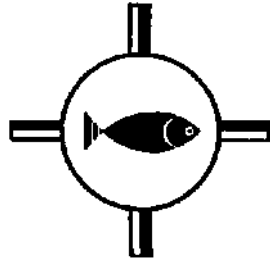


LIBERAL CATHOLIC INSTITUTE OF STUDIES



Unit 3

THE LIBERAL CATHOLIC CHURCH : HISTORY

Paper 1

PART I



Printed in Australia

UNIT 3

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE LIBERAL CATHOLIC CHURCH

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Prescribed Reading:

- Wedgwood: The Beginnings of the Liberal Catholic Church (Revised ed. 1976)
Table of Apostolic Succession in the Liberal Catholic Church (1977 or later ed.)
- Taylor: The Liberal Catholic Church - What is it? (1966)
- Wicks: The Liberal Catholic Church - pages 167 to 198 (1977)

Recommended for more extensive study:

- Cockerham: The Apostolic Succession in the Liberal Catholic Church (1966 or later ed.)
- Burton (Editor): The Official Records of Synods during the Period 1910-1920, Parts 1 & 2
"The Australian Liberal Catholic" February-March 1966 issue
- Cooper: A Short History of the Liberal Catholic Church (1921) -LCIS
"The Liberal Catholic" Jan. 1938—July 1940

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INTRODUCTION

Very little has so far been written on the history of our Church. The author therefore undertook in 1975-1976 to write a brief history of the Liberal Catholic Church and its antecedents for the Clergy Training Course, then in the planning stage. The plan is that an enlarged version, containing more source material will be published in book form. In the meantime the present material is made available for the Course as Unit 3.

Dr. J. S. Martin of the Department of Germanic Studies at Melbourne University has with my permission and support undertaken the task to write an objective history of our Church on scholarly lines. When published, this book will be a valuable addition to the literature on our Church.

This Paper has for convenience been divided into two parts. The first Part takes us up to the year 1920. Part II will include short biographies of Bishops Wedgwood and Leadbeater and an outline of the further history of the Church from 1920 to the present.



SPIRITUAL FOREBEARS

In the Statement of Principles of the Liberal Catholic Church the following statement from St. Vincent of Lerins is quoted:

"That let us hold which everywhere, always and by all has been believed: for this is truly and rightly Catholic"

together with another, from St. Augustine which reads:

"The identical thing that we now call the Christian Religion existed among the ancients and has not been lacking from the beginnings of the human race until the coming of Christ in the flesh, from which moment on the true religion, which already existed, began to be called Christian."

These two statements (pages 7 and 8 Statement of Principles) obviously do not show a dogmatic point of view excluding every other teaching except those given in the Old and New Testaments, but show an openness to the wisdom of the past as it had been given by the great philosophers and teachers preceding Christianity.

All through the history of Christianity we find two tendencies:

- (1) A more strict, orthodox and limited attitude holding only certain narrowly defined beliefs and doctrines, usually derived from Scripture or from a particular Church Father or theologian's views.
- (2) A more open, "liberal" tendency, a willingness to accept what appeals to common sense and human intuition, including teachings from other religions and philosophies.

The first attitude is usually accompanied by intolerance, condemnation and persecution of those who think differently. It has a tendency to end up in narrow dogmatism and a literal and materialistic interpretation which gradually kills all fresh insight and initiative.

The second attitude is one of tolerance and appreciation of other views and often has a tendency to distil from many sources a world-view which appeals to the human heart and reason. This is what we may term the liberal view. It is sometimes inclined to be syncretistic (i.e., trying to combine different doctrines), an attitude which is anathema to the dogmatic mind which can accept only *one* truth or revelation.

The two tendencies just described are manifestations of inherent qualities of the human mind, one pointing as it were downwards, perceiving the presumed solidity and "reality" of matter and all earthly things; the other instinctively pointing upwards towards heaven, seeing an ideal vision of the divine unity in the diversity of all creation.

Perhaps no better and more beautiful symbolism of these two inherent attitudes can be found than in the famous painting of Rafael depicting the Academy of Athens in the Vatican library. In the centre are the two figures of Plato and Aristotle, the two great philosophers of Antiquity, the one pointing upwards, the other downwards. In the symbolic gestures of the two philosophers we at once perceive a truth revealed to us by the inspiration of the great artist: These qualities are inherent, God-given characteristics in man, both equally part of his divine mission on earth. One to explore the created world to its ultimate depth, the other to soar on

the wings of contemplation and devotion back to God, at the same time man's innermost self and his ultimate goal.

It is when these qualities of the human mind become *imbalanced* that we either get the rigid dogmatist clinging to the flotsam of outmoded beliefs or the free-running idealist constantly jumping from one sect or religion to the other. Now that we understand a little of these tendencies in man, we can perhaps look with a little more sympathy at the theologians of past and present.

We have quoted "liberal" statements from two great theologians of earlier centuries of Christianity, and a closer study would probably reveal that there were many more similar statements. But we must be careful not to try to claim either St. Vincent or St. Augustine as "liberals". But there were other Church fathers and theologians who can be regarded as liberal to a certain degree. The proper place to deal with these figures of history is in the Church History units and we shall therefore only deal here with what we may call the "Earlier Liberal Catholics" very briefly.

When looking at these figures of history we cannot expect that they would have had exactly the same outlook in every respect as modern Liberal Catholics. But we can find *some* of our teachings expressed by these men in their writings.

In our *Statement of Principles* we find the following reference to the schools of thought with which the Liberal Catholic Church claims affinity:

"In forming this body of doctrine and ethics the Liberal Catholic Church takes what is, in certain respects, a distinctive position among the Churches of Christendom. The Christian church has always contained within itself differing schools of thought. The medieval schoolmen who systemized theology in the Western church followed the method of Aristotle, but the earliest among the Church Fathers of philosophic bent were Platonists, and The Liberal Catholic Church, whilst not undervaluing the clarity and precision of the scholastic systems, has much in common with the Platonic and Neo-Platonic schools of Christian tradition."

It is thus among the representatives of the Platonic and Neo-Platonic schools of Christian tradition that we have to look for our spiritual forbears. Let us then look at some of their teachings:

Clement of Alexandria (150-215 A.D.) was at one period head of the Catechetical School of Alexandria. He taught a synthesis of Greek philosophy and the doctrines and ethics of Christianity.

"The way of Truth is therefore one, but into it, as into a perennial river, streams flow from every side."

Clement makes much of the existence of *Mysterics* in Christianity and a secret tradition or *Gnosis* (knowledge) handed down from the apostles

"To James the Just and John and Peter was the Gnosis delivered by the Lord after the resurrection. These de-

livered it to the rest of the apostles, and the rest to the seventy."

"The Mysteries are delivered mystically, and what is spoken may be in the mouth of the speaker, rather not in his voice, but in his understanding..."

Christ is "the Teacher of the Divine Mysteries", the teaching of the Church being "the lesser Mysteries" and the Gnosis or inner knowledge being the way to the greater Mysteries.

Clement was a contemporary of the great Gnostic schools and with the more moderate Gnostic Doctors he held that "Gnosis", an inner knowledge or illumination, was an essential element in the perfection of the individual. Towards this goal every Christian should strive. His *Gnostic* or ideal Christian is one of the noblest ideals set before man.

He lives a life of purity, love and beauty, as taught by Christ.

Origen (c. 185-257 A.D.) succeeded Clement as the head of the Catechetical School in Alexandria. Origen is often regarded as the first great theologian of the Church. He taught some doctrines with which Liberal Catholics are familiar:

He sees three ways of interpreting *Scriptures*. It has a "body" or literal and historical meaning. But it has also a "soul", a moral or allegorical meaning. Thirdly, there is the "spirit" of the scripture, an inner or divine sense, to be understood only by those who have "the

Origen is perhaps most widely known for his teaching of *Pre-existence*. He taught that even before the manifestation of the universe men and angels were *logikoi*, rational beings within the Logos (the Word) and sharing His properties. They were co-equal and have free will.

It has generally been thought that he did not teach reincarnation as we understand it today. But the following quotes from his "De Principiis" may seem to imply that he did, at least in part:

"The soul has neither beginning nor end.... Every soul comes into this world strengthened by the victories or weakened by the defeats of its previous life.... Its work in this world determines its place in the world which is to follow this..."

Origen also was a *Universalist*, that is, he believed that all men will be "saved" because they are in essence divine. All will in due time out of their own free will return to God; even the devil and the fallen angels will eventually be saved, and then "God will be all in all." (Cor. 15:28).

Dionysius the Areopagite (about 500 A.D.) is a mysterious figure, thought to have been a Syrian monk. He wrote under the above pseudonym (purists insist on calling him the pseudo-Areopagite or the pseudo-Denis) several works which profoundly influenced Christian Medieval mysticism and theology. He combined in his writings *neo-platonic* (theosophical) concepts with Christian theology.

God is for him beyond being, nameless and ineffable. Yet we must ascribe to Him certain symbolic divine attributes such as love, wisdom, light, power, goodness. But these concepts are all insufficient to reach the unfathomable depth and greatness of divine Reality.

Dionysius sees three ways for man to approach God: The affirmative way, by seeing him as the source of all that is good, holy, wise, etc. There is also the negative way of approaching God by realizing that He is *beyond* all attributes. But the best way is the mystical:

"In the exercise of mystical contemplation leave behind the senses and the activities of the intellect, and all things sensible and intellectual...that thou mayest arise, as far as thou mayest, by unknowing towards union with Him who transcends all being and all knowledge."

According to Dionysius the way of the spiritual life has three stages, those of purgation, illumination and union. The ultimate union with or return to God is the goal of man.

In his work "The Celestial Hierarchy" he describes the nine Angelic Hosts as mentioned by St. Paul and as we invoke them in the Holy Eucharist. He seems to have been the first person to have used the word "hierarchy" for both the Angelic Hosts and the orders in the Church.

Dionysius is of importance to us as a mystical theologian who combined the Theosophy of his time (Neo-Platonism) with Christian theology.

John Scotus Erigena (c. 810 - c. 877) was a deeply original thinker who translated the works of Dionysius into Latin and thereby transmitted them to the West

God is the beginning of all things and also the end. He is a Being above all categories and therefore No-thing. Out of this incomprehensible essence the world of ideas or primordial causes is eternally created. This is the Logos (the Word) in Whom all things exist.

John Scotus was born in Ireland and taught at the palace school at Laon instituted by Charlemagne.

Against his contemporary, the monk *Gottschalk*, who advanced an extreme view on pre-destination (that the chosen are predestined to eternal bliss and all others to eternal hell) and gave much trouble to the Church of his day, Erigena taught that we are all called to become saints. For God, evil is non-existent. Man is a microcosm. The corruptible body can sin, but the original body is immortal and will one day be restored. The world will reach perfection, when all will ultimately be one in God. There is no place of punishment anywhere.

Giordano Bruno (1548-1600) was a Dominican monk who had to flee Italy because of his unorthodox views but who was finally caught by the Inquisition and burnt at the stake in the year 1600. It seems quite a leap from Erigena to Bruno, and it does not mean that there were not men and women in between (in time) who held views similar in certain respects to those held by members of the Liberal Catholic Church today. It is more a case of not making this chapter too long.

Bruno was an advocate of the Copernican system but also taught that nature is alive and divine. God is the all-pervading soul of things, the one in the many; he is both transcendent and immanent.

"I hold the universe to be infinite, as being the effect of infinite divine power and goodness.... Infinite worlds exist beside this our earth; I hold with Pythagoras that the earth is a star like all the others... that all these numberless worlds are a whole in infinite space..."

"I... hold the soul to be immortal...it may be in one body or in another and pass from body to body. This...seems at least likely, according to Pythagoras...From the spirit...proceeds life and soul. -As to bodies and their substance, all are immortal, there being no other death than disintegration and re-assembly, which doctrine seems expressed in Ecclesiastes, where it is said that "there is nothing new under the sun; that which is, is that which was." (From his profession of faith before the inquisition.)

By now we should be realizing that we are only scratching the surface of the manifold aspects appearing throughout the ages of the "Ancient Wisdom", or whatever name we may like to give to the type of human thought, philosophy, theology and theosophy, from which the Liberal Catholic Church draws much of its doctrine and inspiration.



EARLIER LIBERAL CATHOLICS

As we come nearer in time to the 20th century we find the word *Liberal* being used to describe certain views and doctrines which appeared in the 19th century both among Catholics and Protestants. It has been generally defined as "holding liberal opinions in politics or theology", the word usually being defined as meaning open-minded, unprejudiced, as opposite to conservative, literal or orthodox.

In this sense there have been and still are "Liberal Catholics" within the Roman Catholic fold' "Liberal Protestants" and "Liberal Evangelicals" within the Protestant Churches. All that they may be said to have in common is a general tendency to favour freedom and progress. It is in this sense that our Church adopted the name "Liberal Catholic", but it is much more, and a movement of a very different kind from the "Liberal Catholic" movement within the Church of Rome which flourished in the 19th century.

There were liberal groups, particularly among intellectuals in the Roman Catholic Church in France, Italy, Germany and England during last century. Their views and aims in each country were all somewhat different, often tied up with different political aims. The Liberals were (particularly in France) strongly opposed by the arch-conservative and authoritarian *Ultramontanist* movement which worked for complete centralization of both administrative and doctrinal power in the hands of the Pope.

In Germany this trend was opposed by a school of Liberal Catholic theologians led by Dr. von Dollinger, who were concerned with trying to formulate a more liberal presentation of theology in the light of contemporary scientific thought. In England a group (at one time led by Lord Acton) published a journal called "The Rambler", consisted mainly of intellectuals who valued independent thinking, unfettered by the authority of the Church.

All these liberal groups and tendencies were condemned by Pope Pius IX in the *Syllabus Errorum* in 1864. The death knell of the liberal movement in the Roman Catholic Church came with the pronouncement of the infallibility of the Pope at the first Vatican Council in 1870. A later movement of a rather different and more radical nature, *Modernism*, arose around the turn of the century, and was condemned by the Pope in 1907.

We cannot end the chapter without mentioning a group of Anglo-Catholic theologians who under the leadership of Bishop *Charles Gore* tried to come to terms with modern thought around the turn of the century. The book *Lux Mundi* (Light of the World), with many contributors, was edited by Bishop Gore, who was fond of calling this movement within the Anglican Church "a Liberal Catholicism".

During the first decade of the 20th century the eloquent preacher at the City Temple in London, *R.J. Campbell* put forward many new ideas which came to be known as "The New Theology" and attracted much attention. Bishop Gore was against this movement and Campbell after some time recanted and later became a minister in the Church of England.

Bishop Wedgwood had this to say about him:

"In another field of Christian endeavour they had before them a living example in the person of the Rev. R. J. Campbell, of the City Temple in London, then a Nonconformist minister. His book *The*

New Theology had reached thousands of people, and his sermons published weekly in *The Christian Commonwealth* attracted a wide circle of readers to a more liberal and living conception of Christianity. Mr Campbell presently found that Protestantism was not his spiritual home, and entered the ministry of the Church of England, which in its most familiar aspect may be described as midway between Protestantism and Catholicism. Mr Campbell, though not a Theosophist in the more technical sense, was certainly inclined to Theosophy, and was a natural mystic. He was a halfway house between Protestantism and Theosophy. The Liberal Catholic Church had some ambition to erect a similar half-way house for the refuge of those who were attracted by the mysticism of sacramental worship but were repelled by the narrow dogmatism of the Catholic Churches - whether Roman, Old Roman, Anglican or Greek."

("The Liberal Catholic", July 1926)

We see from looking back at the history of Christianity (and even to pre-Christian times) that Liberal Catholics can claim and feel at least partial affinity with some church fathers, mystics, philosophers, scholars and movements (including some so called heresies) that have characterized the Christian religion throughout the ages. From Plato and Philo Judeus to some of the great Gnostic teachers, the Church Fathers such as Clement of Alexandria, Justin the Martyr, Origen and others right up to St. Augustine. Along another line from Plotinus and the Neo-Platonists through the so-called Pseudo-Dionysius to the great mystics of the Middle Ages such as Eckhart and Ruysbroeck and scholars like John Scotus Erigena, and St. Thomas Aquinas (at one time condemned as a heretic) to Renaissance philosophers such as Giordano Bruno and the "Liberal" Oxford reformers, Erasmus and Thomas Moore. In more modern times the early Catholic Tübingen School and such figures as William Law, Berkeley, Emerson, Coleridge, Inge, Schweitzer and Teilhard de Chardin should receive our attention. So should of course figures in our own Church such as Leadbeater, Wedgwood, Pigott, Tettemer, Van der Leeuw and the mystic visionary Van der Stok.

As part of his studies the student should include a more comprehensive study of the life and teaching of one such figure, or the history and teaching of one particular religion or church or religious movement (preferably Christian), during the three-year course.



THE OLD CATHOLIC CHURCH



In his book "The Liberal Catholic Church" Bishop Hicks has given us a good description of the Old Catholic Church and its antecedents (pages 179-198). We shall here cover this subject in general outline with some added information here and there.

As the Liberal Catholic Church is without any doubt a branch of the Old Catholic Church - even though we have developed in quite a different direction - it is essential that we should have a general knowledge not only of this our "mother" Church but also of the way that particular Church has developed out of the universal Catholic Church. The Old Catholic Church claims to be the legitimate successor of the ancient Church of Holland and we therefore first have to go back a little in history.

We can perhaps start at the slave market in Rome in the year 580 A.D. or thereabouts, when the Abbot of St. Andrew's was struck by the sight of the fair-haired Anglo-Saxon slave-boys at the market. The Christian Britons had by that time been pushed into Wales and other less accessible parts of Britain by the invasions of the Angles and Saxons. When the above mentioned Abbot a few years later became *Pope Gregory I* (the Great), he sent the prior of St. Andrew's, Augustine, and 40 monks to Britain to convert the Anglo-Saxons. Augustine succeeded in converting the King of Kent and later became the first Archbishop of Canterbury. Aided by the Irish missionaries working from the island of Iona, Anglo-Saxon Britain was largely converted to Christianity during the 7th century.

The Church established in England now in its turn became imbued with missionary zeal, and like the Church in Ireland previously, started to send missionaries to the Continent. One of the first of these was *Willibrord* (658-739), a monk from the new monastery of Ripon.

In 690, with 11 companions, Willibrord started his missionary work among the Frisians north of the Rhine. In this work he was supported by *Pepin*, the ruler of the Franks, who claimed sovereignty over the area, after some years of successful work Willibrord was consecrated to the episcopate in Rome and appointed Bishop of the Frisians, with *Utrecht* as the seat of his see.

THE MIDDLE AGES

It is a little beyond our scope to follow the vicissitudes of the see of Utrecht through the middle Ages. During that period the Prince Bishops of Utrecht were not only the spiritual heads of the Low Countries, they were also the secular rulers over a certain area. The German emperor was their feudal Lord. In conflicts between Pope and Emperor it was perhaps only natural that the Bishop of Utrecht - with many other of his colleagues - took the side of the Emperor.

A constant source of controversy during this long period was the election or choosing of the Bishop. The Emperor, the local or neighbouring rulers, the Pope and the clergy chapters of the Utrecht Diocese all claimed this right. The chapters consisted of the clergy appointed as Canons by the Bishop and attached to the Cathedral of St. Martin in Utrecht and to some of the other older and most respected churches in the country. Every new Bishop had to pay a sum of money, the "servitia" to the Pope before his appointment. Even at the very beginning this conflict had occurred when Pepin persuaded the Pope to consecrate and appoint Willibrord as Bishop, while the candidate elected by the clergy was moved to another place. In spite of all this, though many of the Bishops of Utrecht were worldly princes, some of them were spiritual men who encouraged the monastic and spiritual life in their diocese. A Canon of Utrecht, *Geert Groote* in the 14th century founded the order of "The Brethren of the Common Life" who not only developed a lofty spirituality but were also some of the foremost educators of their day.

One of the best known of these Brethren was *Thomas à Kempis* regarded as the author of "The Imitation of Christ."

At the end of the middle Ages the problem of episcopal elections seemed at least temporarily solved when Utrecht's Bishop Henry of Bavaria surrendered his secular territory to the Emperor Charles V in 1528. It was then arranged that the secular ruler should *nominate* the candidate, the chapters elect him and the Pope *appoint* him. In 1560 Utrecht was raised to the status of an Archbishopric. But this arrangement was not to last long.

THE REFORMATION PERIOD

The 16th century was the century of the Reformation and soon the situation thoroughly changed. Calvinism was spreading to the Netherlands and gradually became the main denomination in the north and also in Utrecht. After the death of Charles V the country was no longer under the German Emperor, but came under Spain. The revolt against the Spanish rule led to the 80 years war, during which the northern Netherlands became an independent Protestant nation and Calvinism for some two hundred years became its official creed.

During this difficult period the Dutch Catholics had at times to go underground while at other times when there was more tolerance they could worship more openly.

The first Archbishop of Utrecht died in 1580. After that the Pope appointed Vicars Apostolic for the Netherlands, and so as not to annoy the Protestants they were consecrated as "Archbishops of Philippi". The Chapters were gradually filled with Protestants, appointed by the Government, which made it impossible for the Vicar Apostolic to use them. One of these, Rovenius, then appointed a clergy council which he called "the vicariate" to assist him, replacing the previous Chapters. By this time the Counter-Reformation had also set in and the Order of the Jesuits was particularly active in this work during the 17th century. They tried unsuccessfully to persuade the Pope to declare the Netherlands a missionary territory - which would have put it completely under their influence.

There now gradually emerged two parties among the Dutch Catholics: one which held strongly to the tradition of a national Church and supported the Vicars Apostolic as successors of the Archbishop of Utrecht; the other, following the lead of the Jesuits, was willing to place itself under the more direct authority of Rome. The first party held that the Pope was like a constitutional monarch, bound to observe the rights and privileges of the local churches and particularly the clergy chapters. The party of the Jesuits held that the Pope was like an absolute monarch who could override any local customs and privileges. The situation became even more complicated by a new factor.

JANSENISM

The 17th century saw the development in France of a movement called *Jansenism*, which can be classified partly as a resurgence of some of the ideas of St. Augustine and partly as a reaction to some of the theological casuistry of the time. The piety and strictness of the Jansenists gained them many followers and their antagonism of the Jesuits made them the natural friends of the traditional Catholic group in Holland. When the two Jansenist leaders Arnauld and Quesnel had to leave France they were therefore welcomed by the Dutch Vicar Apostolic and given sanctuary in Holland.

For a better understanding of this subject and as the Old Catholic Church has often been accused of being "Jansenist" we shall quote parts of an article on Jansenism by Nicholas Manitiuss (The Liberal Catholic, Dec. 1973):

"What then is Jansenism and who was its founder? *Cornelius Jansen junior* was born in 1585 at Accoy in Northern Holland and died of the plague at Ypres in Flanders in 1638. As was alleged, Jansen tried to join the Jesuit order at Louvain but, when he was rejected, he developed a lifelong antipathy to the Society of Jesus and came under the influence of the followers of Baius, a Louvain divine who had been condemned as a heretic for his unusual teachings on the Divine Grace and man's salvation.

Having become a friend of Du Vergier, a Galician¹ and follower of Baius, Jansen lived with him for some time at Bayonne in Southern France. In 1617 Jansen was appointed Rector of the newly formed Dutch College at the University of Louvain where he obtained his doctorate in 1619 and became a professor of divinity in 1630. In 1636 Cornelius Jansen was consecrated Bishop of the rural see of Ypres where he devoted his time to theological writings...

Jansenism was in fact "founded" as a reform movement of the Roman Catholic Church in France by Du Vergier: it developed mainly in France in ardent opposition to the doctrine and tradition of the Roman Church and could be called a reaction to the post-Tridentine theology and the religious humanism then ruling the minds in France. In his "Augustinus" Jansen broke with the established theology which was fixed within various schools following the so-called "Graces' Dispute" and argued against the Jesuits and for the misunderstood ideas of St. Augustine which, as Jansen argued, had been severely neglected by the teachings of the scholastics. He had mainly Augustine's ideas concerning freedom and divine graces in mind. Basing his teachings on those developed by Jansen, Du Vergier's reform plan envisaged a stricter interpretation of practical Christianity; Jansen and Du Vergier had deduced from the teachings of St. Augustine a sensational pessimism which came very close to Calvin's theology and was, of course, rejected by Rome. According to Jansen the human will, having lost its freedom through the Fall of Adam will remain under the insurmountable influence of the desire for evil (concupiscence) if this is not in turn defeated by the desire for good (grace). The stronger desire (*delectio relative victrix*) decides the outcome. This brings Jansen into conflict with the Roman doctrine of sufficient grace (*gratia sufficiens*) which Jansen denies. He adopts the invincibility both of concupiscence and of grace and remains only one step short of Calvinism.

As a confessor of the famous convent of Port Royal, Du Vergier could gather an influential circle of followers of Jansenism and of his own rigorous ideas of pastoral care and sacramental life. So determined were his followers that they defended the "Augustinus" against the Papal prohibition of print in 1640 and bull "In eminenti" of 1642. A party of Jansenists formed itself and was led by A. Arnauld and

¹ *Gallicanism* was a movement within the Church in France which claimed a degree of freedom from the ecclesiastical authority of the Pope. It can be said to have disappeared after the First Vatican Council (1869-70).

later assisted by Blaise Pascal and P. Nicole. The leaders of this religious party, the so-called "hermits" of Port Royal, gained the wholehearted support of a large portion of educated Frenchmen, amongst who were several Bishops, and professors of the Sorbonne...

Blaise Pascal attacked Jesuit moralism in his "Lettres provinciales", a satire of enormous success. Thus the point of gravity was shifted and the conflict rested for the time being (the so-called Clementine Peace of 1669) but flared up in 1701 with renewed intensity over the case of conscience, whether or not a priest could be absolved who in regard to the "quaestio facti" would observe only the "siletium obsequiosum" (reverent silence). Pope Clement XI in his bull "Vineam Domini" of 1705 denied this and confirmed the dogmatic decrees of his predecessors. Since Arnauld's death in 1696 Paschasius Quesnel, the author of the widely read opus "Moral Reflexions" which taught old Jansenist ideas in seemingly deeply religious ways, had become the leader of the Jansenist cause. In his bull *Unigenitus* of 1713 Pope Clement XI condemned some 101 of Quesnel's theses. Now two parties emerged, the "Acceptors", defenders of the bull, and the "Appealers" who were supported by twelve Bishops amongst whom was Archbishop Noailles of Paris; also the Sorbonne and the Universities of Rheims and Nantes had joined the ranks of the "Appealers" and demanded a general council against the Papal sentence. There occurred a flood of pamphlets; the danger of a Galician schism had become a reality and would probably have occurred, had it not been for the declared opposition of the royal court against Appealers, several great churchmen, amongst who were Cardinals Bissy, Dubois and Fleury, intervened after 1720 and prevented the split. During the following years Jansenism declined through running shallow and losing many eminent supporters. Its rigour and religious zeal increasingly lost appeal whilst new ideas were springing up separating humanism from religion: it was the time of Rousseau and Voltaire and of the Rococo. Henceforth Jansenism held its own in France only through its hostility to the Jesuits and linking its own cause with that of Gallicanism...

The Jansenist movement attracted numerous eminent minds and filled them with renewed religious enthusiasm but through its teaching about divine grace and its ascetic rigor it finally estranged many believers from the Church and Christianity. Its attempt to surpass the old Christian mood in penance did, in fact, not represent progress in effect a fair amount of religious regression: the sacraments were taken more rarely and the authority of the Roman Church was considerably shaken; it offered few solutions to religious controversies and proved a rather sterile reform movement which became a forerunner of the modern anti-religious enlightenment.

Liberal Catholics will find little to attract them to Jansenism apart from its concept of freedom which must, however, be qualified and is in essence quite different from that held by the Liberal Catholic Church. Apart from the inheritance of the Apostolic Succession through the archbishopric of Utrecht and some historic sentiments there is today very little that binds our Church to the Dutch Old Catholic Church and, indeed, much less to Jansenism. Very few of us will ever have the chance of viewing the three volumes of Jensen's "Augustinus", a work that requires a sound knowledge of Medieval Latin because, to my knowledge, no attempt has ever been made to have it translated into a modern tongue. Cornelius

Jansen, who never intended to form a "heretical" or schismatic movement but died a devout and faithful Roman Catholic, is thus perhaps the strangest of all modern church reformers and his work possibly the most unknown to the followers of any religious school. Today, although Jansenism seems to linger on in the religious practices of some remote rural Roman Catholic districts of Holland and West Germany, it is a closed and not particularly exciting chapter of the Church History of the West."

TROUBLESOM YEARS

Towards the end of the 17th century the Dutch Catholics were experiencing a greater degree of tolerance from the Protestant government. But at the same time they became increasingly involved in the Jansenist controversy and were openly attacked by the Jesuits and accused of complicity in the Jansenist "heresy". This led to the suspension, in 1702, of the Vicar Apostolic, *Peter Codde*, by the Pope.

Codde accepted the Pope's ruling and refused to exercise his episcopal functions after his suspension. He died in 1710 and the pro-Jansenist, anti-Jesuit party in the Dutch Church was now entirely without a Bishop. The "vicariate" which after the storms of the Reformation had surfaced again in 1631 as the Chapters of the Church of Utrecht and its allied churches now took up an uncompromising stand, friendly to the Jansenists and insisting on maintaining what they claimed to be their ancient right to elect their own Bishop. The following years were a time of confusion and uncertainty with the Pope trying to impose Vicars Apostolic on a group of churches unwilling to accept them. They were being supported in their stand by the Netherland's government which obviously preferred a local, independent church to one subservient to Rome. For a time priests for this group of churches were ordained by sympathetic French and Irish Bishops. But that could not go on for long.

BISHOP VARLET

Into this for the Utrecht Catholics desperate situation help appeared in the person of a French missionary Bishop *Dominique Marie Varlet*, who, on his way to Persia, was passing through Holland. Varlet took pity on the Dutch Catholics, now for many years without a Bishop, and administered Confirmation to some 600 candidates.

But this kind deed of Christian charity earned him the displeasure of the Pope. After a long journey, while on the way to his missionary see, he was notified of his suspension. He then returned to Holland, where he remained for the rest of his life.

The chapters now decided that a new Dutch Bishop should be consecrated. They elected *Cornelis Steenhoven* for the office, and he was duly consecrated by Varlet in 1724. However, both Steenhoven and two of his successors died before they could pass on the succession. Again Varlet came to the rescue and in 1739 consecrated *Peter John Meindaarts* as Archbishop of Utrecht. From then on the succession was duly passed on.

Varlet had himself been consecrated at Paris in 1719 by Bishop de Matignon, who in his turn had been consecrated in 1693 by the famous Jacques Benigne Bossuet, the "Eagle of Meaux". Bossuet traced his episcopal lineage through Archbishop Le Tellier, son of the Grand Chancellor of France, to Cardinal Antonio Barberini, nephew of Pope Urban VIII.

Since Varlet is a figure of great importance both to the Old Catholics and to ourselves we shall here quote from an article in the "Liberal Catholic" of February, 1964 by Roger Williams on the life of Bishop Varlet:

"Those little human details which can quicken a name on a page of history to a living, breathing man are often lost under the dust of centuries. Dominique Marie Varlet, the man, is hard to find. Dominicus, the Latinized version of his first name, which the records often use, makes him seem even more remote. The Church of Rome called him a rebel and a schismatic, his admirers hailed him as a new St. Chrysostom. What manner of man was he?...

Well, one thing at least stands out. He was certainly a man of courage. What he thought right, he did, even though it means opposing the full might of Rome. As to the comparison with Chrysostom, they were both magnificent preachers. But there was much more than that, as we shall see.

Varlet was a Frenchman, born in Paris in 1678. When he was quite young, his father retired to Mount Valérien outside the city and spent the rest of his life in repentance - for what, one wonders? And was it, as part of this repentance that young Dominique Marie was, at a very early age, dedicated to the priesthood? He studied for the Church at the Seminary of Saint-Magloire and received ordination and the diploma of a Doctor of Divinity at the same time. This was in 1706. Five years later he was sent from a curacy at Conflans Charenton to give religious instruction to the people of Louisiana. But he was left in America for less than six years. He was brought back to be consecrated Bishop and sent off to Asia.

Now here we have another ray of light cast upon Varlet. A trip across the Atlantic in the early 18th century was not undertaken in the light-hearted way we are used to today. He was only forty. Yet his superiors thought it worth while to send for him from one end of the world, give him high office, and at once dispatch him to another. Surely they must have found both exceptional brilliance and tremendous spiritual force in him? As the Chappelle des Missions Etrangères in Paris he was consecrated Bishop of Ascalon, and named coadjutor to the Bishop of Babylon. On that very night word came that the Bishop of Babylon had died and that he had succeeded to the See. On February 19, 1719, he set off on the first leg of his journey. And what a journey it was!

A war made the normal route impossible. First he went by sea to Amsterdam. After a pause there, he crossed the whole of Russia to the shore of the Caspian. By the time he arrived there it was November, 1. And there he waited for authority from the court of the King of Persia to enter the country and travel to Hamadan, the headquarters of his See. It is not clear how long he paused in Amsterdam, but the rest of his journey must have taken little short of six months. What a pity it is that he did not leave us a journal of it. Six months of travel by post chaise or on horseback through country, much of which can have been barely civilized. And at the end of it the Caspian to cross! It must have been a veritable Odyssey.

But we must leave him for a while there at Schamarke, and go back to his stop in Holland. For in doing there what he saw as his Christian duty, he had brought, trouble on himself which was to change his whole life. The Church in Holland was

in distress. Its Archbishop Peter Codde had been deposed in 1702, because of an alleged leaning to the Jansenist heresy. Rome had tried to force an unwelcome Bishop on the Dutch church, which refused to accept him. The result was that for fifteen years the people were deprived of those sacraments which only a Bishop can give.

When Bishop Varlet came to Amsterdam he found that great numbers of people were crying out for confirmation. He felt that he could not disregard their plea, and he confirmed several hundred of them. Now the newly consecrated Bishop was no fool. He must have known that this, his first use of his new power, must bring trouble upon himself. He faced it with open eyes. The blow fell even before he had taken over his diocese. The Bishop of Isfahan, who was the Vicar Apostolic of the province, received orders that Varlet was to be declared "suspect". Further, he delivered a Papal Brief suspending the new Bishop from the exercise of any jurisdiction in the diocese.

For a time at least he could probably have defied the order. Rome was far away. But he felt that to do this would cause grave harm to the faith. Rather than risk this, he returned to Holland, where he found many grateful people eager to receive him. He would gladly have healed the breach with Rome, but since his appeals to *Innocent XIII* were quite ineffective, he yielded to the entreaties of the Dutch Christians and threw in his lot with them. The break with the Vatican was complete.

He had returned to Amsterdam in 1720. By 1724 it was obvious that his appeals to the Pope, both for himself and the church of Utrecht would have no result. On October 15 he consecrated Cornelius Steenhoven as eighth Archbishop of Utrecht. But the new Archbishop died next day, after only five months. Again only the life of one man, Varlet, stood between the Church of Utrecht and extension. He lost no time. Barchman Wuytiers was consecrated to fill the see in September. Two more Archbishops received their consecration from Varlet, Van der Croon, and in 1739 Peter John Meindaerts, who in his turn passed on the Apostolic Succession.

What, besides these consecrations, had Varlet been doing during these nineteen years? Well, he had been far from inactive. He lived in Amsterdam till 1727, then with some fugitives at Schoohau, and finally with a religious order at Rhyndijk. During all this time he did everything in his power to help the freed church.... He wrote much, and his writings were described as models of ordered reasoning and deep piety. He even made several secret visits to France to gather support and funds. Various attempts were made to persuade him to cease his labours, but he would not withdraw.

Perhaps we can fairly deduce a little more about Varlet the man from his life during this period. He could undoubtedly have put himself at the head of the Diocese of Utrecht. He would have been welcomed with open arms. Instead he merely worked for it and ensured its survival as a legitimate Episcopal Church. Surely this must mean that he was completely without personal ambition. We can now see the grounds on which he was compared to Chrysostom. Both were eloquent preachers, both were noted for the piety and power of their writings. And above

LIBERAL CATHOLIC INSTITUTE OF STUDIES

all, both were Bishops who were deprived of their sees because they had followed the dictates of conscience.

Bishop Varlet died at Rhyndijk on May 14, 1742, and was buried in the cloister of the church of St. Mary in Utrecht. The Liberal Catholic Church, a direct descendant of those Utrecht Christians, can surely never forget its debt to him."

BREACH WITH ROME

The consecration of Steenhoven in 1724 was followed by Papal excommunication which now confirmed the final breach between Rome and Utrecht. From now on there seemed little hope of reconciliation, but several attempts were made. In 1763 a Synod meeting at Utrecht even declared the Pope to be the head of the Church on earth with spiritual and ecclesiastical authority. Again in 1774 efforts were made to heal the schism but to no avail.

After Meindaerts' consecration in 1739 it was realized that several Bishops were needed to prevent the succession from dying out. In addition to Utrecht the Bishoprics of Haarlem and Deventer were therefore revived and Bishops elected and consecrated for these sees.

In 1853 the liberal policy of the Dutch government made it possible for Rome to "restore" its episcopal hierarchy in Holland. New Bishops were appointed to the various sees, with the result that ever since there have been two Archbishops of Utrecht, one Roman Catholic, and the other Old Catholic. The Roman Catholic Church has subsequently made great gains in Holland. In the census of 1971 38% of the population were listed as Roman Catholic.

THE OLD CATHOLIC MOVEMENT

The First Vatican Council (1869-1870) and its declaration of the infallibility of the Pope (when speaking *ex cathedra*) aroused much controversy in the Roman Catholic Church. The student should read Bishop Wicks' account on pages 186-193 of his book for a more detailed description.

The First Vatican Council was the culmination of a trend towards total absolutism and autocracy which had been propounded by the *Ultramontanist* party within the Church since the 17th century. The *Syllabus Errorum*, issued in 1864, which made any form of liberalism incompatible with Catholic belief, was now followed by the dogma of infallibility. The church of Rome had indeed come a long way from the simple declaration by Pope Gregory I in the 6th century of the Pope as the *servus servorum Dei* (servant of the servants of God) to the *suprema et plena potestas iurisdictionis in universam Ecclesiam* (supreme and total power of jurisdiction in the universal Church) accorded to Pius IX in 1870.

A number of Roman Catholics, mainly in Germany, Switzerland and Austria, under the leadership of the well-known historian Dr. von Dollinger, rejected the new dogmas of the Vatican Council and were subsequently excommunicated. They organized themselves into "Old Catholic" congregations in opposition to the "new" Catholic dogmatism of the Vatican Council.

They approached the Bishops of the independent Church of Utrecht, which aided them by consecrating Bishops for the Old Catholic groups in Germany and Switzerland. But the new movement in these countries soon adopted certain radical reforms which were not to the liking of the Dutch Church.

THE DECLARATION OF UTRECHT

In order to come to closer agreement five Old Catholic Bishops met at Utrecht in 1889 and drew up the *Declaration of Utrecht* which since then has been subscribed to by the Old Catholic Churches in various countries.

The following points from this declaration are of interest to us:

1. Adherence to the statement by St. Vincent of Lerins (as included in our Statement of Principles) "That let us hold which everywhere, always and by all has been believed: for this is truly and rightly Catholic".
2. Adherence to "the unanimously accepted decisions of the Oecumenical Councils held in the undivided Church in the first thousand years."

(The following seven Councils are usually regarded as the "Oecumenical" [pertaining to the whole world] Councils: Nicea I [325], Constantinople I [381], Ephesus [431], Chalcedon [451], Constantinople II [553], Constantinople III [680-1], Nicea II [787]).

3. Rejection of the decrees of the Council of the Vatican of 1870, concerning the infallibility and the universal Episcopate of the Bishop of Rome. This does not deny the historic primacy which several Oecumenical Councils and the Fathers of the ancient Church have attributed to the Bishop of Rome by recognizing him as the *Primus inter pares*.
4. Rejection of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception promulgated in 1854.
5. Rejection of the Bulls *Unigenitus* of 1713 (against Jansenism), *Auctorem Fidei* of 1794 (against certain reforms promulgated by the Synod of Pistoia), the *Syllabus Errorum* of 1864 (against the "Liberal" Catholics).
6. Refusal to accept the decrees of the Council of Trent (1545-63) in matters of discipline.

Although the various Old Catholic Churches in Holland, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, U.S.A. and other countries differ widely in some respects as to ritual etc., they are united in their adherence to the Declaration of Utrecht.

THE 20TH CENTURY

A few years after the turn of the century some of the Old Catholic Bishops were approached through correspondence by some ex-Roman Catholics in England showing interest in the Old Catholic Church. It was claimed that there were priests and congregations in England willing to join the Old Catholic Church. This led to consecration of an ex-Roman Catholic priest, *Arnold Harris Mathew* by Archbishop Gerardus Gul, assisted by several Old Catholic Bishops, to the episcopate at Utrecht on 28 April 1908. The Old Catholic mission in England, at first headed by Bishop Mathew, after some vicissitudes developed into what is now the Liberal Catholic Church.

The Old Catholics use a Mass in the vernacular based on the Tridentine Roman Mass (which has also been the basis of our Holy Eucharist). Their clergy are permitted to marry. Confession is not compulsory.

In 1925 the Old Catholic Church recognized the validity of Anglican Orders. Since 1931 it has been in *full communion* with the Anglican Church. Old Catholic Bishops have since then on many occasions taken just part in the consecration of Anglican Bishops and vice-versa.

The Old Catholic Church has so far shown little interest in its offspring, the Liberal Catholic Church. There have been a few occasions of mutual help. They accepted the help of Bishop Vreede to consecrate Dr. Vidor Deak as Old Catholic Bishop for Hungary in 1919. Dr. Deak reciprocated by consecrating Zoltan Rath as Liberal Catholic Bishop for Hungary in 1950. In 1957 our Bishops Reiching and Coats consecrated at Zagreb, Yugoslavia, Grgur Cengic as Old Catholic Bishop for that country.

During the last few years a dialogue has developed between the Utrecht Old Catholics and the Dutch Roman Catholics. As far as we know, this has mainly been exploratory, to establish points of accord or difference in their theology and general outlook.



THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

One of our Bishops once remarked that the Liberal Catholic Church was "the offspring of a marriage between Christianity and Theosophy." From father's side it had inherited the rich heritage of the Sacraments and the Catholic tradition and from mother's side *Theos Sophia*, the divine wisdom of the ages, as reborn in modern Theosophy. There is a considerable element of truth in the above statement.

Students of the history of the Liberal Catholic Church are familiar with the fact that theosophists, i.e., members of the Theosophical Society, played a crucial role in the early development of the Liberal Catholic Church. The two Bishops we sometimes call "the founders" of the Church, J. I. Wedgwood and C. W. Leadbeater, were both very active members of the Theosophical Society.

Throughout the history of Christianity there have been many off-shoots of the Universal Church which have branched out of their own, mainly because their founder or group of founders stressed a particular doctrine or practice, or because of a new revelation.

In the case of the Liberal Catholic Church the new revelation was the clairvoyant discovery that the Sacraments of the Church were an immensely powerful help given to humanity by Christ to help it forward in its evolution. The Catholic Church in East and West had claimed this all along, but modern materialism and some of the Churches of the Reformation denied it. Through Leadbeater's clairvoyant observations the Sacraments and the whole system of Catholic worship became a living reality to Liberal Catholics.

Also in the field of doctrine new light was thrown on the teachings of Christianity by Theosophical literature. New meanings could be discerned in the Scriptures, in the dogmas of the Church and in early Christian writings. Theosophy brought a new revelation and rediscovery also in this field. In view of all this it seems only natural that a new branch of the Church Catholic appeared.

THE FOUNDING OF THE SOCIETY

The Theosophical Society was founded in New York in 1875. Its chief founders were Madame H.P. Blavatsky, Colonel H. S. Olcott and Mr W.Q. Judge, a lawyer.

The main objects at its foundation were "to promote the knowledge of the laws which govern the universe, to study the esoteric philosophies of ancient times, and to uphold freedom of thought and opinion." Colonel Olcott also said in his inaugural address: "Since the days of Neo-Platonism of Alexandria, this is the first revival of Theosophy."

Except the three people mentioned above, the initial members soon fell away and it was left mainly to Madame Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott to carry on the work of the society. In 1878 they moved to India, and in 1882 they founded the headquarters of the society at *Adyar*, near Madras, where it has remained ever since. Slowly the society started to grow, and spread to many countries around the world.

It soon became known that behind the society and its founders stood two Mahatmas, also called Masters or Adepts, who lived at that time in the Himalayas and who appeared from time to time to give advice to the founders. Much of the philosophy and mysticism of the East, today better known and much studied in the West, became at that time gradually available through

the Theosophical Society. The study of Gnosticism and the Mystery religions of the first centuries of our era were also encouraged. Then, and in the years to follow the society pioneered these studies. It was a period when scientific materialism on the one hand and rigid religious orthodoxy on the other were at their strongest.

As time went on the objects of the society were formulated as follows (in 1896):

- FIRST: To form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour.
- SECOND: To encourage the study of Comparative Religion, Philosophy and Science.
- THIRD: To investigate unexplained laws of nature and the powers latent in man.

The following declaration was added though not binding to members:

The Theosophical Society is composed of students, belonging to any religion in the world or to none, who are united by their approval of the Society's Objects, by their wish to remove religious antagonisms and to draw together men of goodwill whatsoever their religious opinions, and by their desire to study religious truths and to share the results of their studies with others. Their bond of union is not the profession of a common belief, but a common search and aspiration for Truth. They hold that Truth should be sought by study, by reflection, by purity of life, by devotion to high ideals, and the regard Truth as a prize to be striven for, not as a dogma to be imposed by authority. They considered that belief should be the result of individual study or intuition, not its antecedent, and should rest on knowledge, not on assertion. They extend tolerance to all, even to the intolerant, not as a privilege they bestow but as a duty they perform, and they seek to remove ignorance, not to punish it. They see every religion as an expression of the Divine Wisdom and prefer its study to its condemnation, and its practice to proselytism.

Theosophy is the body of truths which form the basis of all religions, and which cannot be claimed as the exclusive possession of any. It offers a philosophy which renders life intelligible, and which demonstrates the justice and the love which guide its evolution. It puts death in its rightful place, as a recurring incident in an endless life, opening the gateway to a fuller and more radiant existence. It restores to the world the Science of the Spirit, teaching man to know the Spirit as himself and the mind and body as his servants. It illuminates the scriptures and doctrines of religions by unveiling their hidden meanings, and thus justifying them at the bar of intelligence, as they are ever justified in the eyes of intuition.

Freedom of thought is also stressed:

"As the Theosophical Society has spread far and wide over the civilized world, and as members of all religions have become members of it without surrendering the special dogmas, teachings and beliefs of their respective faiths, it is thought desirable to emphasize the fact that there is no doctrine, no opinion, by whomsoever taught or held, that is in any way binding on any member of the Society, none which any member is not free to accept or reject. Approval of its three Objects is the sole condition of membership. No teacher or writer, from H.P. Blavatsky downwards, has any authority to impose his teachings or opinions on members."

Every member has an equal right to attach himself to any teacher or to any school of thought which he may choose, but has no right to force his choice on any other."

We have gone into this aspect of the Theosophical Society at some length as it will help us to understand better the background of the Liberal Catholic Church.

ANNIE BESANT AND C.W. LEADBEATER

Madame Blavatsky died in 1891, Colonel Olcott in 1907. Two other figures soon rose to prominence within the Society: *Mrs Annie Besant* a noted socialist and worker for women's rights (joined in 1889) and *C.W. Leadbeater*, an Anglican curate, born 1847 (joined in 1883). Madame Blavatsky, who had considerable psychic powers, had produced psychic phenomena in the early days of the Society, partly to convince an unbelieving world that there were "more things between heaven and earth" than normally perceived, and partly to explain the phenomena produced by the spiritualist mediums of the day. Mr Leadbeater left for India in 1884, and after years of strenuous and one-pointed work developed within himself, with the aid of his Indian Master, the psychic or extra-sensory faculties which later enabled him to observe with great accuracy the conditions and processes of the worlds beyond the physical. Mrs Besant also developed these faculties. The result was a stream of literature on the normally unseen and unknown "planes" or worlds of existence, life after death, and the existence of angels and great beings of immense goodness, knowledge and power, the Masters or Adepts.

The various religions of the world, both ancient and modern, were also studied, and it was shown how their common source was to be found in what was called the *Ancient Wisdom*. This is a partly revealed, partly hidden and esoteric teaching, some of which is given out from time to time by great teachers such as the Christ or the Buddha to humanity. The world is the theatre or field of an ordered plan of *spiritual evolution* (now revealed shortly after Darwin had stated his theory of physical evolution). The various kingdoms of nature, including the human, are all parts of this scheme. Man's evolution is determined by the fact of reincarnation (or repeated lives upon earth) and the law of *karma* or action and reaction, eventually leading to perfection or adept-ship.

Based partly on Madame Blavatsky's works (Particularly *The Secret Doctrine*) and the extensive literature coming from the hands of Annie Besant and C.W. Leadbeater, this new presentation of the Ancient Wisdom constituted something of a new revelation to the Western World and soon found eager students in many countries. It also necessitated the coining of a new terminology, often using Sanskrit words, as the Western languages in many cases had no suitable words covering the concepts expressed. (It was only a decade or so later that the great psychologists Freud and Jung began to create the terminology of modern psychology.)

The term "Theosophy", derived from the Greek *Theos Sophia* ("Divine Wisdom"). It was now employed to designate the type of teachings given through the literature of the Society. The term was first used in the third century by the Alexandrian philosopher Ammonius Saccas. He was the teacher of Plotinus, the founder of Neo-Platonism, and it is also said, of the Church father Origen, the "father of Christian theology". Until being adopted by modern theosophists the term had been used as in Neo-Platonism for knowledge or understanding derived from "divine revelation". This includes knowledge derived from mystical experience or vision, through intuition or extra-sensory means such as clairvoyance. The German mystic Jacob Boehme and the Swedish seer Emmanuel Swedenborg are accordingly sometimes described as "theosophists", though today this term usually denotes a member of the Theosophical Society.

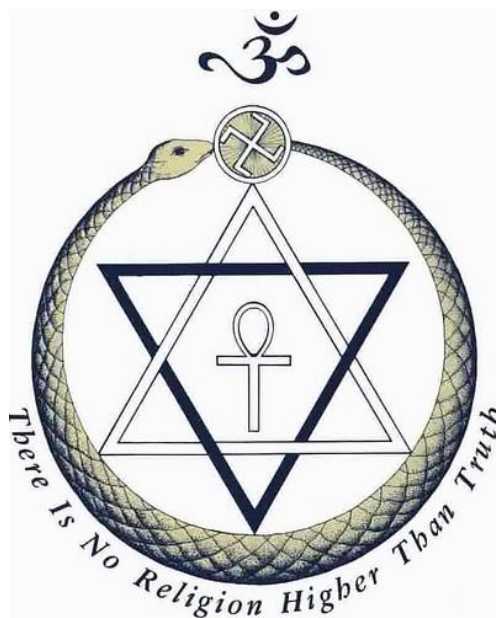
KRISHNAMURTI

Soon after the death of Colonel Olcott the history of the Society took an unexpected turn. Among the many Indian children at Adyar, Mr Leadbeater in 1909 discovered a young boy, *J. Krishnamurti*, who he claimed, by clairvoyantly looking up his past lives, was a very great soul. Mrs Besant, at this time president of the Society, was in full agreement and undertook to give the boy and his brother a good education. Shortly before this (in 1908), she had proclaimed that the great World Teacher who had appeared as Christ in Palestine, was to come again. Mrs Besant now announced that Krishnamurti had been chosen as the vehicle through which He would speak when the time was ripe. A special organization was founded, named *The Order of the Star in the East*.

With growing enthusiasm many thousands of people subsequently joined this organization. They were taught to prepare themselves for the coming of the Lord by leading a good and devoted life. However, Leadbeater, with characteristic caution, wrote (in 1920) "If it should be, that in the counsels of the Most High, He should postpone His coming, to have prepared ourselves to receive Him is still a great and noble work."

Subsequent history showed that more caution should have been adopted and that it should have been realized that His coming in the 20th century - if it actually took place - would be fundamentally different from His coming as Christ in Palestine 2000 years ago. In 1929 Krishnamurti dissolved the Order of the Star, denounced all organizations and movements and all authority and set out to give his own specific teaching, now fairly well known through his talks and books.

The question whether Krishnamurti is actually giving the world a teaching "for the new age" as some believe, can only be decided in centuries to come when the impact of this teaching can be seen in historical perspective. There can be no doubt that he is a remarkable man, and the credit for "discovering" him among the millions of India is Leadbeater's.

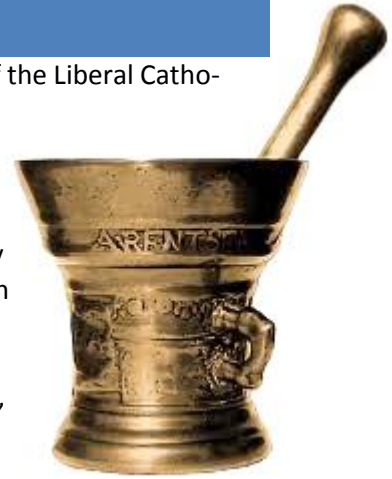


EVENTS CREATE THE MOVEMENT 1908 – 1916

A number of seemingly unconnected events led to the creation of the Liberal Catholic Church.

The first was the decision by the then Archbishop of Utrecht of the Old Catholic Church, *Gerardus Gul*, to consecrate an English ex-Roman Catholic priest, *A.H. Mathew*, to the episcopate as "Regionary Bishop of the Old Catholic Church in the British Isles". The consecration took place on 28 April 1908 in the Church of St. Gertrude, Utrecht.

For some time Mathew remained attached to the see of Utrecht, but in December 1910, there came a breach and the small Old Catholic Mission in Britain under Mathew became independent. We now turn to another event that was to have far-reaching effects for the years to come.



AN IMPORTANT DISCOVERY

At about this time Leadbeater made an important discovery. With some exceptions the main interest of members of the Theosophical Society had been focussed on the Eastern religions, Hinduism and Buddhism in particular. But at the turn of the century some clairvoyant study of early Christianity had taken place, resulting in two important books: "Esoteric Christianity" by Mrs Besant and "The Christian Creed" by C.W. Leadbeater. They were of importance as showing that the original teachings of Christ and of early Christianity had been largely identical with that "Ancient Wisdom", which had formed the background of all the great religions, both Eastern and Western.

While out in the country side in Sicily using his inner sight, Leadbeater noticed a wave of blessing, like dazzling light, passing over the land, and tracing its source he found it came from the altar in the little village church where the priest was saying Mass. To quote his own words:

"At the moment of consecration the Host glowed with the most dazzling brightness; it became in fact a veritable sun to the eye of the clairvoyant. It was this glow which first brought to my notice the possibility of studying clairvoyantly the hidden side of the Eucharistic service... I was naturally intensely interested in this phenomenon, and I made a point of attending various functions at different churches in order to learn whether what I had seen on this occasion was invariable, or if it varied, when and under what conditions. I found that at every celebration the same results were produced... We are here in the presence of a grand and far-reaching scheme."

These observations were of the greatest significance as showing clearly that the Sacramental system (and the Holy Eucharist in particular) has been devised by the Lord Christ as a means of helping humanity's spiritual evolution on an unprecedented scale. It was obviously something which deserved all possible support and Leadbeater was immediately aware of this.

His observations were published in "The Theosophist" on September 1910, and in his book "The Hidden Side of Things" (1913).

WEDGWOOD

A person who, with many others, was particularly interested in Leadbeater's discovery as reported in "The Theosophist" was the General-Secretary of the English section of the Theosophical Society, *James Ingall Wedgwood*. He had in earlier years seriously considered entering the Anglican ministry, while a pupil-organist at York Minster. However, his interest in Theosophy, aroused by hearing a lecture by Mrs Besant, prevented these plans' and he became an ardent worker in the Theosophical Society and also in the new Co-Masonic movement (a branch of Free-Masonry admitting women) which had started at the beginning of the century.

In 1913 his attention was drawn to an article on the habits of birds in a daily paper, written by Archbishop A. H. Mathew, who had in 1908 been consecrated a Bishop of the Old Catholic Church in Holland. Archbishop Mathew had tried to form an English branch of the continental Old Catholic Church but his efforts had not been very successful. A breach with the Dutch Old Catholic Church occurred in December 1910, and at the time that Wedgwood met him, his followers "could be counted on the fingers of one hand".

When Wedgwood approached Archbishop Mathew seeking information about his church he was well received, and it was not long before Mathew ordained him to the priesthood (July 22, 1913). A few other theosophists were also ordained priests in the following year. I need not repeat here in detail events described so well by Bishop Wedgwood in "The Beginnings of the Liberal Catholic Church".

A result of the ordination of Wedgwood and the other theosophists (Gauntlett, Farrer, King and T. Bell) to the priesthood in 1913 and 1914 was the slow and gradual build-up of a congregation, chiefly consisting of theosophists who had become interested in the Old Catholic movement through these priests and through the writings of C. W. Leadbeater.

Regular church activities took place, mainly centred on Wedgwood's small oratory at No. 1 Upper Woburn Place, London. Soon most activities moved to 28 Red Lion Square where the Rev. (later Rt. Rev.) Robert King held regular Sunday services. This chapel, dedicated to the Holy Spirit, was a number of years a centre of activity in London.

Bishop Mathew, unable to make the movement grow, submitted to Rome in December 1915. Before that, on 28 October 1914, he consecrated a former Anglican priest, F.S. Willoughby, to the episcopate to "preserve the succession".

The following year Willoughby consecrated, on 25 September 1915, in Wedgwood's oratory at No. 1 Upper Woburn Place *Robert King* and *Rupert Gauntlett* to the episcopate as he in his turn wished to safeguard the succession for the small but promising group which had formed around Wedgwood and the other theosophical priests. He too, then sent in his submission to Rome.

NEW LEADERSHIP

But before that, on 13 February 1916, Wedgwood was consecrated to the episcopate by Bishops Willoughby, King and Gauntlett. The small group of clergy and members in London, practically all theosophists, now came under his leadership. The "birthday" of the Liberal Catholic Church is usually counted as from this date, though there never was any idea of forming a new Church. The group of people, clergy and laity, which at that time formed "The Old Catholic Church in Great Britain", continued as before; the change of name of the movement came later.

From the whole progress of events it is quite clear that what we now call *The Liberal Catholic Church* is a direct continuation and expansion of the English branch of the *Old Catholic Church*. Its development can be followed in the Minutes of the joint Clerical and Episcopal Synod from 1910 to 1920, kept in our London Archives. (See "The Official Records of Synod 1910-1920, Parts I and II, edited by the Rt. Rev. E. J. Burton).

A study of these Minutes show that there is an uninterrupted continuity from the time the first Chapter X) was held on April 28, 1910, under the Chairmanship of Bishop Mathew, right up to the time that this body came to function principally as the Clerical Synod for Great Britain and Ireland only.

After Wedgwood's consecration as leader of the growing movement he set about giving it a more coherent shape. At a joint meeting of the Episcopal and Clerical Synods on April 20, 1916, at Red Lion Square a *Statement of Principles, A Constitution and Rules for the Clergy* were formally adopted. These were interim documents intended to serve the movement at this stage of development.

During the years that followed Wedgwood travelled widely and Bishop King was in charge of the work in England. The Joint London Synod functioned as the governing body of the Church, presided over by Bishop King or by Bishop Wedgwood when in London.

Bishop King carried on the work in London in the oratory at 23 Red Lion Square. This oratory was later moved to No. 2 Upper Woburn Place.



FORMATIVE YEARS 1917-1920

Wedgwood soon left for Australia where he consecrated C. W. Leadbeater to the Episcopate on July 22, 1916, as Regional Bishop for Australia and New Zealand.

Leadbeater wrote to Annie Besant on 25 July 1916:

"Wedgwood has arrived, and is in good health. His consecration to the Episcopate has had the unexpected result of putting him practically at the head of the Old Catholic movement as far as the British Empire is concerned, all his colleagues (except, I think, one) in it being Theosophists ready to work under his direction. This being so, he desires most earnestly to offer the movement to the World Teacher as one of the vehicles for His force, and a channel for the preparation for His Coming."

We see here clearly another motive which guided and inspired the two leaders - apart from the realization of the tremendous power for good in the sacraments: the expected Second Coming.

A NEW LITURGY

The most important work now before Wedgwood and Leadbeater was the revision of the Old Catholic Liturgy, and they set about this work almost immediately with great enthusiasm.

Leadbeater wrote to Annie Besant in September of the same year:

"This thing *ought to* be well done - the Ritual of His Church, the *only* one combining the power of the ancient Church with a true Theosophical expression of the *real* relation between GOD and man; all the greatest poets of the age ought to be at work on it."

The two Bishops were very much aware of their own inadequacy, but they actually formed an outstanding team for the purpose, Wedgwood having a sound theological knowledge and a great gift for liturgical expression, and Leadbeater, the ability to study the workings of the liturgy clairvoyantly. In December 1916, Leadbeater wrote again to Annie Besant:

"We wished again and again that we could have had your invaluable help in this task, for you have the gift of language which is denied to us, and we feel so hopelessly inadequate. The greatest poets and writers of the day were needed for such a work - not two obscure Bishops in a suburb of Sydney! Our only qualifications were familiarity with ecclesiastical forms, and a very deep anxiety to do exactly what he wants."

We realize now that the new Liturgy was a masterpiece, and undoubtedly the two Bishops were deeply inspired when compiling and writing it. For the purpose of immediate use "The Liturgy of the Holy Mass", "Ritual of Holy Baptism and Confirmation" and "Ritual of Vespers and Solemn Benediction" were published in booklet form in Sydney in 1917. They were authorized by Bishop Wedgwood "for use within the British Jurisdiction of the Old Catholic (Provinces of Great Britain, Australia and New Zealand)".

In 1918 *The Old Catholic Church Liturgy* in two parts (paperback) was published in London, containing further additional services. It was authorized by Bishop Wedgwood "for use in the churches of our movement in the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand and America".

The inclusion in this issue of the instruction "the priest bows low and kisses the altar" on several occasions during the Mass now seems strange, as this is not found in the earlier (1917) Sydney edition. The Bishops kept on working on the liturgy for some time to come yet. But the new (revised) form of the principal services of the Church had now been established. The new Liturgy, the Church's most important tool for the efficient working of the sacraments had been established.

THE CHURCH BEGINS TO EXPAND

Having thus laid the foundations for the future work and growth of the movement in the form of a new Liturgy, the two Bishops now set about trying to attract people to the Church. The obvious way to achieve this was to try to interest members of the Theosophical Society, as had been the case in London. Many had read Bishop Leadbeater's description of the Mass as seen clairvoyantly in his books and articles, and he was a well known lecturer in Sydney with a considerable following.

However the going was not easy at first. At this period (early 1917), outside the services in the oratory in London, the only regular services of Holy Mass were held privately in suburban oratories in Sydney and Melbourne. One of the first Australians ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Wedgwood, the Rev. John McConkey of Melbourne, in January 1917 started to hold regular Sunday services for a small group of theosophists and friends in rooms rented from the Theosophical Society in that city.

Early in 1917 Bishop Wedgwood went to New Zealand to try to establish the Church there and on his return to Sydney a meeting was called of some theosophists who were thought to be interested. Miss Constance Radcliffe relates what happened:

"The purpose of the meeting was explained but the response was not immediate, so we signed a paper and passed it around for others to add their names if they wished and in that way a nucleus of names was obtained, 15 or 16, there being 29 people present."

It was a slow beginning, but once a nucleus was formed the movement started to grow. Even at this stage many theosophists were reluctant to join, especially as at that time prayers were still offered for the Pope as the Patriarch of Western Christendom. (This practice was dropped as of December 1917).

THE GREAT EXPANSION BEGINS

On Easter Day, 8 April 1917, the first public service of the Holy Eucharist was held in rented premises in Sydney. There were 77 communicants. This was the beginning of the spectacular growth of the Church. As from that date congregations started to grow and new groups began to spring up in most cities all through Australia and New Zealand. One of the difficulties was to find men willing (and suitable) to assume "the sweet but heavy burden" of the priesthood. Bishop Wedgwood was untiring in his efforts, travelling from State to State, ordaining suitable men as clergy and forming small groups of interested people throughout Australia and brought the Church to the U.S.A., Canada, South Africa and to the Continent of Europe.

Everywhere theosophists were found who were willing to join and support the Church. Without this help it may have taken many decades to accomplish what was now achieved in a few years time. Mrs Annie Besant, at this time President of the Theosophical Society - though she never became a member herself, supported the Church (and gave sermons to large congregations), just as she had earlier supported the Co-Masonic Movement. In the Esoteric School of the Theosophical Society there were many to whom the Church had special appeal and many devoted members and clergy of the early days came from this group. Its members were trained in meditation and were people of high integrity and imbued with great idealism. Many saw in the Church an avenue of work for and service to God and their fellow men. Many members of the Order of the Star in the East, expecting the Second Coming of the Lord Christ, also joined the Church.

The congregations in Sydney and Melbourne soon outgrew their rented premises and church buildings were purchased and consecrated: The Church of the Holy Spirit in Melbourne on Whitsunday, 1918, and the pro-cathedral of St. Alban in Sydney on 17 November 1918. The latter building (now demolished) could seat up to 400 people and was on several occasions in the following years filled to capacity.

A NEW NAME

During his world-wide travels Bishop Wedgwood found time to visit London, and on December 1 and 2 1917, meetings of the combined Episcopal and Clerical Synod were held. Wedgwood reported on the growth of the Church, now having branches in Australia, New Zealand and U.S.A. This had created a new situation in relation to the mother Church, the Old Catholic Church of Utrecht. The movement had after all started as a "mission" of the Old Catholic Church in Britain, and though Bishop Mathew's efforts had not been successful, the Church was now rapidly growing, mainly outside Britain. At this meeting it was decided that the Presiding Bishop should write to the Archbishop of the Old Catholic Church in Utrecht to try to clarify the situation and - if Utrecht was willing - continue as part of the Old Catholic Church.

However, no reply was received, and it could only be assumed that the see of Utrecht stuck to its previous attitude after the break with Mathew in 1910 and was no longer interested. A change of name now became imperative - as Wedgwood wrote in the later edition of the Statement of Principles: " — that there should not be imputed to them principles of liberalism in religion which would still be distasteful to the Church of Utrecht..." Various names were suggested and discussed at meetings in Sydney and London. The name favoured by Wedgwood, "*The Liberal Catholic Church (Old Catholic)*" was finally decided upon and officially confirmed at a meeting of the London Synod on 6 September 1918.

The first full edition of *The Liturgy according to use of the Liberal Catholic Church* was published in Sydney in 1919. It was "authorized for use in the Liberal Catholic Church" by Bishop Wedgwood on the feast of St. Alban, 1919.

A new *Statement of Principles* with added *Summary of Doctrine* (both written by Wedgwood) and a new *Constitution* were published in Sydney in 1919. These two documents are marked: "Having received the assent of all the clergy in Australasia these documents (-this constitution-) are with the approval of the Presiding Bishop provisionally authorized for the Province of Australasia, C. W. Leadbeater, Regionary Bishop, All Saints Day 1919."

This Constitution and Statement of Principles were the first drawn up for the Liberal Catholic Church after its change of name, and their general outline have remained the same though many changes have been made since.

The same *Statement of Principles and Summary of Doctrine* was authorized by Bishop Wedgwood as Presiding Bishop for the whole church "on behalf of the Episcopal Synod" on Whitsunday 1920, and the same *Constitution*, with some minor additions, was "provisionally" authorized for the whole church by the Presiding Bishop in 1923 and accepted by the First General Episcopal Synod in 1921. The 1916 *Constitution and Statement of Principles* intended by Wedgwood as "stop-gap" documents had now been superseded and replaced by up-to-date versions embodying the organizational and doctrinal development of the Church.

We find then that the *Liturgy*, the *Constitution* and the *Statement of Principles*, these three documents embodying the fundamental principles and outlook of the Church had received their definite form at this stage (1919).

The following year (1920) saw the publication of Bishop Leadbeater's "*The Science of the Sacraments*" and "*The Hidden Side of Christian Festivals*." To quote Bishop Wedgwood:

"These works marked an epoch in the history of the young Church. The LITURGY had opened the way for a new influx of life, but with the wealth of teaching contained in these books, and the new orientation they accomplished, the Church found itself the bearer of a new and entirely distinctive message of Christendom. Stage by Stage it has been borne in upon us that the Liberal Catholic Church has a greater destiny to fulfil in re-interpreting Christian philosophy. Christian ethic and Christian worship in the full light of Theosophy than in merely providing a neutral territory on which people who dissented from orthodox teaching could huddle together. This evidently is the work for which it was intended and brought into being."

