CLASSICS TO GO

CRISIS IN THE HISTORY OF THE PAPACY

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PREFACE

Probably no religious institution in the world has had so remarkable a history, and assuredly none has attracted so large and varied a literature, as the Papacy. The successive dynasties of the priests of ancient Egypt were, by comparison, parochial in their power and ephemeral in their duration. The priests of Buddha, rising to an autocracy in the isolation of Thibet or mingling with the crowd in the more genial atmosphere of China or cherishing severe mysticisms in Japan, offer no analogy to the Papacy's consistent growth and homogeneous dominion. The religious leaders of the Jews, scattered through the world, yet hardened in their type by centuries of persecution, may surpass it in conservative antiquity, but they do not remotely approach it in power and in historical importance. It influences the history of Europe more conspicuously than emperors have ever done, stretches a more than imperial power over lands beyond the most fevered dreams of Alexander or Cæsar, and may well seem to have made "Eternal Rome" something more than the idle boast of a patriot.

Yet this conservative endurance has not been favoured by such a stability of environment as has sheltered the lamas of Thibet or the secular priests of the old Chinese religion. The Papacy has lived through fifteen centuries of portentous change, though it seemed in each phase to have connected itself indissolubly with the dominant institutions and ideas of that phase. The Popes have witnessed, and have survived, three mighty transformations of the face of Europe. They had hardly issued from their early obscurity and lodged themselves in the fabric of the old Roman civilization when this fell into ruins; but they held firmly, amidst the ruins, the sceptre they had inherited. One by one the stately

institutions of the older world—the schools, the law-courts, the guilds of craftsmen, the military system, the municipal forms and commercial routes—disappeared in the flood of barbarism which poured over Europe, but this institution, which seemed the least firmly established, was hardly shaken and was quickly accepted by the strange new world. A new polity was created, partly under the direction of the Popes, and it was so entirely saturated by their influence that religion gave it its most characteristic name. Then Christendom, as it was called, passed in turn through a critical development, culminating in the Reformation; and the Papacy begot a Counter-Reformation and secured millions beyond the seas to replace the millions it had lost. The third and last convulsion began with the work of Voltaire and Rousseau and Mirabeau, and has grievously shaken the political theory with which the Papacy was allied and the older religious views which it had stereotyped. Yet today it has some 35,000,000 followers in the three greatest Protestant countries, the lands of Luther, of Henry VIII., and of the Puritan Fathers.

It must seem a futile design to attempt to tell, with any intelligent satisfaction, within the limits of a small volume the extraordinary story of this institution. No serious historian now tries to command more than a section of the record of the Papacy, and he usually finds a dozen volumes required for the adequate presentment of that section. Yet there is something to be said for such a sketch as I propose to give. If we take four of the more important recent histories of the Papacy—those of Father Grisar, Dr. Mann, Dr. Pastor, and Dr. Creighton—we find that the joint thirty volumes do not cover the whole period of Papal history even to the sixteenth century; and the careful student will not omit to include in his reading the still valuable volumes of Milman and of Dr. Langer. In other words, he must study more than fifty volumes if he would have an incomplete

account of the development of the Papacy up to the time of the Reformation, and more than that number if he would follow accurately the fortunes of the Papacy since the days of Paul III. The history of the Papacy is very largely the history of Europe, and this voluminous expansion is inevitable. On the other hand, the general student of the history of Europe and the general reader who seeks intellectual pleasure in "the storied page" are not only repelled by such an array of tomes, but they have no interest in a vast proportion of the matter which it is incumbent on the ecclesiastical historian to record. One wants a view of the Papacy in the essential lines of its development, and they are usually lost, or not easily recognized, in the conscientiously full chronicles. Is it possible to give a useful and informing account of the *essential* history of the Papacy in a small volume?

The rare attempts to do this that have been made have failed from one or other of two causes: they have either been written with a controversial aim and therefore have given only the higher lights or darker shades of the picture, or they have been mere summaries of the larger works, mingling what is relevant and what is not relevant from the developmental point of view. The design which occurs to me is to write a study of the Papacy by taking a score of the outstanding Popes—which means, in effect, a score of the more significant or critical stages in the development of the Papacy—and giving an adequate account of the work and personality of each. The evolution of the Papacy has not, like the evolution of life in general, been continuous. It has had periods of stagnation and moments of rapid progress or decay. Of the first hundred Popes, scarcely a dozen contributed materially to the making of the Papacy: the others maintained or marred the work of the great Popes. It is the same with the environment of the Papacy, which has influenced its fortunes as profoundly as changes of

environment have affected the advance of terrestrial life. There have been long drowsy summers closed by something like ice ages; there have been convulsions and strange invasions, stimulating advance by their stem and exacting pressure. I propose to select these more significant periods or personalities of Papal history, and trust that the resultant view of the Papacy will have interest and usefulness. The periods which lie between the various Pontificates which I select will be compressed into a brief account of their essential characters and more prominent representatives, so that the work will form a continuous study of the Papacy.

In the selection of a score of Popes out of more than two hundred and fifty there is room for difference of judgment. The principle on which I have proceeded is plain from the general aim I have indicated. The story of the Papacy may fitly be divided into two parts: a period of making and a period of unmaking. Taking the terms somewhat liberally, one may say that the first period reaches from the second to the fourteenth century, and that the subsequent centuries have witnessed an increasing loss of authority, especially in the catastrophic movements (from the Papal point of view) of the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries. A selection of significant Popes must, therefore, include the great makers of the Papacy, the men whose vice or incompetence brought destructive criticism upon it, and the men who have, with varying fortune, sought to defend it against the inroads of that criticism during the last four centuries. One must make a selection neither of good Popes nor bad Popes, but of the Popes who, in either direction, chiefly influenced the fortunes of the institution; and, in order that no important phase may be omitted, a few men of no very pronounced personality must be included.

Regarded from this point of view, the history of the Papacy may be compressed within limits which rather accentuate than obscure its interest, and, at the same time, a very

ample account may be given of some of its more instructive phases. The first phase, before the Bishop of Rome became a Pope, in the distinctive sense of the word, is best illustrated by taking the bishopric of Callistus at the beginning of the third century. The Roman bishopric was then one of several "apostolic Sees," rarely claiming authority over other bishoprics, and still more rarely finding such a claim acknowledged: thrown somewhat into the shade by the vastly greater strength of the Eastern churches, yet having an immense and as yet undeveloped resource in the tradition, which was now generally accepted, that it had been founded by the two princes of the apostles. There was, however, in three hundred years, no Roman bishop sufficiently endowed to develop this resource, and the fourth century still found the Roman See so little elevated that its African neighbours disdainfully rejected its claim of authority. Then the far-reaching change which followed the conversion of Constantine bestowed on it a material splendour and a secular authority which gave it a distinctive place in Christendom, and a study of the life of Bishop Damasus shows us the extension of its prestige and the exploitation of its tradition; while the founding of a rival imperial city in the East and the obliteration of all other apostolic Sees withdrew half of Christendom from Roman influence before its ecumenic claim was fully developed.

The fall of the western Roman Empire enfeebles the once powerful and independent provincial bishops and gives a more spiritual outlook to the successors of Peter who sit among the ruins of Rome. The life of Leo the Great illustrates this concentration on religious power amidst the autumnal decay of the more material power and of the wealth which had inflated and secularized some of his predecessors. The life of Gregory the Great marks the culmination of this development. The material world seems to be nearing dissolution and the old Roman spirit of

organization, which is strong in Gregory I., is directed to the creation of a moral and religious dictatorship. There are still flickers of independence in remote bishoprics, and the East is irrecoverably removed, but the disordered state of Christendom cries for a master. Europe is young again, with a vicious impulsive youth, and the rod of Rome falls healthily on its shoulders; and the paralysis of civic government and land-tenure in Italy inevitably casts secular functions and large possessions upon the one effective power that survives. An elementary royalty begins to attach to the Papacy: the function of ultimate tribunal in that violent world is imposed on it almost by public needs: and, though Gregory is personally disdainful of culture, the Church, and the monastic refuges it consecrates, preserve for a wiser age to come some proportion of the wisdom of the dead age.

With Hadrian I. a new phase opens. The possession and administration of "patrimonies," or bequeathed estates, give place to the definite political control of whole provinces, under the protection of a powerful and conveniently remote King of the Franks. In the ninth century, Nicholas I. consolidates and extends the new power, both as temporal and spiritual ruler. The vice and violence of Europe still justify or promote the growth of a great spiritual autocracy, and the illiteracy of Europe—for culture has touched its lowest depth—permits the imposition on it (in the "False Decretals," etc.) of an impressive and fictitious version of the bases of Papal claims. Then Rome, which has hitherto had singularly few unworthy men in the chair of Peter, becomes gradually degraded to the level of its age, and the Papacy passes into the darkness of the Age of Iron: which is fitly illustrated by the Pontificate of John X. Gregory VII. shows its restoration to spiritual ideals and the union of monastic severity with the Papal tradition; and this steady creation of a machinery for dominating the vice and

violence of Europe is perfected in the extraordinary work of Innocent III., who would, for its moral correction, make Europe the United States of the Church and treat its greatest monarchs as satraps of the Papacy.

After Innocent, the Papacy degenerates. A renewed school-life, the influence of the Moors, the evolution of civic life and prosperity, and the rise of powerful kingdoms stimulate the intelligence of Europe, while the political connexions in which the temporal power entangles the Papacy lead to a degeneration which cannot escape the more alert mind of the laity. During a long exile at Avignon the Papal court learns soft ways and corrupt devices—illustrated by the life of John XXII.—and the Great Schism which follows the return to Rome causes a moral paralysis which permits the Pontificate of an unscrupulous adventurer like John XXIII. The prosperous sensuality of the new Europe infects an immense proportion of the clergy: war, luxury, and display entail a vast expenditure, and the more thoughtful clergy and laity deplore the increasing sale by the Popes of sacred offices and spiritual privileges. The body of lay scholars and lawyers grows larger and more critical, while the Papal Court sinks lower and lower. The Papacy is fiercely criticized throughout Europe, and the resentment of its moral complexion leads to a discussion of the bases of its power. The earlier forgeries are discovered and the true story of its human growth is dimly apprehended. The successive Pontificates of Alexander VI., Julius II., and Leo X. exhibit this dramatic development: a flat defiance by the Papal Court of the increasing moral sentiment and critical intelligence of Europe. Men are still so dominated by religious tradition that, apart from an occasional heresy, they generally think only of "reform" and reforming councils. When Luther strikes a deeper note of rebellion, the echo is portentous, and neither reform, nor violence, nor persuasion succeeds in averting the disruption of Christendom. In Paul III., we have

the last representative of the Papacy of the Renaissance wavering between the grim menace of Germany and the unpleasantness of reform. In Sixtus V. and Benedict XIV. we study two of the great efforts of the new Papacy to preserve the remaining half of its territory. In Pius VII., Pius IX., and Leo XIII. we see the Papacy meeting the successive waves of the modern revolution.

In composing this sketch of Papal history, or, rather, study of its critical phases, I have gratefully used the larger modern histories to which I have referred. Dr. Ludwig Pastor's *History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages*[1] is, for the period it covers (1300-1550), the most valuable of all Papal histories. The Catholic author is not less courageous than scholarly, even if we must recognize some inevitable bias of affection, and he has enriched our knowledge by a most judicious and candid use of unpublished documents in the Secret Archives of the Vatican. Dr. H.K. Mann's *Lives of the Popes in the Middle Ages*,[2] which covers the ground from Gregory I. to Innocent III., is based upon an ample knowledge of the original authorities, but is much less candid and reliable, and seems to be intended only for controversial purposes. Dr. Creighton's learned and judicious *History of the Papacy from the Great Schism to the Sack of Rome*[3] must be corrected at times by the documents in Pastor. Father H. Grisar's incomplete *History of Rome and the Popes in the Middle Ages*[4] is a learned and moderate partisan study of the Papacy in the first four centuries. The older works of Dr. J. Langer,[5] Dean Milman,[6] Gregorovius,[7] and Ranke are by no means superfluous to the student, though more recent research or judgment often corrects them. Less extensive works will be noted in the course of each chapter, and I owe much to industrious older authorities like Baronius, Tillemont, Raynaldus, Mansi, etc. I have, however, had the original authorities before me throughout. The earlier chapters are, indeed, based almost

entirely on the Latin or Greek sources, and, in the later chapters, at every point which seemed to inspire differences of judgment I have carefully weighed the original texts. For the later mediæval period, however, Creighton, Pastor, and Gregorovius have so generously strengthened their works with quotations and references that, except at a few points, I may direct the reader to their more comprehensive studies. The narrow limits which are imposed by the particular purpose of this work forbid either the constant quoting of passages or the design of enlarging on some of the remarkable scenes to which it at times refers. The severe condensation, after the first few chapters, has entailed a labour only second to that of research, and I can only trust that the abundance of fact will afford some compensation for the lack of elegance. Happily the earlier controversial method of writing Papal history has so far yielded to candid research that the points in dispute—as far as fact is concerned—are comparatively few. Where they occur—where grave and accepted historians of any school dissent—the evidence is more liberally put before the reader.

J.M.

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FOOTNOTES:

[1] English trans., 1891, etc.

[2] Ten vols., 1902-1914.

[3] Six vols., 2d ed., 1897.

[4] English trans., 1911, etc.

[5] *Geschichte der römischen Kirche*, 1881, etc.

[6] *History of Latin Christianity.*

[7] *The City of Rome in the Middle Ages*, English trans., 1900, etc.

CHAPTER I

ST. CALLISTUS AND THE EARLY STRUGGLE

At the close of the second century after the birth of Christ the Christian community at Rome still saw no human prospect of that spiritual mastery of the world which they trusted some day to attain. They lived, for the most part, in the Transtiberina, the last and least reputable section of the great city, beyond the shelter of its walls. In that squalid and crowded district between the Janiculus and the Tiber dwelt the fishers and tanners and other poor workers; and the Jews, and others who shunned the light, found refuge among their lowly tenements. Near that early ghetto, from which they had issued, most of the Christians lingered. Still they were a small community, and still the might of Rome bade them crouch trembling at the gates, lost among the tombs and gardens of the Vatican or the dense poverty at the foot of the Janiculus. Across the river they would see, above the fringe of wharves and warehouses, the spreading line of the Roman people's palaces, from the Theatre of Pompey to the Great Circus: perhaps they would hear the roar of the lions which might at any time taste Christian flesh. Beyond these was the seething popular quarter of the Velabrum, sending up to heaven at night a confused murmur and a blaze of light at which the Christians would cross themselves; and on either side of the Velabrum, the stern guardians of its superstition, were the hills which bore the gold-roofed temple of Jupiter and the marble city of the Cæsars. More than one hundred and fifty years had passed since the death of Christ, yet his followers waited without the gates, little heeded by the million citizens of Rome.

The old gods were dying, it is true. In many a cool *atrium* there must have been some such discussion about the successor of Jupiter as has been finely imagined by Anatole

France; but assuredly not the weirdest of the Syrian visionaries who abounded would have said that, in a few centuries, those neglected fields beside the Neronian Circus at the foot of the Vatican would become the centre of the world, and that men and women would come from the farthest limits of the Empire to kiss the bones of those obscure Christians. Men talked of the progress of the cult of Mithra, which spread even to distant Eboracum, or the success of the priests of Isis or of Cybele, but few thought about the priests of Christ. Earlier in the century, Pliny had written to court to say that he had found, spreading over his province, a sect named the Christians, whose beliefs seemed to him "an immoderate superstition"; though they had, he said, under pressure, abandoned their God in crowds; and he had little doubt that he would extinguish the sect. Few even of the Christians can have imagined that within two centuries their cross would be raised above the proudest monuments of Rome, and that the eagles of Jove and the rams of Mithra would lie in the dust.

Toward the end of the second century the Roman Christians can hardly have numbered twenty thousand. Dr. Döllinger estimates their number at fifty thousand, but the letter of Bishop Cornelius, on which he relies, belongs to a later date and is not accurately quoted by him.[8] The Bishop says that, in his time, the Roman Church had forty-four priests, fourteen deacons and subdeacons, and ninety-four clerics in minor orders. The crowd of acolytes and exorcists must not be regarded in a modern sense; most of them would never be priests. At that time, there was not a single public chapel in Rome and it would be an anachronism to regard each of the thirty or forty priests of Rome as a rector in charge of more than a thousand souls. The Christians gathered stealthily in the houses of their better-endowed brethren to receive the sacred elements from poor glass vessels, and Tertullian blushes to learn that they are found among the

panders and gamblers who have to bribe the officials to overlook their illegal ways.[9] The fact that they supported fifteen hundred poor, sick, and widows need not surprise us when we remember what an age of parasitism it was. At least a fourth of the citizens of Rome lived on free rations and had free medical service. There were, in fine, thirty years of development between the time of Cornelius and the time of Callistus.[10]

Yet, it was nearly a century and a half, tradition said, since Peter and Paul had baptized crowds on the banks of the Tiber. One cannot today add anything to the discussion of that tradition and I will very briefly state the evidence. The First Epistle of Peter—which is not undisputed—says[11]: "The Church that is in Babylon saluteth you," and Babylon is very plausibly understood to mean Rome. Next, about the year 96, Clement of Rome, writing to the Corinthians, speaks vaguely of a "martyrdom" of Peter and Paul, and seems to imply that it took place at Rome.[12] About the middle of the following century, we find it believed in remote parts of the Church—by Papias in Hierapolis and Dionysius at Corinth—that Peter had preached the Gospel at Rome.[13] Ignatius of Antioch also seems to imply that Peter and Paul founded the Roman community.[14] Irenæus and Tertullian and later writers know even more about it—the later the writer, the more he knows—but the historian must hesitate to use their works. There is a respectable early tradition that Peter and Paul preached the Gospel at Rome and suffered there some kind of martyrdom, during or after the Neronian persecution. Peter is not called "bishop" of Rome by any writer earlier than the third century, and the belief that he ruled the Roman Church for twenty-five years seems to be merely the outcome of some fanciful calculations of Anti-Pope Hippolytus.

Of the earlier bishops, Linus and Anacletus (or Anencletus), we know only the names.[15] Then a faint light is thrown on the metropolitan Church by the letter of Clement, its third Bishop. We find an ordered community, with bishop, priests, and deacons; perhaps we conceive it more accurately if we say, with overseer, elders, and servants. Then the mists thicken again and a line of undistinguished names is all that we can discern until the consecration of Bishop Victor in the year 189.

One would like to know more about Bishop Victor. He seems to have been the first Pope, in the familiar sense of the word. "Pope" was, we know, a common title of bishops until the sixth century, but Victor is one of the makers of a distinctive Papacy. We shall, presently, find Tertullian speaking, with his heaviest irony, of "the bishop of bishops, the supreme pontiff," and, although he is probably referring to Callistus, he is echoing the words of some other bishop. History points to Victor, who peremptorily cut off the Eastern churches from communion because they would not celebrate Easter when he did. They were not much concerned, but Victor's premature assertion of leadership marks the beginning of the Papacy.

The Roman Church was wealthier than those of the East, or had a few wealthy members in the city. It sent sums of money to more needy communities and received flattering requests for advice. It was, however, singularly lacking in intellectual distinction, and it produced no scholar to refute the subtle Gnostics and fiery Montanists who came to it. The waves of heresy which raged over the East broke harmlessly on the Italian shore of Christendom. One must not imagine that it was isolated from the East by difference of tongue. Until the end of the third century, it was wholly Greek: more isolated from Rome than from Corinth. Nor is it less inaccurate to say that the Latins were more interested in administration than in speculation. There is little trace of

organization until the days of Callistus. One is more disposed to conceive the Roman Church shivering in poverty amid the wealth and culture of the metropolis. The disdainful language of the intellectuals and the wonderful success of Stoicism in the second century excluded it from the educated world; while its secrecy, its stern abstinence from games and festivals, its scorn of the gods, and the shadow of deadly illegality which brooded over it, made it less successful in appealing to the people than the other Eastern religions.

If, however, the Roman See made little impression in Rome, it made some progress in the Church. As the fragments of Papias and Dionysius show, Christians were saying, far away in the East, that it had been founded by Peter; and the Gospels plainly made Peter the chief of the apostles. The Roman See did not yet speak of having inherited the primacy of Peter, and it had very little share in the prestige of Rome. It must rise higher in the eyes of men, and at the end of the second century it was rising. Marcia, the robust ex-slave who shared the brutal pleasures of Commodus and was mistress of his harem of three hundred concubines, had a grateful recollection of earlier Christian kindness, and she secured peace and favour for the Church. Here it is that, for the first time, a clear light falls upon the Christian community at Rome and upon its bishops.

In the year 217 (or 218), Bishop Callistus succeeded Bishop Zephyrin, who had followed Victor. From the fourth century he has been counted one of the greatest of the early Popes. Two of the historic cemeteries bore his name, and there were a Church of St. Callistus (or Calixtus, as the Latins sometimes misspell it) and a Square of St. Callistus in the Trastevere district. Martyrologies honoured him as a witness to the faith, and (probably from the seventh century) the *Acta* of his martyrdom, including a most impressive account of his virtues and miracles, might be consulted in the

archives of Sta. Maria in Trastevere. From these materials, Moretti composed an eloquent biography of the saint, and even the Bollandists, more discreetly, and with disturbing hints that Christian scholars were saying naughty things about the *Acta S. Callisti*, set their learned seal upon his diploma of sanctity and martyrdom.

Contemporary with Callistus, the saint and martyr, was Hippolytus, the scholar and saint and martyr. They were the two shining jewels of the Roman Church. The many works of Hippolytus had strangely disappeared, and tradition was not even sure of which town he had been Bishop; but there was evidence enough to connect him with the Roman Church and to justify the claim that he was the Origen of the West. When, in 1551, a broken marble statue of Hippolytus was discovered at Rome, it was devoutly restored and set up in the Lateran Museum. And just three hundred years afterwards, in 1851, there was given to the world a lost work of the saintly scholar, from which it is plain that he was the first Anti-Pope, and that the Pope whom he opposed and reviled was Callistus. The first book of this work, the *Refutation of all Heresies* (sometimes called the *Philosophoumena*), had long been known; the manuscript copy of Books IV. to X. was found in a monastery on Mount Athos in 1842. Now that the true character of Hippolytus is known, some doubt has been cast upon his scholarship, but it was considerable for his age and environment. He was one of the very few scholars of the Roman Church during several centuries, and one chapter of his work throws an interesting light on the person of Callistus and on a remarkable phase of the development of the Papacy.

The controversy about the authorship of the book and about the charges against Callistus has brought to bear upon that period all the available light; and the modern student will probably find the truth somewhere between the extremes held by the contending historians of the nineteenth century.

[16] De Rossi himself, indeed, while pretending to support, entirely discredits the arguments with which Döllinger, in his years of orthodoxy, sought to defend the impeccability of the Popes and to prove the moral obliquity of all who opposed them. The Italian archæologist, it is true, imputes to Hippolytus a malice which goes ill with *his* reputation for sanctity, but perhaps we shall be able to extricate ourselves from this painful dilemma without grave detriment to the character of either saint.

Callistus was, in the days of Commodus, a slave of the Christian Carpophorus, according to the *Liber Pontificalis*.[17] He was the son of a certain Domitius who lived in the Transtiberina. The master entrusted the slave with money to open a bank, and the faithful put their savings into it, but it became known after a time that Callistus had—to quote the text literally—"brought all the money to naught and was in difficulties." He fled to the Port of Rome, whence, after leaping into the sea in despair, he was brought back to the house of Carpophorus and put in the *pistrinum*, the domestic mill in which slaves expiated their crimes. The faithful, prompted by Callistus, begged his release on the ground that he had money on loan and could repay. He had no money, however, and he could think of nothing better than to make a disturbance in the synagogue on the Sabbath, for which the Jews took him before the Prefect Fuscianus[18] and described him as a Christian. He was scourged and was sent to the silver or iron mines of Sardinia—the Siberia of the Empire—from which few returned. But, shortly afterwards, Marcia obtained the release of the Christians, and although Bishop Victor had not included the name of Callistus in the list, Callistus persuaded the eunuch to insert it. Victor, however, reflecting on the hostility of his victims, sent him to live, on a pension provided by the Church, at Antium.

This narrative has been subjected to the most meticulous criticism, as if it were something novel or important to accuse a Pope of having committed certain indiscretions in his youth. It suffices to say that, while Döllinger is, in the end, reduced to claiming that Hippolytus was probably not in Rome at the time, the more learned De Rossi is so impressed by the minuteness and (as far as it can be checked) the accuracy of the account that he believes Hippolytus to have been a deacon of the Church at the time and so to have had official knowledge of the facts. The single point of any importance is open to a humane interpretation. Did or did not Callistus embezzle the money? If he did, how came he to be elected bishop? If he did not, how comes his sainted rival to call him, as he does, a fraud and impostor? We may remember that financial troubles of this kind are peculiarly open to opposite interpretations. Hippolytus, Victor, and Carpophorus, it seems, took the less charitable view; but it would not be unnatural for others to persuade themselves, or be persuaded by Callistus, that he was merely the victim of circumstances.

Victor died in 198 and was succeeded by Zephyrin, "an ignorant and illiterate man," says Hippolytus. Callistus, who had ceased to be a slave when he was sentenced to penal servitude, was recalled to Rome and, apparently, made first deacon (now called archdeacon) of the Church. He was put in charge of a cemetery in the Appian Way which the community had just secured, and this cemetery bears his name to this day. Hippolytus, who was indignant, charges Callistus with ambition, and says that Zephyrin was avaricious and open to bribes; which we may humanely construe to mean that the able administration of Callistus enabled the Bishop to live in some comfort. Nor need we despair of finding a genial interpretation of his further charge, that the deacon induced Zephyrin to meddle with questions of dogma, and then, behind the Bishop's back,

diplomatically sympathized with both the contending parties. The truth is that the Latins were sorely puzzled by the subtleties with which the Greeks were slowly and fiercely shaping the dogma that the Father and Son were one nature, yet two persons, and both Zephyrin and Callistus stumbled.

Callistus is further described as assisting Zephyrin in the "coercion," or, as others translate, the "organization" of the clergy, and this point is of greater interest. As far as one can construe the barbarous Latin of the *Liber Pontificalis*, Zephyrin decreed that the priests were not to consecrate the communion for the people. The sacred elements were to be brought to them, on glass patens, from the altar at which the bishop said mass. Probably this is the "coercion" to which Hippolytus refers, as the aim was, plainly, to emphasize the subordination of the clergy. I would further venture to suggest, against the learned Father Grisar, that this was also the occasion when the sphere of the Roman bishop was divided into twenty-five *tituli* (or parishes). The *Liber Pontificalis* describes how Urban I., the successor of Callistus, substituted silver for glass vessels at the altar, and expressly speaks of "twenty-five patens."

We must conclude that Callistus was able as well as persuasive, and we are not surprised to learn that, when Zephyrin died in 217 (or, according to another account, 218) he was chosen Bishop. It was customary, until long afterwards, to choose the bishop from the body of deacons, but Hippolytus and his friends were indignant at the election of the ex-slave, and a schism occurred. Hippolytus had the support of the minority of precisians and correct believers: Callistus was the favourite of the majority. Epithets of which the modern mind can hardly appreciate the gravity were hurled from camp to camp. "Patripassian," thundered Hippolytus; "Ditheist" retorted Callistus. It is quite clear that the scholar set up a rival See at Rome. He says that

Callistus, when he was elected, "thought" that he had attained his ambition, and this must mean that he claimed himself to be the true Bishop of Rome. Later tradition, concealing the ugly schism, left the bishopric of Hippolytus in the air, or placed it at the Port of Rome, twenty miles away. But this picture of daily combats implies that both bishops were in Rome, and the little flock was rent and agitated by the first Papal schism.

The dogmatic issue between the rivals cannot profitably be discussed here. The Church was then in an early phase of the great Trinitarian controversy, and, under Victor and Zephyrin, the Roman clergy had favoured the simpler, or unitarian, view. Sabellius, who has given his name to one form of unitarianism, was in Rome and was supported by the deacon Callistus: indeed, his rival says that it was Callistus who seduced Sabellius. However that may be, Callistus shrewdly perceived he could not meet his learned opponent on that ground. He disowned Sabellius, and soon lost himself in a maze of technical theology into which I will not venture to follow him. To theologians I leave also the discussion of the charge that Callistus favoured the rebaptizing of converted heretics.

It is the charges of a practical or disciplinary nature which best illustrate the character of Callistus and make his Pontificate a milestone in the history of the Papacy. When we have made every possible allowance for exaggeration, they show that Callistus infused a remarkable spirit of liberalism into the Christian discipline and made smooth for the tender feet of the Romans the rough ways of his Church.

The first charge is that Callistus admitted grave sinners to communion, if they did penance. The ancient discipline is well known. Those who committed one "mortal" sin after baptism could never again be admitted to communion. They were the pariahs of the community, bearing in the eyes of

all the ineffaceable brand of their sin. There was as yet no central power to define mortal sins, but sins of the flesh were, beyond doubt, in that category, and, as such were not uncommon at Rome, a rigorous insistence on the old discipline hampered the growth of the Church. Callistus, with princely liberality, abolished it. "I hear," says Tertullian, "that an edict has gone forth. The supreme Pontiff, that is to say, the Bishop of Bishops, announces: I will absolve even those who are guilty of adultery and fornication, if they do penance."[19] So the narrow gates were opened a little wider to the warm-blooded Romans, and the Church grew.

But, while modern sentiment will genially applaud this act of the first liberal Pope, the fifth charge in the indictment, which I take up next, seems graver. The Greek text of Hippolytus is here particularly corrupt and ambiguous, but the translation given by the Rev. J.M. Macmahon in the *Ante-Nicene Library* is generally faithful:

> For even also he permitted females, if they were unwedded and burned with passion at an age at all events unbecoming [more probably, at a seasonable age], or [and] if they were not disposed to overturn their dignity through a legal marriage, that they might have whomsoever they would choose as a bedfellow, whether a slave or free [freedman], and that they, though not legally married, might consider such an one as a husband.[20]

The Bishop goes on to describe in technical language, which need not be reproduced here, how the practice of abortion spread among Christian ladies as a result of this license.

The apparent gravity of the charge has, however, so far disappeared since the days of Döllinger that we are now asked to admire the bold and exalted charity of Callistus. He is, of course, referring to the Roman law which forbade the

widow or daughter of a senator, under pain of losing her dignity of *clarissima*, to marry a free-born man of lower condition; a slave or freedman she could not validly marry. There cannot have been very many ladies of senatorial rank in the Church at that time, seeing that, seventy years after the conversion of Constantine, St. Augustine found "nearly the whole of the nobility" still pagan.[21] There were, however, some, as the inscriptions in the Catacombs show, and their position was painful. They must either mate with a Christian slave or freedman, and be regarded by the law and their neighbours as living in concubinage: or marry a free-born Christian of low degree and thus forfeit their rank: or devote their virginity or their widowhood to God. The Church was concerned that they should not marry pagan senators, who would scoff at their superstitions and would dissipate their fortunes. Callistus told them that he would recognize as valid in conscience unions with slaves or freedmen which the State did not countenance. The number of ladies to whom the license extended must have been small, and Hippolytus evidently exaggerates the occasional scandals which followed. The impartial historian, however, will hardly regard the action of Callistus as a humanitarian protest against caste-distinctions. Such distinctions were maintained by the Church for centuries afterwards in its legislation about the clergy, and, on the other hand, the measure was profitable to the Church. In practice, indeed, these secret marriages would easily lead to disorder. A Christian lady would, if she were to keep her union secret, merely choose a "husband" among her slaves or freedmen, and would be tempted to use illicit means when her "marriage" threatened to be exposed too plainly to pagan eyes.

The other charges against Callistus show a general policy of liberality. He decreed that a bishop who was convicted of mortal sin was not necessarily to be deposed: he permitted

men who had been twice or thrice married to become deacons or priests: he directed that "men in orders" must not be disturbed if they married. Some writers think that, in the latter case, he was referring only to men in minor orders, but that would not have been a daring innovation. Hippolytus, in fact, makes his policy and his character clearer by telling us, indignantly, how Callistus searched the Scriptures for proof that the Church must be wide enough to embrace both saints and sinners. There had been clean and unclean animals in the ark: Christ had said that the tares must grow up with the wheat: and so on. His reputation for liberality spread so far in the Church that, while Tertullian grumbled in Africa, a quaint Syrian charlatan named Alcibiades was attracted from the East to Rome. He brought a mystic work, given to him by two angels of the imposing height of ninety-six miles each, and he proclaimed that his new form of baptism absolved even from certain gross sins which he very freely and suggestively described.

The Church grew during these years of peace, of able organization, and of humanization. Callistus "made a *basilica* beyond the Tiber"—the *Liber Pontificalis* says—and there is an interesting passage in the *Historia Augusta* which seems to refer to this first Christian chapel at Rome. The biographer of Alexander Severus says (c. xliii.) that the Emperor wished to give the Christians the right to have public chapels, but his officials protested that "the temples would be deserted—all Rome would become Christian." This is obviously a piece of later Christian fiction. In a more plausible paragraph, however, Lampridius tells us that the Christians occupied a "public place," to which the innkeepers laid claim, and the Emperor decided that "it was better for God to be worshipped there in some form than for the innkeepers to have it." It is probable enough that this inn is the *taverna meritoria* (wine shop and restaurant) referred to by Dio Cassius[22]: among the portents which

accompanied the struggles of Octavian a stream of oil had burst forth in this hostel in the Transtiberina. We know from Orosius[23] that the Christians claimed the occurrence in later years as a presage of the coming of Christ. The age, if not the disputed ownership, of the place suggests a dilapidated, if not deserted, building; and if we may in one detail trust that interesting romance, the *Acta S. Callisti*, we have a picture of the Christians of the third century meeting at last, under their enterprising Bishop, in the upper or dining room of this humble old inn in the despised Transtiberina. This was the high-water mark of a century and a half of progress.

Only one other act is authentically recorded of the brief rule of Bishop Callistus: he directed his people to fast on three Sabbaths in the year. This may seem inconsistent with his genial policy, but we must remember that rigorists abounded at Rome and demanded sterner ways. Callistus, apparently, merely sanctioned some slight traditional observance and thus virtually relieved the faithful of others.

It may be fascinating to conjecture what so enterprising a Pope would have done with the ecclesiastical system if he had lived long enough, but Callistus died, according to the best authorities, in the year 222, four or five years after his consecration. He did not die a martyr. In opening his account of the career of Callistus, the rival Bishop says: "This man suffered martyrdom when Fuscianus was Prefect, and this was the sort of martyrdom he suffered." It is inconceivable that Hippolytus should use such language in Rome after the death of Callistus if the Pope had really suffered for the faith. No Christian was executed at Rome under Alexander Severus. We must suppose that after his death, if not during his life, Callistus was applauded as a martyr because of his banishment to Sardinia, and probably this gave rise to the legend of his martyrdom, which first appears, as a bald statement, in the fourth century. The

Acta S. Callisti may be traced to about the seventh century, and may be a pious contribution to the rejoicing of the faithful at the transfer of his bones to Sta. Maria in Trastevere.[24] The recklessness with which the writer describes the gentle and friendly Alexander Severus as a truculent enemy of the Christians was noted even by mediæval historians, and the narrative is now regarded as, in the words of Döllinger, "a piece of fiction from beginning to end." Yet Father Grisar[25] describes Callistus as a martyr.

Hippolytus maintained his little schism under Urban I. and Pontianus, while the orthodox community prospered in the sun of imperial favour. Then the grim Maximinus succeeded Alexander on the throne, and the clouds gather again over Christendom. We just discern Pope and Anti-Pope, Pontianus and Hippolytus, passing together to the deadly mines of Sardinia. Later legend generously reconciled the rivals and gave to both of them the martyr's crown; but the authority is late and worthless. In whatever manner he ended his career, Rome was too proud of its one scholar to darken his memory, and the names of Hippolytus and Callistus shone together in ecclesiastical literature until that fateful discovery among the dusty parchments of the monks of Mount Athos.

FOOTNOTES:

[8] It is preserved in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, vi., 43.

[9] *De Fuga a Persecutione*, xiii.

[10] The number of interments in the Catacombs cannot very well be regarded as evidence. Archæologists differ by millions in estimating the number, and the populous Church after Constantine still buried in the Catacombs, at least until the Pontificate of Damasus.

[11] V., 13.

[12] *Epistle*, v.

[13] See Eusebius, ii., 15, and iii., 40, for the words of Papias, and ii., 25, for the testimony of Dionysius.

[14] *Letter to Romans*, iv.

[15] Even the names and order are given differently in early writers. I follow, as is now usual, the order given by Epiphanius (xxvii., 6) and Irenæus.

[16] Bunsen's four-volume *Hippolytus and his Age* (1852) was sharply attacked by Döllinger (*Hippolytus and Callistus*, English translation, 1876) and more judiciously handled by G.B. de Rossi in his *Bulletino di Archeologia Cristiana* (1866, pp. 1-33). Milman (*History of Latin Christianity*, vol. i.) and Ch. Wordsworth (*St. Hippolytus and the Church of Rome*, 1853) supported Bunsen. The work itself is translated in *The Ante-Nicene Library*, vol. vi.

[17] This anonymous catalogue of the Popes, which I must often quote, is a quaint mixture of accurate archives and inaccurate rumours. The first part seems to have been written in the sixth century, and it was continued as a semi-official record. See the Introduction to Duchesne's edition.

[18] Fuscianus was Prefect between the years 186 and 189, so that we have an approximate date of these events.

[19] *De Pudicitia*, i. Döllinger, on no apparent ground, and against all probability, refers this to Zephyrin, and some older writers think that the indignant Puritan is quoting an African bishop. We must agree with De Rossi that Tertullian has Callistus in mind, especially when we find Hippolytus saying that he was "the first" to do this. An earlier attempt of an Eastern bishop might easily have escaped Hippolytus.

[20] Vol. vi., p. 346. This is a fair, if inelegant, rendering of the Greek text given by Duncker and Schneidewin in their edition of the *Refutation*, and it corresponds with the Latin translation given by those editors and with De Rossi. Döllinger is alone in his interpretation.

[21] *Confessions*, viii., 2.

[22] XLVIII.

[23] VI., 18.

[24] Neither this church nor the Basilica S. Callisti can have been the original meeting-place, though the latter may have been founded on it.

[25] *History of Rome and the Popes in the Early Middle Ages*, i,. 313.

CHAPTER II

ST. DAMASUS AND THE TRIUMPH

In the year 355, the Christians of the imperial city startled their neighbours by a series of violent and threatening demonstrations. Armed crowds of them filled the streets, and monks and sacred virgins hid themselves from the riot. An inquiring pagan would have learned that the Emperor Constantius, who had waded to supremacy through a stream of blood, was attempting to force on their Bishop and themselves the damnable heresy of Arius. A few weeks before, Constantius had sent his eunuch with rich presents to Liberius, suavely asking him to condemn a certain fiery Athanasius who resisted the heresy. Liberius had courageously refused, and, when the eunuch had cunningly left the gifts beside the tomb of St. Peter, the Bishop had had them cast out of the church. When the exasperated eunuch had returned to the Emperor at Milan, the Christian community had prepared for drastic action, and it was presently known that the civic officials at Rome had received orders to seize the Bishop and send him to Milan. The Christians threatened resistance, and for a few days the city was enlivened by their turbulence. At last, Liberius was dragged from his house at night and taken to Milan; and, since he bravely resisted the Emperor to his face, he was sent on to remote and inhospitable Thrace. Then the clergy, and as many of the faithful as could enter, gathered in their handsome new *basilica* on the site of the Laterani Palace and swore a great oath that they would know no other bishop as long as Liberius lived. One, at least, of the clergy set out—no doubt amidst the cheers of the people—to accompany his Bishop into exile; this was the deacon Damasus, who was destined to be the next Pope of prominence in the Roman calendar.

The scene reminds us forcibly of the dramatic transformation which had taken place since, a century before, Pope and Anti-Pope had been sent in chains to the mines. For fifty years after that date the *Liber Pontificalis* is a necrology, a chronicle of gloomy life in the Catacombs. Eleven Popes out of the thirteen who followed Urban I. are—most of them wrongly—described as martyrs, and the record of their actions shrinks to a few lines. At last, with Bishop Eusebius, the chronicle brightens and lengthens; and then, under the name of Silvester, it swells to thirty pages and glows with tokens of imperial generosity. The darkest hour of the Church has suddenly changed into a dazzling splendour.

The historical revolution reflected in this early chronicle of the Popes is well known. For eighty years after the death of Callistus, the hope of the faithful was painfully strained. The Decian persecution (249-251) sent some to the heroic death of the martyr, many to the corrupt officials who sold false certificates of apostasy, and very many back to the pagan temples. Then another schism and another Anti-Pope appeared; and the alliance with St. Cyprian and the African bishops, which had at first promised aid against the schismatics, ended in a contemptuous repudiation by the African bishops of Rome's claim to jurisdiction. The Valerian persecution dissolved the feud in blood, and, then, forty years of peace enabled the Roman Christians to recover and to extend their domain. Two or three small *basilicæ* were erected or adapted. But, in the year 303, the new hope was chilled by the dreaded summons of the persecutor, and, for the last time, stern-set men and gentle maidens set out to face the headsman. Rome did not suffer much in the next seven years of persecution, but one can imagine the feelings of the faithful when they saw century thus succeed century without bringing any larger hope even of a free place in the sun. And then, in rapid succession, came the

triumph of Constantine, the issue of their charter of liberty (the Edict of Milan, 313), the imperial profession of Christianity, the grant to the Christian clergy of the privileges of Roman priests, and the building of large *basilicæ* and scattering of gold and silver over their marble altars. Even the transfer of the court to Constantinople hardly dimmed the new hope. It remained "a new form of ambition to desert the altars," the pagans murmured, and no one dare thwart the zeal of the clergy.

So, by the year 355, when deacon Damasus makes an inglorious entrance into history, Rome had a large Christian community and at least half a dozen churches. But Christendom was now overcast by the triumph of Arianism and an Arian Emperor, and the struggle put an insupportable strain on the character of the faithful. At first, the prospect at Rome was brave and inspiring. They would all be true to their martyr-bishop; with that thrilling cry in his ears the deacon set out for Thrace. In a very short time, he was back in Rome, having changed his mind: "fired with ambition," his critics said. And, in another short time, the chief deacon Felix, who also had taken the oath, listened to the Arian court and became Bishop of Rome; and Damasus and most of the clergy transferred their loyalty to him. Then, in two or three years, Liberius grew tired of Thrace, and signed some sort of heretical formula, and came back to Rome; and the bloody struggle of Pope and Anti-Pope led to a train of sorrows which darken the life of St. Damasus.

He had been born, probably at Rome, though his father is said to have been a Spaniard, about the year 304.[26] The father had been a priest in the service of the little *basilica* of St. Lawrence in the city—I am not impressed by Marucchi's contention that he was a bishop—and had brought up Damasus in the same service. The mother Laurentia was pious: the sister Irene consecrated her virginity to God. Damasus became, and remained, a deacon, and was at