

## CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTORY—EUROPE IN 1200

**T**HE early Christian belief in the imminence of the Second Coming, a belief which profoundly influenced the medieval Church, is no isolated phenomenon, but merely the most widely-held of many similar prophetic ideas which have arisen at various periods. In an earlier age the Jews already had their Messianic teaching, and Zephaniah had foretold the Day of Doom in language that was later to inspire Thomas of Celano to that most impressive of religious poems, the *Dies Irae*. Even to-day, the idea is not dead; within the present century, the end of the world has been more than once confidently expected, and if we are to believe certain interpretations of the “Message of the Great Pyramid”, our present economic and political difficulties are but signs of the coming of Armageddon and the catastrophic events which shall usher in the reign of peace. In the centuries with which we shall here be concerned, prophecies of an Apocalyptic or similar nature were common. The year A.D. 1000 was awaited with terror and foreboding by a great part of the population of Western Europe, and signs were easily found which seemed to indicate that the wrath of Heaven was about to overwhelm the world. Less dreadful in its implications was Merlin’s supposed prediction of the fate of the devil-descended House of Anjou (“*Lynx penetrans omnia exitio propriae gentis imminet*”), for which a fulfilment was even found in the rebellions of his sons against Henry II. The same idea is present in the German legend of the sleeping Barbarossa, who should some day awake and free the land from the tyranny of Rome. More influential than any of these, because more widely believed, were the prophecies of Joachim of Fiore, the twelfth-century Calabrian mystic. He preached the Eternal Gospel,<sup>1</sup> whose reign should commence in or about A.D. 1260; and, though he himself died in 1202, his doctrines convulsed

<sup>1</sup> Not a book, but a new and more spiritual interpretation of the existing Scriptures. The date 1260 is derived from Revelation xi. 3.

the Franciscan Order and the University of Paris before Frederick II unkindly upset the chronology and cast doubt upon the whole thing by dying ten years too early.

But there seems to have been no particular feeling connected with the approach of the year 1200; perhaps fortunately, or it would long ago have been seized on to mark an “epoch” with as disastrous results as that of the capture of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453—still to be found in many of our school text-books as “the beginning of the Renaissance”. Yet 1200 has as good claims as any other year to be placed upon the select list of critical dates. In almost every sphere of life there was, as we can see now, a sense of the near approach of a climax at about this time. In politics, though the medieval theory of limitation and of the Divine Law is in its full glory—indeed Magna Carta is still to come and so are the early Parliaments, except in Spain—yet 1200 marks the middle of the reign of Philip Augustus and the first taste of what was long afterwards to be called royal absolutism. No theory of sovereignty had as yet been put forward, and was not to be for more than three centuries, so that half the force of *Quod principi placuit* was lost, despite its frequent quotation by the new school of lawyers which had been in existence at Bologna for fifty years; yet Henry VI, who probably came nearer in thought to complete triumph over his hereditary enemy at St Peter’s than any Emperor before him, had just had his grandiose but practicable schemes cut short by death, and Frederick II, “the first of modern monarchs”, was shortly to begin his tempestuous career.

At Rome Innocent III had been Pope for two years. In him the Hildebrandine Papacy reaches its highest point. John’s surrender of his kingdom to Pandulf is an event of some importance in English history; to Innocent it was but an example of the position of feudal supremacy which he had managed to secure over almost the whole of Europe by the time of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215). Gregory IX, Innocent IV and Boniface VIII could only add unwise emphasis to his claims and attempt to translate a possible feudal control into an impossible absolute domination. Furthermore, as will appear in more detail later, Innocent III’s tenure of the Papacy marks the real beginning of a new attempt on the part of the Roman Church

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to carry out the mission it had received from Constantine. Hitherto it had perhaps been more Roman than Catholic: the political results of Canossa are a more striking memorial to Hildebrand than the religious results of his enforcement of the Cluniac reform. The Lateran Council and the beginnings of the two orders of friars are indications of a concern with doctrine rather than domination which, more than hitherto, is to be the business of the Papacy until the age of Loyola and the Council of Trent.

In economics the position is similar. Medieval society was mainly agricultural until the twelfth century; the manor was generally the unit of life, and, partly in consequence, a purely static conception of society held sway. This had not really begun to give place to newer ideas in 1200, but the growth of the communes of Northern France and of Italy was already pointing to new developments. Twenty-four years earlier the Italian cities had shown their strength by defeating the Emperor at Legnano, and throughout the thirteenth century the Lombard League is a diplomatic factor of the first importance.

The development of commerce and the replacement in certain districts of a purely agricultural economy by a town economy brought into being a new class, till now unknown within the narrow limits of medieval life. The interests of their trades caused the members of this class to indulge in travel to a much greater extent than had been customary in earlier times, and the town populations were in consequence gradually becoming emancipated from an entirely parochial outlook. A cosmopolitan civilisation of the modern type had been unknown since the fall of Rome; the first signs of its return are visible towards the end of the twelfth century in Lombardy and Southern France. The holding of the Councils of 1245 and 1274 at Lyons may perhaps be construed as a recognition that the importance of this latter district was now rivalling that of Rome itself; the results upon the life of St Francis of Pietro Bernadone's periodical visits to the same town are well known; while finally it was Peter Waldo, a merchant of Lyons, who was the founder of a heresy second only to Catharism in magnitude.

Here we meet a third way in which the world of 1200 was, as

it were, expectant of something new. The previous century had seen the return of learning to Western Europe. Not that the Dark Ages were as unrelieved in their darkness as has been supposed; but the scholarship of those times had been far more restricted in its contacts with general life. The influence of the Irish emigrants had died even in the monasteries they founded; St Gall had continued their tradition, but was unable to perpetuate it beyond its own brief period of greatness in the tenth century; solitary figures like Fulbert of Chartres or Gerbert of Aurillac preserved what they received without diffusing it among great numbers of the succeeding generations. But the age of Abelard and Accursius had succeeded in re-discovering something of the past and in inducing contemporaries to follow them into new speculations and new tracts of knowledge. Yet in 1200 the problem set by the appearance of the new learning was unresolved; schools of Roman law had been set up, scholastic philosophy was started on its long career, but the outer world had not yet shown what its reaction was to be to the shock it had received.

It is in the communes, where these diverse elements are seen working together, that results now begin to follow. Politically the towns always tended to be turbulent; they fitted in very ill with feudalism, whether of Church or State. Frederick Barbarossa's difficulties in Lombardy can be paralleled many times over by conflicts between bishops and their cathedral towns. The commune of Laon, which sacked its bishop's palace, dragged him out of an empty wine-cask in which he had attempted to hide and murdered him in the open street (1112),<sup>1</sup> is by no means alone in its infamy. But the rise of a more educated and more educable race of citizens, with a wide range of interests, together with the new learning which appeared at the same time, intensified the problem. Not only did the citizens rebel against their lord, temporal or spiritual, in order to gain political independence, but they took it upon themselves to quarrel with the accepted doctrines of the Church.<sup>2</sup> Once Waldo had been

<sup>1</sup> H. W. C. Davis, *Medieval Europe*, p. 231.

<sup>2</sup> Balme and Lelaidier (*Cart.* i. 106) state that few peasants were found among the Albigenses, but without quoting their authority. More recently Grundmann (*Relig. Bewegungen*, pp. 29 sq., 157 sq.) has attacked the thesis of Zanoni (*Gli Umiliati* . . . Milan, 1911) that the heretics were drawn mainly

led to an interest in more than the externals of religion by hearing a *jongleur* reciting the life of St Alexis, and had followed this up by getting portions of the Bible translated into the vernacular, a vital blow had been struck at the existing domination of Christendom by the hierarchy. For Waldo found, as Luther was to find later, that the Church said many things for which she had no Scriptural warrant. Consequently he attempted to foster the study of the Bible by preaching—both things forbidden him as a layman—and it was quite hopeless for the Church to attempt to keep him within the bounds of orthodoxy by a qualified approval of his work, because he had attacked the Church in the same way that the Reformers of three centuries later did. To open the Bible, till now forbidden them except in so far as they heard certain selected passages read in a strange tongue by the priest, could only lead, in men acquainted with the elements of reasoning, to the setting up of their private judgment against the authority of the Church; which is *ipso facto* heresy, apart from any particular incorrect doctrines they may have developed. It is this fact which makes the Waldensians in a sense more interesting than the Cathari, in spite of their lesser success, because in their origins they had no false doctrine whatever. This, too, would give some colour of reason to Danzas' otherwise ludicrous attempt<sup>1</sup> to prove a connexion between thirteenth-century heresy and Protestantism; but unwisely he takes the Cathari as Luther's spiritual ancestors, and rather naturally makes out but a poor case.

Heresy proper—at this time almost entirely restricted to dualistic beliefs<sup>2</sup>—flourished under the same conditions, and from the lowest classes, and produces a great deal of evidence in support of his arguments. As he pertinently remarks (p. 168), “Das Bekenntnis zur freiwilligen Armut wäre verlogen gewesen, wenn die Armut aus Not ihm vorangegangen wäre; das Bekenntnis zur *humilitas* wäre eine leere Geste gewesen im Munde derer, die sich nicht tiefer erniedrigen konnten, als die Not sie gestellt hatte.” For an excellent account of heresy, see Kirsch-Hergentröther, *Handbuch d. allgem. Kirchengesch.* (5th ed. 1913), ii. 524–55.

<sup>1</sup> Danzas, p. 432.

<sup>2</sup> Dualism, in spite of being a common characteristic of heresy, is often found within the orthodox fold, e.g. the Processus Belial; cf. Coulton, *Five Centuries*, i. 62–66. Another parallel with heresy is provided by Aquinas (2a, 2ae, Q. 183, art. 4), who lists mankind under three heads, so far as concerns their religious advancement: *incipientes*, *proficientes*, *perfecti*. This classification bears a resemblance to the *credentes* and *perfecti* of the Albigenian church.

had a vastly greater number of adherents than Waldensianism. It had been almost unknown since Patristic times, but began to get a firm hold in Languedoc and Lombardy in the late twelfth century. It was an importation from Bulgaria, and is ultimately traceable to the Manichaeism of the Near East in the third century A.D.<sup>1</sup> This line of descent seems proven; but Mani's synthesis of older beliefs with some new elements, all essentially Oriental in character, had as its central tenet an idea that has often proved attractive: that Good and Evil are warring forces within the human frame, the ultimate hope of salvation depending on the victory of the former. Naturally the two abstractions are easily identified with spirit and body, and original Manichaeism expressed this by the idea that a small portion of Light, the good principle, was mixed with a greater volume of Darkness in every man,<sup>2</sup> the Light always attempting to rejoin other similar scattered fragments to form once again the complete Light that had existed before the Fall. It is easy to see how this duality lent itself to perversion in the minds of opponents, leading them to find grounds for their accusations of immorality in the fact that the body (being, according to the Manichaeans, in origin evil) might be allowed to do anything here on earth: a good life was of no avail because it could not make the Light any brighter. But whatever foundation there may have been for this argument in Manichaean doctrine, there seems to have been little for the suggestion of immorality, which was in consequence of it continually alleged against the Cathari.<sup>3</sup>

It may be well to indicate here that this division of heretical movements into Waldensian and Catharist-Manichaean, though useful in giving a clear sketch of the situation in a few

<sup>1</sup> The most recent opinion agrees upon this, which was the view of the Cathari themselves. Some (e.g. Lea, *Hist. Inq.* i. 109) have denied the connexion. Cf. F. C. Burkitt, *Religion of the Manichees*, p. 11; he thinks it likely that "fragments" of their teaching were derived from Manichaean sources, but considers the original doctrines had become attenuated, so that to call the Albigensis Manichees is "misleading". S. Runciman, *First Bulgarian Empire*, p. 196, states that upon a comparison of Slavonic-Bogomil literature with that of the Albigensis "all doubt upon this matter must vanish". Quite lately, Grundmann, *Relig. Bewegungen*, p. 23, has reaffirmed the Oriental origin.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Anecdotes*, p. 301, on this belief.

<sup>3</sup> The Inquisitors themselves admitted as much. Lea was only able to find one case of this charge being made by Inquisitors—in 1387! (*Hist. Inq.* i. 101).

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words, and though excellently justified in that it is a division commonly adopted by contemporaries, does some violence to historical accuracy. It disguises the historical origin of the revolt from orthodoxy. Dualistic beliefs were not at first the chief mark of heresy in the West (they do not appear, indeed, till towards the end of the twelfth century), nor was the Church's campaign against heresy ever directed solely towards combating them. The earliest manifestations of heresy (i.e. from the eleventh century onwards) were marked by an attempt to lead the apostolic life; that is to say, the life of poverty and preaching.<sup>1</sup> Waldo was, then, by no means the first to advocate this way of making Christianity a living creed once more; nor was Manichaeism, when it was later imported from the East and assimilated by a part of the heretic movement, ever the real gravamen of the Church's charge, however much the Inquisition may have directed its efforts towards discovering it. Quite apart from dualistic tenets, the heretics were already sufficiently convicted of error by their desire to live the apostolic life. Preaching was not even the regular duty of the parish priest, let alone of secular folk; while to advocate poverty was (as was pointed out to Waldo, and later to St Francis) to insult the whole of the hierarchy, which was "possessionate" throughout. The most recent writer on the subject<sup>2</sup> insists on this historical approach to the problem of heresy, and puts his conclusions succinctly thus: "Das Leben der Apostel zu führen, die echten Nachfolger der Apostel zu sein, das ist der eigentliche Anspruch der Ketzler und aus ihm hat sich ihr Bruch mit der Kirche entwickelt." A full appreciation of this point makes even more clear how thoroughly well calculated were the methods St Dominic adopted.

The wide diffusion which heresy now gained in Italy, France and Germany (especially the old Middle Kingdom) soon caused the Church to realise that new methods were necessary to deal with it. Since the doctrinal disputes of the first five centuries of Christianity and the development of an orthodoxy universally recognised and firmly entrenched in Rome, the sheer weight of the hierarchy had always been sufficient to crush any heretical

<sup>1</sup> St Bernard, for instance, takes this as their chief characteristic—see sermon 66 in Migne, *PL.* 183, col. 1098.

<sup>2</sup> Grundmann, *Relig. Bewegungen*. I quote from p. 21, but see the whole section pp. 18–28 on this paragraph.

tendencies. Perpetual imprisonment had silenced Gottschalk, official condemnation in solemn council had dealt successively with Claudius of Turin, Peter Abelard and Gilbert de la Porrée. While heretical opinions were confined to a few scholars who spent more time than was wise in meditating religious truth, and who had no party behind them, the said opinions could be adequately stifled by the prosecution of the offenders before an assembly of bishops who could be guaranteed to murmur “‘namus, ‘namus” between snores, even if they understood nothing of the matter in hand.<sup>1</sup> But the spread of dogmatic error to the large populations of the Midi made these methods no longer of any value. Mere condemnation might break the spirit even of an Abelard, but it did not suffice against the fanatical but unthinking multitude unless backed up by stronger measures.

Rome combated error in the thirteenth century by three new methods which circumstances forced her to improvise. The first involved, as so often, compromise with the enemy. Reason in theology, which Bernard had so strongly denounced, was applied by Aquinas to the defence of the faith and the closer definition of dogma little more than a hundred years after it had brought Abelard to disaster by leading him to question accepted beliefs. This surprising volte-face gave great trouble to the conservatives of the Church, who refused to abandon the Augustinianism of their early training for the Aristotelian teaching of St Thomas. Even his own Order looked askance on Aquinas for some time: within twelve years of his death the Dominican General Chapter had three times to issue injunctions against those “qui de scriptis ejus irreverenter et indecenter loquuntur”.<sup>2</sup> The second method was to attack the evil at its root, by a revival of preaching, now an almost forgotten art, setting orthodox truth clearly before those who had fallen into error. It was realised that it was impossible to expect all be-

<sup>1</sup> “...When therefore the reader had stumbled upon some sufficiently thorny passage, he would cry to the deaf ears of those prelates: ‘Damnatis?’ Then a few barely awakening at the sound of the last syllable, murmured with slumbrous voice and nodding head ‘Damnamus’, while others, aroused by the chorus of the rest, caught only the last syllable and droned out ‘-namus, -namus’”—from the account of the Council of Sens, 1140, which condemned Abelard, written by the latter’s pupil Berengarius: Migne, PL. 178, cols. 1857 sq., translated Coulton, *Life in the Middle Ages*, iv. 176.

<sup>2</sup> *Acta* 1279, cf. 1278, 1286.



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lievers to keep to the straight and narrow path if that path were never shown to them. And when these gentler methods failed the appeal was made to a third force. The Albigensian Crusade and the establishment of the Inquisition were a last resort, the only remaining means to preserve the purity of the faith.<sup>1</sup>

Among these three the re-discovery of the virtues of evangelisation is our chief concern. Through centuries of barbarism the Church had been hard put to it to maintain life at all, and once the Teutonic races had been converted to Christianity evangelisation had ceased to be a primary need and had in consequence been in practice almost abandoned. Religion had hardened into a system which retained sufficient of the essentials to maintain itself in continued existence, but not one scrap more. It was this discarding of all excess burden which had led to the fatal concentration upon the political and feudal side of the Church which was noticed earlier. Faced with the danger of absorption by post-Carolingian Emperors and degradation into a very secondary position in that partnership of Church and State which was to be the *civitas Dei* on earth, the Papacy had developed its own strength along the State's lines and by using the State's own methods—purely worldly ones—from which the State in its turn later learnt much in regard to the detail and routine of government. But in consequence it, and the Church in the wide sense with it, lost touch with, and ceased to lay emphasis upon, the more purely spiritual side of religion. As a result, the successive waves of monastic reform affected Christendom at large to a surprisingly small extent. A few earnest souls in each generation were led to ponder upon the evils of the world and to try to counteract them by ever-increasing

<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to notice that new methods make their appearance almost exactly in 1200. The Church first took up a definite attitude to the problem as a whole with Lucius III's decree of 1184, which defined it, laid down tests by which it might be recognised, etc. Innocent III (1198–1216) introduced new ideas. He was prepared to listen to the claims of the wandering preachers, provided they did not attack Catholic dogma or organisation. Hence the rule created for the re-converted Italian Humiliati in 1199; the organisation of the "Poor Catholics" under Durandus of Huesca (a converted Waldensian), in 1208; the letter to the legate Raoul in 1204 (see below, p. 37); and Innocent's readiness to give Francis and Dominic a chance to prove their value in the struggle in defence of the Church. See a detailed examination of Innocent's personal policy, and the way in which the ban on further Orders (Lateran Council, 1215) can be reconciled with it, in Grundmann, pp. 70–112.

austerities, but outside the walls of the monastery Mammon reigned unchallenged as before. Thus when Cluny's effort was over, Cîteaux took up the task; from Cîteaux a still stricter party went forth, and founded Clairvaux; and so the series went on, until at last the friars appeared, who had for a time direct effect upon the world, and remained true to their early ideals long enough to stave off the threatened disruption of the Church, and to preserve Christianity until reform found its only hope in secession at the Reformation.

But none of these efforts materially affected the Church as an organisation. Monasticism was essentially selfish, considered the outside world as almost irredeemable, and was content to think mainly of securing salvation to those within the cloister. The Popes, busy with diplomatic affairs, had no time to turn monastic energy into more profitable channels. Hildebrand did indeed attempt it, but with little success. Simony went on unchecked throughout the Middle Ages, fostered with the best of intentions by the rulers of Europe, because they quite reasonably regarded their bishops primarily as parts of the machine of government and only secondarily as ecclesiastics. Celibacy was enforced in so far as it was henceforward regarded as the only lawful state for a priest to be in. But it was a very doubtful gain to replace lawful matrimony by illegal but widespread incontinence. It made one more crime for the clerical calendar and wasted the energies of the more zealous bishops in countless inquiries upon their visitations into the cases of priest after priest who was "*diffamatus*" of keeping a concubine. Certainly contemporaries sometimes regarded it as a disadvantage that the clergy were not allowed lawful marriage. In Alsace about 1200 "almost all the priests had concubines; the peasants commonly urged them to this course, saying that a priest could not be continent, so that it were better that he should have his own wife than that he should solicit or defile the wives of all men".<sup>1</sup>

The Church organisation, having been satisfied for centuries with mere conformity and never having made any real attempt to ensure that the generality of mankind should be instructed in even the elements of the faith, had developed no technique for meeting the kind of crisis that was facing it at the end of the

<sup>1</sup> *Annales Colmarienses*, in MGH. xvii. 232.