvest were siphoned off in this way, both by the King himself, and all the various servants of the crown involved in the administration of 'justice'. It will come as no surprise, therefore, to learn that Henry I's income was a great deal higher than that of any King of England for the next forty years.

Henry also promised not to charge excessive or unreasonable fines from his barons; not to marry off heiresses without their consent; and to restore the good laws of King Edward together with whatever legal reforms had been made by William the Bastard with the consent of his barons. The fact that Edward III had issued no law code of any sort during his reign did not prevent Henry's clerks from inventing one.

Henry had a reputation for being a better-educated man than his father or brothers had been; but in the world of the blind the one-eyed man is king. In a family of total illiterates, the man who can read a few words and write his own name can pass for a genius. His cruelty was legendary, but was tempered by a respect for the law. In the 1090s he had personally pushed a rebellious Rouen merchant from one of the highest towers in the city (henceforth known as Conan's leap), and he was known for blinding and otherwise mutilating prisoners, especially those convicted of offences against forest law.

The White Ship

King Henry's only son, Prince William, was drowned in 1120 whilst attempting, after what seems to have been an exceptionally drunken party, to race his father back across the channel. He embarked on the *White Ship* from the port of Barfleur in Normandy, and the vessel struck a submerged rock, and sank, also taking with it a large number of courtiers, including the Earl of Chester. The only survivor was a drunken butcher, who had been carousing with his social superiors when the ship went down.

Stephen of Blois

Henry's wife Matilda had died in May 1118, two years before. Although a second marriage was hurriedly arranged in 1121, Henry was forced to entertain alternative strategies for the succession. He promoted at court his nephew, Stephen of Blois, the son of William the Bastard's only daughter. This man had escaped the disaster of 1120 by what in any other case one would have called Divine Providence, having had a sudden attack of diarrhoea, which prevented him from joining his cousin on the *White Ship*. However when the Emperor Henry V died in 1125, leaving his widow childless, Henry brought her back to England and in 1127 she was betrothed to Geoffrey Plantagenet, the fourteen-year-old heir to the county of Anjou. Henry had Matilda proclaimed as heir to his lands both in England and Normandy, Stephen vying with Robert, Earl of Gloucester, for the honour of being the first to swear an oath to uphold this settlement.

Matilda, who used the title Empress despite the fact that her late husband had never crowned her or recognized her as such, commanded a great deal of prestige, and obviously considered herself a cut above a mere count, and her marriage proved tempestuous. She also quarrelled with her father. Despite a reconciliation in 1131; a second series of oaths that she would be recognized as Henry's heir; and the birth of a son named Henry in honour of his grandfather, in 1133 father and daughter fell out once more, with the result that Matilda was not at her father's deathbed. Henry died after a meal of lampreys, a disgusting eel-like parasite that sucks the blood of other aquatic creatures, and supplied an apt metaphor that it was the luxury and parasitical greed of the Conqueror's sons that would prove their downfall. Twenty months after the death of Robert Curthose, the last of the Conqueror's sons was also dead.

Stephen becomes King

Stephen of Blois, despite his earlier oaths that he would recognize Matilda, now seized his opportunity. He happened to be in the right place at the right time, and made a dash for England and coronation. Whereas Rufus and Henry made first for the royal treasury at Winchester, Stephen could rely on his younger brother, Henry of Blois, bishop of Winchester since 1129, to manage that end of the business, and he made his way first to London. Stephen was crowned at Westminster Abbey on 22nd December 1135. Across England Henry I's former subjects celebrated the news of his death with a wholesale slaughter of his deer and a breaking down of newly erected forest fences: a clear sign of his oppressive administration.

Stephen secured papal approval for his coronation, and bought off his elder brother with a promise of money. When the Scots invaded the northern counties and seized Carlisle and Newcastle, he negotiated a peace with them. The Welsh rose in rebellion, and Baldwin de Redvers, a former servant of Henry I, fortified Exeter castle on behalf of Empress Matilda. He besieged Exeter for three months, and as soon as it had surrendered allowed the citizens to go free. He apparently believed that he had so many allies and such vast

resources at this disposal that he could afford to be magnanimous.

But the velvet glove of Rufus and Henry I had proved effective precisely because it concealed a massive iron fist: Stephen lacked the requisite ruthlessness. An expedition to Normandy in 1137 failed to prevent an invasion of the duchy by Geoffrey of Anjou, and in the following year, troubled by oaths to his half-sister Matilda that Stephen had signally failed to respect, Robert, Earl of Gloucester and the greatest of Henry I's illegitimate sons, rose in rebellion at Bristol. A second Scottish invasion was only narrowly defeated in August 1138 by a rag-tag militia, apparently recruited by the Archbishop of York and led by the Count of Aumale, but even then Northumbria and Newcastle were definitively ceded to the Scots.

In 1139 the Pope failed to absolve Stephen from his oaths to Matilda, merely adjourning his decision. Stephen then alienated the Church by arresting three of the English bishops, and made himself appear a tyrant as well as a usurper and perjurer. Even his brother, Henry of Blois, wavered in his loyalty.

England drifts into Civil War

Empress Matilda landed in England in the autumn of 1139 in Sussex, but was granted a safe-conduct to join her half-brother Robert at Bristol, Stephen apparently reasoning that it was better to concentrate the enemy's forces in one location, rather than having them spread out across southern England. In reality this was the turning point, after which there was no real hope of peace as long as either of the rebels lived. Bristol was now an impregnable Angevin fortress and Robert started using Welsh mercenaries from his Glamorgan estates. The Welsh secret weapon, later to be fully developed into what became the English longbow, had been released.

In the ensuing civil war, which was rather like the game of chess that was becoming very popular at court, King Stephen was taken prisoner at Lincoln in February and imprisoned at Bristol. The Empress Matilda was installed as 'Lady of England', but alienated the Londoners by her haughtiness and had to flee from there, and subsequently from Winchester. Robert, Earl of Gloucester was taken prisoner by an army mustered by Stephen's queen. There was then an exchange of prisoners in which the King and Robert were released, and all returned to virtually the same positions that they had occupied at the beginning of the year. Normandy was eventually conquered by Geoffrey of Anjou, who was installed as Duke in April 1144. England became divided between a series of campaigning forces. Stephen held out in London, relying on a narrow hinterland of Essex and Kent to supply his financial needs. Gloucestershire and Bristol served as the chief Angevin redoubt in England, boosted by the local financier Robert fitz Harding, actually Englisc by birth in spite of his Norman-style name. Both sides issued their own coins. Local barons endeavoured to make alliances between themselves in an attempt to limit damage. Two of the greatest earls in the kingdom, Geoffrey de Mandeville, Earl of Essex and Ranulf, Earl of Chester, were arrested at Stephen's court, although under safe-conduct, and the fear of treachery became endemic.

Stalemate ensues

The death of Robert in 1147 and the refusal of the Archbishop of Canterbury to crown Stephen's eldest son as King during his father's lifetime brought about an effective stalemate, resolved by the emergence of Henry Plantagenet as leader of the Angevin party. Geoffrey's death in 1151 had made him Duke of Normandy and Count of Anjou, and his marriage the following year to Eleanor, only three weeks earlier divorced from the French King Louis VII, brought him the entire duchy of Aquitaine. He started to issue coins with the title *Henricus rex futurus*[2] and in 1153 returned to England determined on a final showdown. In the midst of negotiations and threats, Stephen's son Eustace died, alleged by some to have been poisoned by the monks of Bury St Eadmunds, which opened the way for peace. For the rest of his lifetime, Stephen would retain his title and authority as King. Henry of Anjou would be acknowledged as his heir. The barons would swear homage to both men. The King's younger son, William of Warenne, would be compensated with a vast estate, which Henry would guarantee to respect. Stephen was approaching sixty, an age which saw the death of many of his family; but death came even more suddenly for him than he expected. While staying with the monks of Dover, he was suddenly seized with violent stomach pains and a flow of blood, and died on 25 October 1154.

An assessment of Stephen's reign

Let us at this point look at the damage that Stephen's ineffective reign had done to the already

sad state of England. It has been suggested that it made the ownership of land more secure: barons and knights who had previously relied on the whim of the King, could now pass from father to son with no real possibility of upset. In fact, however, this did not occur until the 1150s, and in practical terms nothing much had changed. As far as the folk who actually lived on the land and were now legally chained to it were concerned, its ownership was mostly irrelevant anyway. One foreign landlord was very much like another. For those who believed that they had a title to land, but who were aware that this title was likely to be the subject of dispute, there was the option of granting the land to religion. The landholder could then benefit from the prayers of the monks and also their keen and active litigation in the courts. The number of religious houses doubled between 1135 and 1154. A large number of these new foundations were Cistercian.

The Cistercians

The term Cistercian derives from *Cistercium*, the Latin name for the village of Cîteaux, where a group of monks had founded an Abbey in 1098, with the object of returning to the literal terms of the Benedictine rule, and rejecting the various developments that the order had undergone. One of the early abbots was Stephen Harding, an Englisc refugee from the Norman Conquest. They were later joined by perhaps their most famous brother, (St[3]) Bernard of Clairvaux, in the early 1110s. Although it was perhaps a brave attempt, their emphasis on austerity – they actually went beyond the original rule – made their enterprise difficult to maintain, and they eventually slipped into the same ways that the Benedictines had been forced by circumstances to adopt, doing less of the manual work themselves and allowing more to be done for them by outside labour. They were distinguished by their white habits, made of un-dyed wool, a badge that immediately laid them open to criticism for the slightest deviation from the high standards that they had set themselves, and were also a temptation to spiritual pride. They also suffered, along with the rest of the people, from the fact that the Western Church had been cut off from the Holy Spirit by the worldly, power-grabbing actions of the Popes, represented by their unilateral addition of the *filioque* to the creed; so that they too, in spite of their good intentions, took part in the slow but ubiquitous moral decline. Although, in the 1150s, the Cistercian General Chapter stepped in to forbid monks from acting as middlemen, buying up the wool crop of surrounding farmers and selling it on at a profit, the practice by no means disappeared. The Cistercians might seek out the deserts of the world, but they swiftly transformed such places into a machined landscape for the generation of cash. But although their extremely efficient methods and their architectural expertise made them successful, their perceived other-worldly attitude guaranteed them acceptance in such places as the Welsh valleys, where the Benedictine foundations were too closely associated with the Norman castles to integrate fully with the local people.

Christ slept and His saints …

But for all the initial success of the Cistercians, we must never let ourselves forget the heartfelt cry of the so-called 'Anglo-Saxon Chronicle', still being written in the original Englisc language in 1137.

> 'I neither know how nor can tell all the horrors they did to the unhappy people of this land, that lasted nineteen years while Stephen was king, and ever it was worse and worse. They laid taxes on the towns all the while, and called it 'tenserie', protection money; when poor men had no more to give, they plundered and burnt all the towns, so that you might well fare all day, never would you find a man staying in a town, nor land tilled. Then was corn dear, and meat, and cheese and butter, for there was none in the land. Poor men died of hunger, some went out for alms who were once powerful men, and some fled out of the land.
>
> 'Never yet was more wretchedness in the land, nor ever did heathen men to worse than they did, for against all custom they spared neither church nor churchyard, but seized all the goods therein, and later burned the church and all together. Nor did they spare in the land either abbots or priests, but plundered monks and clerics – and every man robbed another if he could. If two or three men came riding to a town, all the township fled before them, believing they were robbers. Bishops and clergy cursed them ever, but it was nothing to them, for they were all utterly cursed forsworn and lost.
>
> 'Wherever the land was tilled, the earth bore no corn, for the land was all ruined with such deeds; and they said openly that Christ slept, and His saints. Such, and more than we know how to say, we suffered nineteen years for our sins.'

Xenophobia and the 'blood libel'

Stephen's reign also exhibited the first real outbreak of Xenophobia since the Conquest. It is perhaps understandable that the Englisc community, unable to vent more than eighty years of frustrations over the compromises forced on it by Norman lords, was all the more ready to seek scapegoats in other communities, with Stephen's Flemish mercenaries and the Welsh high on the list of potential victims.

At the end of the Chronicle passage from which the quotation appears above, there is a brief summary of the tale of 'St William of Norwich'. In 1144, according to later and highly unreliable testimony, rumour spread that a twelve-year-old boy called William, apprenticed to the skinner's trade in the City of Norwich, had been lured into the house of a Norwich Jew[4], where he was ritually tortured and crucified, his agony lasting from the Tuesday in Holy Week until Good Friday. His body was then disposed of in woods to the south of the city, where it was discovered by a local forester, keen to ensure that nobody illegally gathered timber from the bishop's wood. The Jews were accused in the bishop's synod but bribed the local sheriff, John de Chesney, to grant them refuge in Norwich Castle (the Jews being, like the deer of the forest, under Royal protection). The body was dug up and reburied in the cathedral precincts, and lacking any saint of their own, the monks of Norwich tried to supply themselves with a potentially miracle-working cult. The chief guardian of the shrine, a man called Thomas of Monmouth, accused the Jews of a conspiracy that reached from one end of Europe to the other, controlled by a line of Jewish princes living in Narbonne in southern France, by whom the Jews were committed to the annual sacrifice of a Christian boy-child in deliberate and mocking emulation of the crucifixion of Christ.

This is the first known appearance of the so-called 'blood libel', that is that Jews were ritually committed to the kidnapping and murder of Christian boys. This vile accusation has spread all over Europe, has been repeated ever since, and forms a cornerstone of anti-Semitism. It still poisons the relationship between Christians and Jews even today. The next appearance of this libel also comes from England: from Gloucester, where in the 1160s another young boy, called Harold, was likewise claimed to have been murdered by the Jews. In origin the libel appears to have been both anti-foreign and anti-royal. According to the story, the King's sheriff was among the villains of the piece, and most of those involved in disclosing the 'truth' bore unmistakeably Englisc names. These stories were doubtless born out of the desperation and bitterness of the Englisc people, but it is indescribably sad that they should have spread so far beyond our shores and wrought so much evil. Ultimately the root cause of it must be laid to the account of William the Bastard.

May God have mercy on us all, and forgive us our many sins.

1 This idea of a 'master race' has of course been encountered before and since in History, from such people as Genghis Khan and Attila the Hun to Adolf Hitler. All such claims (even by the Jews) must be spurious, although Hitler, not unnaturally, rated William the Bastard highly. They were questioned even at the time by a few, but the Norman propaganda was so complete and ubiquitous that it is only recently that historians have looked behind it and exposed it for the lie that it was. In fact there was no area of life in which the Normans did anything new or better than had already been done elsewhere.

2 *Henricus rex futurus* = Henry the future king.

3 St Bernard is not, of course, an Orthodox saint, having been canonized after the Great Schism.

4 Jews were brought into England by the Normans for their purposes of financial exploitation: there were none here before the Conquest.

THE ARISTOCRACY OF ENGLAND
by John Hampden Junior, 1846

TWENTY-FIVE years ago, researching in the Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris into the history of Old England and the ensuing Norman Conquest and Occupation, we came across the above bibliographical rarity. Our first reaction to it was that it was 'over the top'. Written in an ornate early Victorian style, its socialistic, anti-aristocratic vehemence struck us as excessive, but nevertheless perhaps nearer the mark than many would like to admit. Its views were in many respects anti-Catholic, but by no means pro-Protestant. It was also remarkably modern in its clear-sighted understanding of the injustices of British Imperialism, which it logically and rightly

linked to the continuing consequences of the ongoing Norman Occupation. The extracts below, one against the Non-English, post-Conquest monarchy, the second against imperialism in general, and the third on the British Establishment's mistreatment of the Irish (and this before the Potato Famine), illustrate its tone:

Extract One, (p. 30):

'The fact is, however, that if we look forward, the prospect is not much more cheering or attractive. An alternation of tyrants and imbeciles stretches on from John to George IV. The kings, till the time of Henry VII, were either fighting with each other for the crown, and rending the whole island to pieces with their sanguinary dissensions, or were wasting the strength and treasures of their people on the conquests of France and Scotland, which were again wholly wrested from them, so that in the end they had spent much and gained nothing but a great military fame ... killers and drowners of brothers, they only gave way in Henry VIII to the supremest monster of kingship, compounded of boundless lust and merciless murder of his wives – the Bluebeard of all history. Pass over the poor sickly youth, his son, who, though he died so early, and was praised so much for his piety, was a burner of martyrs, to bloody Mary; to Elizabeth ... the murderess of her cousin, Mary of Scotland, and of many a sufferer at the burning stake ..what a catalogue of insignificants or of the worthless are the remainder! How vainly do we look through the vast period for one eminently great and glorious monarch – another Alfred the Great!'

Extract Two, (p. 165):

'The aristocracy may be said to have lived and fattened on the blood of the whole world. Wars of all kinds, and for all pretences; wars for the balance of power in Europe; wars of aggression and slaughter of the natives in America, India, and Africa, have been the source of maintenance to the vast broods of the aristocracy, who did not find the whole land rental of England enough for them'.

Extract Three, (p. 272):

'We have traversed, we have said, our island in all directions and found that the aristocracy have seized on all public property and right. If we extend our search to the farthest bounds of our transmarine empire, we shall find it the same. Our colonies are as much the usurped property of the aristocracy as our native soil. They and their sons occupy all their good offices, their wealth, and their best things. By their greed and maladministration they have reduced one of the vastest to famine and difficulty; by their despotism and imbecility, they have lost us one of the noblest. But before we proceed so far, there is another and more proximate scene of their misdeeds that we must take a glance at, and that is – Ireland.

Ireland, in the very beginning of our connexion with her, was an aristocratic conquest and booty. Strongbow, Earl of Strighul, in the reign of Henry II, with his adherents, went over thither, slew, and took possession. From that hour to this, that fair island has been treated as a conquered country. At the time of the Reformation under Henry VIII and Elizabeth, at the time of the Commonwealth, at the time of the Revolution in 1688, – in short, at all times when the internal distractions of England have given the oppressed Irish a hope of freeing themselves from the galling yoke of the British, they have risen to assert their right to their own soil and to their freedom ; and by our superior might and unmitigated cruelty, have been rebranded by the fires of their blazing huts, and rebaptized in their own blood, as our serfs and slaves. We have robbed them of their lands, of their churches, of the government of their towns and country; we have sent over swarms of aristocrats to take possession of the estates of their ancient families; and hordes of parsons to occupy their churches and devour the tithes which had been given by their fathers for the maintainance of their own religion. And these heretic parsons, – heretic in the sight of the natives, and these English aristocrats, and these Scotch and English intruders, styled colonists, have lived and rioted before their eyes on the lands of their ancestors, and the dying bequests of the ancient saints, as sacred and perpetual funds for the good of their own souls, of the souls of the poor, and of the whole people. From age to age they have been insulted, trodden on, thrust out of their own soil and their own offices; and taunted with being 'alien in blood, in language, and religion!'

Great God! what business had we there? What business had we with their lands, their churches, and their endowments? If we went as Christians to convert them, were violence and robbery and injustice the means? If we went to rule them, was it to be only by insult and slaughter?

Our interest, however, is specifically on the immediate results of the Norman Conquest and below we quote the whole of Chapter II without comment.

Chapter II

Howe'er that be, it seems to me
'Tis only noble to be good;
True hearts are more than coronets,
And simple faith than Norman blood

Alfred Tennyson

The period from which the English aristocracy dates its origins is that of the Norman Conquest. Aristocracy, indeed, there was in the country before, but that was annihilated by the Normans and this epoch is the vaunted birth-day of our nobility. There is nothing of which we hear so much as of the pride of a descent from these first Norman nobles; of the pure and immaculate blood derived from this long descent. To say nothing of this wretched fallacy of blood and descent – for the most wretched and mischievous fallacy it is which ever cursed the human race – being the pretext for every insolence, and every species of tyranny amongst men, and being besides, the most hollow bubble that ever was blown by pride, for, there is no beggar who, if he could trace his pedigree, would not find himself descended from kings and no king who is not descended from beggars, – we will take the trouble to refer to the histories of the time, and show what these Norman conquerors really were. We shall then find so far from being a set of men to be proud of as ancestors, there cannot be a more scandalously disgraceful origin. They were in fact, a swarm of the most desperate, and needy adventurers 'a rascal rabble' of vagabond thieves and plunderers. They were not, in fact, one half of them, what they are pretended to be – Normans; but collected by proclamation, and by lavish promises of sharing in the plunder of conquered England – vultures from every wind of heaven rushing to the field of British carnage. We shall find that, allowing the claims of such families as now can trace a clear descent from these men – and these are very few indeed – even such of them as were Normans, were but of the lower and more rapacious grade. The great vultures fleshed themselves to the throat with the first spoil, and returned home while their places were obliged to be repeatedly supplied, through renewed proclamations, and renewed offers of the plunder of the Anglo-Saxons, from the still hungry tribes of knights who were wandering and fighting anywhere for bloody bread.

Again we shall come to the curious question, who the Normans actually were? Who actually they were who actually were Normans? And here will come another singular laying bare of the proud pretences of our proud nobles. Forsooth, they are descended from the gallant and chivalrous Normans. They will be descended from them and them alone. There is not a soul of them that will claim the honour of descent from the Danes. Oh no! The barbarous and bloody Danes, they are a scandal and an abomination! They axe thieves, pirates, plunderers, and savages. Nobody is descended from them, except some plebeians in the North of England, and except that the rabble rout of the common people are contaminated with their blood. And yet, who are the Normans? Why, the Danes!

Yes! the proud aristocracy of England, such of them as have any long known descent at all, are actually descended from the Danes! They are the legitimate issue of this bloody and barbarous people that nobody wishes to acknowledge as ancestors. The Danes, driven from England, fell on the shores of France, and amid the distractions of that kingdom, laid Paris in ashes, and seized on that district which thence received from these Northmenner or Normans, its name of Normandy. Here, though settled too comfortably for their deserts, they never ceased to keep an eye on the far richer prize of England, from which, for their cruelties and fiery devastations, they had been chased away. In the time of the Conqueror, they had been settled about two centuries in France; and though they had acquired a considerable degree of external civilization, and much martial discipline, yet, if we are to judge by their proceedings on the acquisition of England, they had lost none of their greedy hunger of spoil, nor of their reckless and ruthless disposition to shed blood. Edward the Confessor was the son of Emma of Normandy, a notorious woman. He had been chiefly brought up at the Norman court, and, during his reign, the Norman nobles flocked over in crowds to England, and showed themselves as greedy and rapacious as any of their ancestors, the Danes, had been. They engrossed every great office on which they could lay their hands, especially in the church; and through their rapacity and insolence, became detested by the people. The conduct of a party of them under the Count of Boulogne, in 1051, occasioned an outbreak of popular wrath in Dover, which brought the kingdom to the very point of a civil war, and only ended by filling the army as full of these harpies as the church had been before. The effeminate and misled king became surrounded by countless shoals of them, crowding to enrich themselves. Amongst these, he invited one, William of Normandy, who made good use of the visit, looking round on the beautiful and wealthy island, as a most desirable prize, and resolving to seize it on the first opportunity. This man, one of the bloodiest tyrants in history, was, – so much for his blood, – a bastard, the son of one Harlotta, a tanner's daughter, of the town of Falaise, whence,

it is said, comes our word, harlot. Determined to possess himself of England, by hook or by crook, he asserted that Edward the Confessor had made him his heir by will. Such will, however, he never produced on any occasion. It was, there is little question, an utter falsehood to begin with. The next step was by treachery. He seized on Harold, the son of the great Saxon Earl Godwin, who was the probable successor to the throne; for though standing only as brother-in-law to the king, he had the love of the people, and the real heir, Edgar the Atheling, was an imbecile. He compelled Harold, by a trick worthy of the man and the age, to swear to allow and to support his claims to the throne, on a concealed chest of dead men's bones, or, in other words, on the relics of saints, in which those barbarous times had wonderful faith. Having thus struck a superstitious terror into Harold's soul, his, last step was force. On the death of the Confessor, he armed himself for invasion, and was clamorously supported by the whole hungry body of the nobility. It is curious and characteristic that at a parliament composed of all classes of people – warriors, priests, merchants, farmers, and others – which he called together at Lillebonne, to grant him supplies for this great enterprise, the commons, who would have to pay for it, cried out vehemently against it, but their voice was overborne by the obstreperous soldiers and priests. These were mad with desire at once of' plunder and revenge; for after William's visit to England, they, had accumulated there in such swarms, and had grown to such a nuisance, that the whole people rose with one accord, under the great Earl Godwin, and chased them from the land. The greatest, offenders, indeed, Robert, Archbishop of Canterbury, and William, Bishop of London, fled with the wildest precipitation, arming their retainers, and fighting their way loaded with spoils to the coast. Others took refuge in castles and fortresses which were commanded by their countrymen; but the Wittenagemot or Parliament, met, with Godwin at their head, and pronounced a judgment of outlawry against the whole brood of Normans and French, so that they were speedily expelled or destroyed.

On fire with the remembrance of their ignominious expulsion they crowded to William's standard like wolves at the call of winter; but they were not altogether sufficient for his mighty enterprise. The ambitious William, says Thierry, looked far beyond the confines of Normandy for soldiers of fortune to assist him in his great attempt. He had his ban of war published in all the neighbouring countries; he offered good pay to every tall and robust man who would serve him with the lance, the sword, or the cross-bow. A multitude flocked to him from all parts, from far and near, from the north and the south. They came from Maine and Anjou, from Poitou and Bretagne; from the country of the French king and from Flanders; from Aquitaine and from Burgundy; from Piedmont, beyond the Alps, and from the banks of the Rhine. 'Adventurers by profession, the idle, the dissipated, the profligate, the enfants perdus of Europe hurried at the summons'. Of these some were knights and chiefs in war, others simple foot soldiers; some demanded regular pay in money, others merely their passage across the channel, and all the booty they might take. Some demanded territory in England, – a domain, a castle, a town; while others, again, simply wished to receive a rich Saxon lady in marriage. All the wild wishes, all the pretensions of human avarice were awakened into, activity. William repulsed no one, but promised and pleased all as far as he could.

While STRENGTH was thus preparing itself, CUNNING was not the less busy. Robert of Canterbury, who had been obliged so hastily to fly out of England for his life; Lanfranc, afterwards so famous as primate of England, and other priests, had been to Rome to procure the sanction of the Pope, and this great head of the House of Cunning, always ready to give away that which did not belong to him, gave him a bull to seize on England on condition that it should beheld as a fief of the church. He sent the adventurers also a consecrated banner, and a ring, said to contain a hair of St Peter. Thus armed with the powers of superstition, the priests everywhere preached up this great crusade against unhappy England, and thousands flocked from all quarters of Europe to the call.

Such was the first band of adventurers assembled to invade this country. These had, as we see, no claim to style themselves exclusively Normans, but were the sweeping and refuse of all Europe. But we shall presently find that even these were exchanged, such of them as did not fall in battle, for others of a still lower grade and character. Before, however, proceeding further we must notice a remarkable fact, and that is, that the Conqueror, though pretending a will of the Confessor in his favour, did not come hither as one seeking his own, but in the old character of a Dane, avowing himself and his countrymen as Danes, and that he was come, not only with the old object of the Danes, plunder, but to avenge the injuries of their forefathers, the Danes. This is the speech put by the Chroniclers into his mouth as he rode to the front of his army, and was about to commence the decisive battle of Hastings: 'Make up your minds to fight valiantly, and slay your enemies. A great booty is before us; for if we conquer we shall all be rich. What I gain, you will gain; if I take this land you will have it in lots amongst you. Know ye, however, that I am not

come hither solely to take what is my due, but also to avenge our whole nation for the felonies, perjuries, and treacheries of these English. They massacred our kinsmen, the Danemen, women, and children, on the night of St Bryce. They murdered the knights and good men who accompanied prince Alfred from Normandy, and made my cousin Alfred expire in tortures. Before you is the son of that Earl Godwin who was charged with these murders. Let us forward and punish him, with God to our aid!'

This is every way a most remarkable speech, and one which ought never to be forgotten by Englishmen. It proclaims to them, in most unequivocal language, that great truth which shall have only too frequent occasion in the course of this volume to illustrate – that the aristocracy of England hold their property and privileges by the right of conquest, and that we, the people, are in fact to this day the slaves not only of conquest, but of a Danish conquest. The battle of Hastings was in truth but the final and successful close of those many efforts of the Danes, through whole ages, in which they were repeatedly repulsed, but from which they never desisted, to make themselves masters of this island. Their conduct agreed with their characters. The moment they set foot in the country, they resumed the old Danish ravages – pillaging, burning, and destroying. They overrun the count on all sides of their landing-place, plundered and slaughtered the people, and ransacked the churches. After the battle of Hastings in which the brave Harold was unfortunately slain, and the only effective leader of the English thus lost to them, the Conqueror continued his route; not like one come to enter on a possession, but like his 'kinsmen, the Danes', making his way, with most horrible devastations and carnage. He massacred the habitants of Romney and burned their houses; set fire to Dover appeared before London; but not being able at once to take it, burned down Southwark, and went away through Surrey, Sussex Hampshire, and Berkshire, with his army, burning and destroying the helpless and innocent people like a very devil. From Hertfordshire he went towards London again, burning and massacring the population, and plundering as before.

To be continued

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

I read with interest the Q & A in Volume 18, Number 3. In answer to a question about sexual abstinence in marriage you describe the situation as it is amongst most cradle Orthodox Christians. With due oikonomia you advise against it for most folks because the spiritual level is not there. You also say that most couples under 60 cannot take it for more than a week or two. In view of Orthodox teaching concerning same-sex relationships, is there any advice on the basis of oikonomia you would offer someone who is attracted to others of the same sex?

Initials withheld

We all have sexual urges and they have to be channelled. Heterosexual energy is channelled into monasticism or marriage. Homosexual urges (first of all, we must determine their origins – these can be very diverse) are channelled into monasticism or friendship. It is one of the great tragedies of the last 50 years that everything has been sexualized, from children's fashions to friendship. Just as today it is very hard to have non-sexual male/female friendships, so also non-sexual male/male and female/female friendships. It is for us to buck the trend. I think anyone with homo-sexual urges must channel these urges into social activities and friendship. Sport may be one of these social activities. I hope this short answer is of some help.

What Orthodox name would you suggest for someone called Francis?

P. N., London

He may have a second forename which is Orthodox or else he may have a favourite saint, in

which case the answer is clear. Alternatively he could look in the calendar under his birth date and find a saint commemorated on that day. Otherwise he could choose a name vaguely sounding like Francis, say, Theodore. Finally, there is the case of St Joseph the Hesychast († 1959), who was called Francis in the world, as he was born on one of the Italian-influenced Greek islands, Paros. He is venerated on Mt Athos.

What do you think of organ donation?

A. L., London

I am glad that you phrase the question in this way and do not expect me to give an answer on behalf of the Church, since I cannot do that. This is an individual question and no-one can issue any categorical or definitive answer, in other words, there is no Church dogma on this matter. It is an answer for the individual conscience. If in doubt, ask your priest and, if still in doubt, ask your diocesan bishop. I can therefore only give a personal answer: I think that organ donations are acceptable, unless it concerns the donation of the heart or the brain. Those two organs contain such an essential part of the human person or soul that they should not be donated.

I would like to emphasize that if my bishop contradicts me on this point, please listen to him, not to me!

Can menstruating women go to church?

C. J., Cambridge

With modern hygiene, there is no reason why not, as the holy Serbian Patriarch Pavle wrote a few years ago. However, I think they should stand at the back. Clearly, they cannot take communion (unless there is some life or death emergency), since menstruation is the result of the Fall, in the same way as men with nocturnal emissions do not take communion.

What do you make of the new (August 2015) edition of Timothy Ware's book *The Orthodox Church*?

N. D., Birmingham

The book has been through several printings in three different editions and has been a gateway to the Church for many. The first edition had the rather rigid and reserved Oxford style of Anglican public school background. It was offputting for those without a University education. I know people who gave up reading it because of that ivory tower style, though others really appreciated it. It is written from outside the Church for others outside the Church. This is why it has had very little impact among us actual Orthodox – it is clearly for external consumption and as such can be excellent. However, as a result, in Russia at least, the author is looked on as not very Orthodox. This outsider's approach has been continued in the second and third editions, both of which have also tended to slip into the modernism of the contemporary Patriarchate of Constantinople.

This third, and presumably last, edition is, I think, disappointing. Statistically, it is very inaccurate, openly ignoring the official statistics of the Local Orthodox Churches, such as the Romanian and the Russian, and in general seems to be stuck in the early 1990s, especially as regards Eastern Europe and Russia, where it is simply ill-informed. It repeats for example the common and typically Anglican errors about St Joseph of Volokalamsk and the great Patriarch Nikon, blaming the latter for the State persecution of which he was the first victim! I find it also disagreeable to read of the heresies of Patriarch Parthenius of Alexandria (such as female clergy), since he in his old age suffered from dementia. I really think we should clothe the nakedness of our fathers. The harsh criticisms of the monks of Mt Athos are also disturbing.

Generally, this edition seems to fall into the same modernism and ecumenism as the second edition. In a word it needs a rewrite and update from inside the Church and by someone who knows how to write for ordinary people. For some 'An Academic View of the Orthodox Church' would be a better title than *The Orthodox Church*. I cannot think of anyone in the average, non-convert parish reading it. It could depress them, if they understood it. Written for outsiders or else University-educated converts who have not yet been Churched, as such it is a fine book. I sincerely hope that I am wrong, but sometimes I tend to have the impression of a convert who, like the late Olivier Clement, has seen his flame burn out since his initial enthusiasm of fifty and sixty years ago.

GREAT

14 Great Martyrs

16 Sep	Euphemia 303
20 Sep	Eustace 2c
20 Oct	Artemius 362
26 Oct	Dimitrios 303
11 Nov	Menas 304
24 Nov	Catherine 310
24 Nov	Mercurius 251
4 Dec	Barbara 306
22 Dec	Anastasius 304
8 Feb	Theodore 319
23 April	George 303
5 May	Irene Ist c
8 July	Procopius 303
27 July	Panteleimon 304
	James the Persian *c.*400

19 The Great

21 Oct	Hilarion 372
26 Oct	Alfred (Western King) 899
4 Nov	Joannicius 846
1 Jan	Basil
11 Jan	Theodosius
17 Jan	Antony
17 Jan	Theodosius (Emperor)
18 Jan	Athanasius
19 Jan	Macarius
20 Jan	Euthymius
6 Feb	Barsanuphius c. 550
18 Feb	Leo (Western) 461
12 March	Gregory (Western) 604
8 May	Arsenius 448
15 May	Pachomius 346
21 May	Constantine (Emperor) 337
12 June	Onuphrius 400
19 June	Paisius 444
6 July	Sisoes 429
27 Aug	Pimen 5c

The Martyrdom of St Stephen from the Æthelwold Benedictional