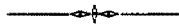


object is, first, to enable the Bishops of the Province of India and Ceylon to provide the ministrations of the Church for our fellow-countrymen scattered throughout that vast portion of the British Empire; and, secondly, to help to establish the large and increasing body of native members of our Church, who greatly need our support, especially as it is through them that the non-Christian mass may best be brought to the knowledge of the truth. Of course, funds are greatly needed for all the different objects connected with this association. The other day, at a meeting of the Council at the Church House, it was lamentable to hear the poor sum of £140 being doled out to the different dioceses in the huge Province of India and Ceylon. And we shall be doing a good work if we turn the attention of anyone interested in the Church's work in India to the efforts of the Indian Church Aid Association; and I may mention that an *Indian Church Magazine* is now published quarterly, which gives very interesting information about Church work in India.

Looking back over the past century, we should indeed be thankful for the success which God has given to all the Church's efforts in India, and we may look forward into this century "in fullest faith and hope that the progress will be more rapid and the success more complete"; only let us bear in mind our Lord's caution, that in this dispensation the Gospel is to be preached in all lands *for a witness*, and that we are not to expect national conversions until the Jews have first turned to the Lord; and then Zechariah's prophecy "about many people and strong nations" (chap. viii.) will be fulfilled. Meantime, let us wait patiently, and pray for God's blessing on the Church's work in India and in all lands, and do all we can to support and further it.

WALTER WACE.



ART. VI.—"THE AGE OF THE FATHERS": BEING
CHAPTERS IN THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH
DURING THE FOURTH AND FIFTH CENTURIES.¹

THE ground covered in these volumes is almost exactly the same as that traversed by Dr. Bright in his earliest work, "The History of the Church from A.D. 313 to A.D. 451." But the treatment is very different. That book was written for

¹ By the late William Bright, D.D., Regius Professor of Ecclesiastical History in the University of Oxford. In two volumes. Vol. i., pp. x, 543; ii., pp. 597. London: Longmans, 1893. Price 28s.

students; references to authorities enabled the students to verify all statements. The present work is more popular, and no notes are given. At the same time (says Dr. Lock, the editor of the work, in his preface) it is more learned, because enriched by the varied reading of thirty-five additional years.

A posthumous book is, by its nature, unsatisfactory. Who does not regret that the great scholar, F. J. A. Hort, did not live to witness the publication of the various volumes that, since his death, have been edited and issued by grateful and pious hands as a memorial, *ære perennius*, to the teacher? One must needs miss those finishing touches, those added notes, that delicate pruning, that a fastidious scholar ever deems it necessary to execute. No other hand, however deft, can manipulate the material with quite the skill of the original writer. And so, perhaps, it is with the present work, admirably finished off, as it has been, by Mr. C. H. Turner and Dr. W. Lock. All that painstaking revision could accomplish they have done.

As to the book itself, the reading of it—despite the ease of its style—has been a more exacting task than might have been anticipated. The very absence of footnotes has proved (to one reader at least) rather a hindrance than a help, inasmuch as there was no clue provided whereby to test this or that statement, or weigh this or that conclusion. And the verification has frequently proved laborious, and, at times, intricate.

What strikes one most about the book, perhaps, is the consummate ease with which Canon Bright moves through a mass of detail—biographical and political, as well as theological—that would go far to swamp most men. Evidently his knowledge is a first-hand knowledge; the scenes he depicts—and with so forcible a pen—he depicts from intimate knowledge; he is in close living touch with his heroes; they speak to him, across the gulf of a millennium and a half, as though he too were of them; he has entered into their interests, has watched them at their work, has seen and appreciated their struggles, anticipated their victories, and solaced them in their defeats. Such a knowledge as this—and it is everywhere apparent in Dr. Bright's massive and crowded volumes—comes not from reading *about* the Fathers in the latest German encyclopædia, or the last theological pamphlet from Leyden or Zürich, but from close intimate acquaintance with the actual writings of the Fathers themselves. To this the editors have called attention in their judicious preface, when they say: "It must be acknowledged that Dr. Bright was not well acquainted with German. . . . On the other hand, few (if any) scholars of our generation have moved with such ease among the primary

Latin and Greek contemporaneous writers." This is what gives his work its peculiar quality; one feels instinctively that the writer has read Jerome's "Letters"; has mastered Augustine's "De Civitate"; has followed Chrysostom's "Sermons," with tender interest and pathetic regard, in their original Greek; and is as familiar with the correspondence of Leo the Great as a modern man of letters is with the correspondence of Horace Walpole or Fitzgerald.¹

Doubtless the weak element in the book as a whole lies in the fact that the chapters are rather biographical sketches in a historical framework than a closely-knit organic history. The book has the charm of discursiveness, but not the ordered efficiency of such a work as Gibbon's. The details give life and colour to a narrative; true, but they require a strict subordination to the main account. Biographical details are sometimes apt to distort the historical perspective. And that is, possibly, the impression left on the mind by parts of the book. Parts, on the other hand, are admirably conceived and rendered—*e.g.*, the story of Chrysostom, from the summons from Antioch to that dark day when he fell a victim to Imperial treachery and the jealousies of an ecclesiastical cabal.

The following is a very brief sketch of the contents of the book as a whole. A short introductory chapter leads us to the Donatist troubles that eventuated in the Council of Arles. Then follow two chapters, the one containing an account of the Councils of Ancyra and Neocæsarea, the other an account of the relations between Licinius and Constantine. Next comes one of the most important sections of the work—the story of the Nicene Council, and the Arian factions which were the *fons et origo* of that celebrated meeting. Dr. Bright does ample justice to the part taken by Athanasius at the Council, and devotes a considerable portion of the subsequent chapters to an account of Athanasius and his place in the development of Christian doctrine. This is not the first time that Dr. Bright has written, with singular affection, yet equal impartiality, of this, the greatest of the Fathers; readers will call to mind his masterly book, "Lessons from the Lives of Athanasius, Chrysostom, and Augustine."

The Pagan reaction under Julian is next dealt with; and this is followed by the chapter on Basil—not, we think, the most satisfactory portion of the book. Basil evidently appeals strongly to Dr. Bright's sympathies; yet, somehow, one gets a much less vivid impression of the life of that Father from these pages than of Ambrose, for example, or Cyril.

¹ The student may usefully read, alongside of Bright's volumes, Prof. S. Dill's admirable volume, "Roman Society in the Last Century of the Western Empire" (1898); and Farrar's "Lives of the Fathers" (1888).

Of Theodosius Dr. Bright writes with uncommon admiration and respect, though no attempt is made to gloss over the growing tendency of the Emperors generally, and of Theodosius in particular, to advance the interests of the Christian Church by persecution of dissentients and (so-called) "heretics."

The chief chapters in the second volume are those—already alluded to—which recount the troublous episcopate of Chrysostom, and of the work of Augustine in, practically, welding Western Christianity into a doctrinal unity. No man ever left so lasting an impression, not merely on the thought, but the organization, of the Christian Church as this extraordinary man—a man who, despite certain intolerances, certain weaknesses (*e.g.*, the unhappy business of Pinianus, not referred to by Dr. Bright), and certain superstitions (possibly inevitable amid the growing superstitions of the fifth century), has given to Western Christianity a forcefulness, a character, that Eastern Christianity has conspicuously lacked.

The rise of Nestorianism, the Councils of Ephesus and Constantinople, the "Latrocinium," and the events that led up to, and included, the great Council of Chalcedon, occupy the rest of the book—viz., some 300 closely-printed pages. The reader will do well to weigh Dr. Bright's temperate verdict on Cyril of Alexandria, the best-abused of all the Fathers, not, perhaps, undeservedly. Much as we may detest, and rightly detest, Cyril's relentless persecution of Nestorius, and his connection with the shameful murder of Hypatia, it must be confessed that the Church of Christ is in his debt for the services he rendered her at a critical juncture. He had the misfortune to begin life under the care of an evil-natured man, Theodorus of Alexandria; he had a fierce opposition to contend against, and that under the burden of ill-health, sharp censure, bitter imputation, misconstruction, and never-sleeping suspicions. Whatever his faults—and they were many—"the thought," says Bright, "as well as the heart of Christendom has pronounced judgment" in his favour, as against the attempt of Nestorius to empty the Incarnation of its Divine content.¹

Three facts rise prominently into notice, if we carefully study these two volumes: First, the extraordinary decline in the best Christian ideals and in concepts of true Churchmanship, from the moment the Imperial mantle was flung over the shoulders of the Church. Individuals might—nay, did—adorn the Church they served with the graces of consistent living; but the Church, as a whole, seemed to lose that savour

¹ See Bright's "Waymarks in Church History," chap. vii., for an interesting paper on Cyril. For his "dogmatic" position *cf.* Harnack, *History of Dogma*, E.T., vol. iv. (*passim*).

of *other-worldliness* and to be robbed of its ancient purity, in proportion as it ceased to be a struggling and a persecuted Church. After all, it was to be expected. "Blessed are ye when men shall persecute"—these words had (and still have) wider applications than men suppose. The union of Church and Empire—Christ's little flock and the World-Power—was certain to end in a spiritual declension. So it proved; and all after-history has but exemplified that truth of truths: "*My kingdom is not of this world.*"

Secondly, from a persecuted community, the Christian Church grew to be a persecuting power. The Bishops prayed for the *unity* of the *Spirit*; they worked for *uniformity* of *doctrine* and *organization*.¹ Even Augustine was not exempt from the increasing tendency to invoke the secular arm to carry forward the mission of the Redeemer; nay, he strove to justify his action by (the usual) appeal to expediency.

Thirdly, one cannot but mark how, as the primitive simplicity and purity of early Christianity declined, and as the Church of Christ, receding from its first affection, embraced within itself alien teachings, rites, and modes of thought, so there grew up, within its borders, strange superstitions—many of them purely childish, all of them detrimental to the spiritual life—that gradually preyed upon the body of primitive Christian doctrine, eating deep into the heart of morality. The evil was only too apparent even in Cyprian's day; in Augustine's time it was far advanced; and the upas-tree of hierarchical supremacy grew swiftly as the long night of the Middle Ages drew on. Not for, at least, a millennium was the axe to be lifted that should cut at the root of this baleful supremacy. It was lifted—at last; and the world rose up, once more, free. But at what a cost! Christianity has not yet recovered from the mischiefs received during the fourth and fifth centuries of our era, when the seeds of sacerdotalism were sown into the furrows of a dying civilization. True, during that epoch noble and permanent work was accomplished: creeds were formulated, doctrine enforced, the lines of organization laid down. But we search in vain for the gracious spirit of the Church's golden age—its humbleness, its sweetness, its unworldly temper, its upward glance, its Apostolic faith and fervour. It is only now, after 2,000 years' bitter experience, that the world begins to realize all that is signified in the watchword, "Back to Christ."

E. H. BLAKENEY.

¹ Zwingli might have taught them better. "*Christiani hominis est non de dogmatis magna loqui,*" said that Reformer, "*sed cum Deo ardua semper et magna facere.*"