

Saint Willibrord
and
His Society

BY

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'Chosen by God'

THE year was A.D. 664. According to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, it was the year when an eclipse of the sun occurred, and when there came a great pestilence to the island of Britain. It was the year of the death of Eorcenbert, King of Kent, as well as of Deusdedit, Archbishop of Canterbury. It was also—and this is of greater significance to our story—the year of the consecration of Wilfrid, and of a meeting held at the celebrated monastery of Streonshalh or, to give it its more familiar name, Whitby; a monastery ruled by an equally celebrated Abbess, Hilda.

This conference took place between two rival parties, each of which had for long been struggling to gain general acceptance for its own particular religious observances. The most noteworthy of these observances, and certainly the one which could cause the most embarrassment and confusion, was that concerning the date of Easter. One has but to imagine the inconvenience of an arrangement whereby King Oswy of Northumbria, following the Celtic system of reckoning, which fixed the date of Easter according to what it claimed to be the authority of S. John, would be celebrating the Easter festival with every mark of customary joy and feasting, at the same moment as his wife who followed the Roman method of reckoning, which based its Paschal dating on what was considered the Petrine authority, would be observing Palm Sunday and the solemn fast of Holy Week. So at Whitby matters had once for all to be thrashed out. On this point King Oswy was fully determined.

To lead the Celtic party came Colman, formerly a monk of Iona, and now Bishop of Lindisfarne. He included amongst his supporters the Abbess Hilda. The other group had as its chief spokesman Wilfrid, recently appointed Abbot of Ripon, and the champion of all things Roman. But, if to outward appearances the main question was the fixing of a uniform date for the celebration of Easter, beneath the surface far more vital matters were at stake. Should England reject Roman authority by accepting the decision of what Wilfrid called 'one corner of a distant island,' and thus deprive itself of all opportunity in days to come of entering into the main stream of world affairs? Or, should it fall into line with the rest of Western Christendom by following Roman usages, and thereby enable itself to play its full part in European life and culture? So it is that the Synod of Whitby has been described justly as 'one of the great turning points in the history of our race.' That, in the end, King Oswy's judgment went in favour of the Roman party was chiefly due to the persuasive eloquence of Abbot Wilfrid. There can be no doubt that this decision was right.

A few miles south of Whitby lived a young boy named Willibrord, at that time about six years of age. He had been born on November 6th, most probably in the year 658, in what is now Yorkshire, but was then called Deira, in a place possibly not far from the mouth of the river Humber. His father, by name Wilgils, was a 'ceorl' or nobleman of English descent. Of his mother we know almost nothing, save that, like her husband, she was a devout Christian.

Alcuin, the legal inheritor of Wilgils's property, and the earliest biographer of Willibrord—a man who, with all the materials at hand, could have written a really first-rate life of the saint, packed full of historical information, but whose

work was produced mainly for devotional purposes—tells how, before the boy was born, his mother had been granted a vision in which 'it seemed to her as if she saw in the sky the new moon, which, as she watched, slowly increased until it reached the size of the full moon. Whilst she was gazing intently upon it, it fell swiftly into her mouth, and when she had swallowed it her bosom was suffused with light. Filled with fear, she awoke at once and went to recount the dream to a holy priest, who asked her whether during the night on which the vision came to her she had known her husband in the customary way. When she assented, he replied as follows: "The moon which you saw changing from small to great is the son whom you conceived on that night. He will disperse the murky darkness of error with the light of truth, and wherever he goes he will carry with him a heavenly splendour and display the full moon of his perfection. By the brightness of his fame and the beauty of his life, he will attract to himself the eyes of multitudes." Hence, it is true to say that, even before his birth, Willibrord had been 'chosen by God.'

When it was held, the conference at Whitby cannot have conveyed much to the six-year-old Willibrord. Later, however, he would often hear Wilfrid speak especially of his own personal success in the debate. And, although Willibrord cannot then have known it, the Synod of Whitby was to have a profound effect upon his life and work.

It was, perhaps, at the very time of this decisive event of 664, that Wilgils, the father of Willibrord, resolved to forsake worldly affairs and become a hermit. He chose for his cell a small chapel overlooking the spot where the Humber joins the North Sea. There he was to pass many quiet years, giving spiritual succour to large numbers who sought him out, until eventually he became head of a small

religious community. Probably his wife was already dead, for it seems that before he could enter upon the religious life, he had to make some provision for his young son. This he did by entrusting Willibrord, who had by then reached the age of reason, to Wilfrid's abbey at Ripon. Four years earlier, this had been founded as a house where the Benedictine Rule was observed: we can almost hear Abbot Wilfrid emphasizing the point, since he himself had introduced it—the ordered rule of Latin Christendom, a 'little rule for beginners,' as its founder Benedict of Nursia described it, not the Celtic monastic observance, so much more severe.

A study of Benedictine monasticism tells us something of the kind of life which Willibrord would have spent at Ripon. He soon grew to understand what S. Benedict intended when he had spoken of the monastery as a 'school for the service of God.' He found that this meant, as far as he was concerned, Prayer, Work and Self-discipline. Prayer was indeed fundamental: day by day, and night by night, Willibrord joined with his companions in the recitation of the Divine Office. This, he came to realize, was the 'Work of God' which nothing must ever be allowed to hinder. There was other work to be done as well: the sharing in manual labour in the abbey garden or fields, and, less pleasant perhaps, in the kitchen. For the younger members like Willibrord, there were lessons as well. These included not only the careful study of the Bible and the Fathers, but also of what had already become the basic school curriculum, the seven liberal arts, consisting of the 'trivium'—grammar, rhetoric and poetry—and the 'quadrivium'—arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy. Self-discipline was involved in the daily faithful perseverance in prayer and work, and in obedience to one's superiors. Doubtless, also, young Willibrord came to know something

of the thirtieth chapter of S. Benedict's Rule: 'Concerning boys under age, how they shall be corrected'!

Later, says Alcuin, Willibrord received the tonsure, and made his profession as a monk. He adds that the young man was inferior to none of his companions as regards fervour, humility and zeal for study. Indeed, it appears that as time passed he outshone them, and that although he was of small physique, his mental development was well in advance of his years. Like the child Samuel of old, it could be said of Willibrord, that he 'grew and the Lord was with him.'

Abbot Wilfrid seems to have taken a particular interest in this his 'spiritual son,' and instilled in him his own love for Roman customs and ceremonial. The association between the two continued even after the year 664, when Wilfrid was appointed Bishop of York. Willibrord watched with eagerness the fulfilment of the desire of his spiritual father, in the gradual rising of the great church at Ripon, a 'basilica of polished stone, towering to a great height, with pillars of varied form and arched vaults and winding cloisters.' He was present at the dedication service, to which had been invited two kings, together with numerous abbots and other dignitaries. At this service, Bishop Wilfrid played the leading role, amidst all the pomp and splendour which he so dearly loved.

In the year 678, when Willibrord had reached the age of twenty, he suddenly decided to leave the abbey of Ripon and to seek new surroundings in Ireland. Alcuin gives several reasons for this unexpected action: he 'felt an urge to pursue a more vigorous mode of life'; he was 'stirred with a desire to travel abroad'; he 'had heard that schools and learning flourished in Ireland'; and he 'was encouraged further by what he was told of the manner of life adopted there by certain holy men, particularly by the blessed bishop Egbert.'

In those days Ireland was noted for its intellectual culture and especially for its schools which attracted scholars from foreign lands. Learning was prized there for its own sake, not for any material gains or rewards. Bede, in his *History of the English Church and People*, refers to the fact that many Englishmen, nobles and others, were drawn to Ireland, either on account of sacred learning or in search of a more ascetic life. Nor was it without good reason that a later Englishman was to raise the complaint that so many students of his own country should find it necessary to journey to Ireland for educational purposes.

Nevertheless, the somewhat facile explanations on Alcuin's part may well conceal the real reason for Willibrord's departure from what had for so long been his spiritual home. A quarrel between Wilfrid and King Egfrid of Northumbria had eventually resulted in the bishop losing his see. It is understandable that Willibrord, who had such close ties with Wilfrid, would be angered by the treatment meted out to his friend, and would himself seek voluntary exile as a gesture of sympathy. Many of Wilfrid's monks followed the same course.

The monastery that Willibrord chose for his new home was situated at Rathmelsigi. Its abbot was the Northumbrian scholar Egbert, to whom Alcuin refers as a bishop, and who, like Wilfrid, was a champion of the Roman customs. Another celebrated monk resident at Rathmelsigi, was Wigbert. By means of contact with these men Willibrord hoped to attain to the degree of holiness and virtue which they possessed, much, Alcuin says picturesquely, 'as a bee sucks honey from the flowers and stores it up in its honey-comb.'

At the monastery of Rathmelsigi he must often have heard of the missionary needs of the continent of Europe.

Bede relates how Egbert had especially longed to undertake the task of evangelizing the people living in the region which is to-day the Netherlands, but was then known as Frisia. He was, however, prevented from doing so by a storm at sea, forcing him to turn back after he had ignored a vision in which it had been revealed to him that, in spite of his own wishes, his future work must be in Ireland. Wigbert, his companion, had actually spent a couple of years working in Frisia, but had at length returned to Ireland without having achieved any success.

Willibrord was ordained priest at the age of thirty by his new abbot. Two years later, in 690, he set out upon that mission where hitherto all efforts to preach the Gospel of Christ had failed. It was evident that, for the carrying out of this task, Willibrord had been 'chosen by God.'

Archbishop of the Frisians

THE history of the Frisians, to whom Willibrord felt himself called by God to preach the Gospel, is obscure. They lived along the coast of the North Sea, between the rivers Ems and Scheldt; and during the seventh century they had been forcing their way inland and southwards. They had a close affinity with the people of England, as is obvious from the resemblances between the Frisian and English languages even now. This may explain the enthusiasm on the part of Anglo-Saxon missionaries to preach the Gospel to their pagan kinsmen on the continent.

The monks Egbert and Wigbert had both attempted to convert Frisia. Even earlier, Amandus, Bishop of Maastricht, and Eligius, Bishop of Noyon-Tournai, had spread the Faith in southern Frisia. For a time the Merovingians had occupied Frisia, and a small chapel dedicated to S. Martin of Tours had been built at Utrecht. According to a letter written by Boniface to Pope Stephen III in 753, Dagobert I had given this chapel to the Archbishop of Cologne on the understanding that he should try to evangelize the Frisians; but, declared Boniface, he had not carried out this obligation.

In the year 678 the Frisian king or chief, Aldgils, had shown himself friendly disposed towards Bishop Wilfrid, who had landed in Frisia on his way to Rome. Wilfrid had been allowed to spend the winter amongst the Frisians, who must have been impressed with what he had to say, for

according to his biographer Eddius, nearly all the chiefs were baptized, as well as many thousands of the common people. Wilfrid was undoubtedly helped in his success by the marked increase in the local catch of fish, which fortunately coincided with his arrival.

But King Radbod, who succeeded Aldgils, was extremely hostile towards Christianity, not least because it was the faith of the Franks. He proceeded to drive them out of Frisia. Then he destroyed the churches, persecuted any of his countrymen who had received Christian baptism, and eventually seized Wijk bij Duurstede, an important centre on the river Rhine, and Utrecht where he established himself.

There is a celebrated tale told of Radbod, which although now generally recognized as being doubtful and based on late medieval manuscripts, is not without value as indicating the kind of man Radbod was. It is said that a seventh century Bishop of Sens, named Wulfram, had met with such excellent results in his preaching that he was minded to turn to Frisia. Here he at last persuaded even Radbod to accept baptism. The king, standing at the font, had actually gone so far as to dip one foot within it when it occurred to him to ask the bishop the question whether his predecessors, the kings and noble chieftains of Frisia, were in heaven or hell. Wulfram, with more zeal than tact, and without a moment's hesitation, answered that undoubtedly they were all in hell. Immediately Radbod withdrew. He would, he said, prefer to dwell with his forefathers in hell rather than sit down with only a few of his men in heaven. If the story is true a great opportunity was lost. In any case, Radbod throughout his life remained a most bitter enemy of the Church.

Shortly before Willibrord set forth upon his mission to

Frisia, a quarrel had taken place between Radbod and Pepin II, mayor of the palace of Austrasia and virtual ruler of the Frankish kingdom. After a considerable struggle Pepin had driven back the Frisians, and had regained Utrecht and Wijk bij Duurstede. Radbod, seeing that he would have to come to terms with his adversary, consented to the marriage of his daughter Tuetsinde or Theodosine to Pepin's son Grimoald, after she had been baptized. Yet, he retained a burning resentment against the Frankish conquerors and their religion.

Thus it will be seen that Willibrord was faced with difficulties and dangers of many kinds. Till then he had passed almost his whole life within the cloister. Henceforth it would no longer be peace and tranquillity for him, but ceaseless toil and adventure. Fortunately, we are no longer solely dependent upon the fragmentary *Life* by Alcuin, but have also to assist us the precious record of Bede, which although too brief, is historically of the highest importance.

Willibrord did not travel alone; he had with him eleven other companions. This close following of the Master whom they served, even to such minute details as arranging that their number should correspond to that of the first disciples, shows the simple faith and spirituality of those early Christian missionaries. Legend, as usual, has been busy with the eleven who accompanied Willibrord, but we know scarcely anything about them except Suidbert, and what Alcuin has to say, that some of them later became bishops while others gained the crown of martyrdom.

As to the journey itself, all we are told is that they 'embarked in a ship.' Some have understood this to mean that they set sail from some unknown port in Ireland, and eventually reached Frisia by an indirect route. But the more usual method followed by Celtic monks of Ireland was

first to sail to Britain, and then cross over land on foot to one of the Kentish ports, most probably Richborough, from which they would re-embark. We search in vain to discover the nature of the ship in which Willibrord and his companions sailed; for this is a completely blank period in maritime history. Probably the ship bore some resemblance to the considerably later sailing vessels of Goksted and Oseberg in Norway or, perhaps, even to those which figure in the Bayeux tapestry.

An eleventh century biographer of Willibrord, Theofrid, a monk of Echternach, says that the ship put in at Grave-lines, but his information appears to be based on the fact that his hero was the patron saint of the church at Grave-lines. It is far more likely that, as Alcuin says, the vessel cast anchor at the mouth of the Rhine.

After taking rest and refreshment the monks continued on their journey, making first for the old Roman city of Traiectum, the modern Utrecht, where later on Willibrord was to have his episcopal residence. However, as Radbod was still in the vicinity, they deemed it wiser not to stay there, but instead to 'turn aside' and go on to Wijk bij Duurstede, where they sought out Pepin II. He received them favourably and assured them of his protection. Moreover, they accepted from him certain gifts including a church at Antwerp, dedicated to S. Peter and S. Paul, which had been built by Bishop Amandus when he worked in the city. Antwerp formed a good base for Willibrord's missionary endeavours, and there is reason to believe that he established himself there soon after his arrival on the continent.

Much has been written about the support given to Willibrord by Pepin. Indeed, according to some historians, the missionary was little more than a tool in the hands of the

Frankish ruler, who was sufficiently astute to see that the spreading of Christianity would strengthen his own power, and who therefore used Willibrord to serve his own purposes. Such a supposition is unnecessary; while there are certain features in the story which are opposed to it. Without a doubt Pepin was anxious to retain the services of Willibrord and his companions. No doubt, too, selfish motives entered into the support which he gave to them. Yet, dependant as Willibrord was upon Pepin's goodwill, he did not regard him as the final authority in matters spiritual as well as material. The assistance of the mayor of the palace of Austrasia may have put the work at Antwerp on a firm footing, and have helped to crown the first efforts of the English missionaries with success, but their leader wanted something more.

Not for nothing had Willibrord received his training from Wilfrid of York. Sharing Wilfrid's veneration for Rome, he particularly desired to have the sanction and blessing of the Pope for his task. With that end in view he hastened to cross the Alps for Rome. He could scarcely have taken a more memorable step. For the first time, a missionary from the island church of Britain had come to Rome seeking the confirmation of his appointment. Henceforth the Anglo-Saxon missionaries would pledge themselves to promote the interests of the papacy on the continent of Europe.

Pope Sergius I received Willibrord gladly, and readily blessed him for the work in Frisia. In order to encourage him the Pope bestowed on him various gifts, including objects of culture and books, as well as numerous relics for the churches which he planned to build on the site of heathen temples. Thus equipped, Willibrord returned to Antwerp.

Either during his absence, or very soon after his return, there occurred an incident to which will always be attached a certain mystery—the consecration as bishop of a member of Willibrord's band of missionaries, the monk Suidbert. As the work progressed and the number of converts increased, the monks, very naturally, felt the need of a bishop to perform episcopal functions. The difficulty lies in their choice of Suidbert for this office, rather than of their leader, Willibrord. Some scholars have seen in this action a clear sign of dissent among the monks, and even of opposition towards Willibrord and his policy. Others have taken it to suggest that Suidbert, and not Willibrord, was the real head of the mission. The truth is probably far less complex. Willibrord, as on a later occasion, most likely protested his own unworthiness when the suggestion of his consecration was first mooted, and deliberately gave place to Suidbert, who was an older man with more experience than himself. Whatever the true explanation may be, when Suidbert returned to England for consecration he received it at the hands of Bishop Wilfrid, who was then in Mercia, since the see of Canterbury at that time was vacant; and it is inconceivable that Wilfrid would have consented to consecrate as bishop a man who was the leader of a faction against his own spiritual son, Willibrord. Finally, the name of Suidbert has a place in Willibrord's 'Calendar,' now preserved in the *Bibliothèque Nationale* in Paris—a document which the saint kept for his own personal use, consisting of the names of those whose memories he especially treasured.

The election of Suidbert by the monks on their own account seems to have displeased Pepin, who probably felt that he ought to have been consulted on a matter which involved a bishop exercising jurisdiction within his terri-

ories. However, what might easily have proved a difficult situation was saved by Suidbert's leaving Frisia to preach to the Boructuari, a Germanic people living in South Westphalia. Later, after Suidbert's work had been undone by a Saxon invasion, Pepin, in response to a plea from his pious wife, Plectrude, gave the bishop a place of residence in an island on the Rhine, known then as 'in Litore' and now as Kaiserwerth, where Suidbert built a monastery, and remained until his death.

The enthusiasm for spreading the Gospel in Europe led, on more than one occasion, to acts of indiscretion by some of the English missionaries. An attempt made at this time to extend missionary activity beyond the Frisian borders into the country of the Saxons met with disaster. Two priests named Hewald, and distinguished as 'Black' Hewald and 'Fair' Hewald by the colour of their hair and skin, who undertook this ill-timed venture, both suffered martyrdom. Their bodies were flung into the Rhine, but were later retrieved and taken by Pepin's order to Cologne, where they were laid to rest in the cathedral. The names of the Hewalds are to be found in Willibrord's 'Calendar,' under the date October 4th.

As time passed, Willibrord became increasingly aware that, if the labours of himself and his colleagues were to have permanent results, there should be someone at the head with a higher status than that of itinerant preacher. He therefore asked Pepin that a bishop should be appointed. Even so, he persisted in his refusal to allow himself to be put forward for the office on the grounds of his unworthiness. Eventually Pepin—to quote Bede, 'with their unanimous consent,' which probably refers not to the monks, but to a gathering of the nobles—urged Willibrord to go to Rome once more. He himself asked the Pope to consecrate

him as 'Archbishop of the Frisians.' So, once again, the great missionary crossed the Alps into Italy.

Alcuin, who only records this one visit of Willibrord to Rome, says that shortly before his arrival Sergius I was given a dream wherein 'he was advised by an angel to choose him with the highest honours, because he had been chosen by God to bring the light of the Gospel to many souls: his purpose in coming to Rome was to receive the dignity of the episcopate, and nothing that he asked for was to be refused.'

Willibrord was consecrated Archbishop of the Frisians in the church of S. Cecilia in Trastevere, on November 22nd, 695. November 22nd, in addition to being the feast day of S. Cecilia is also the eve of that of S. Clement. Hence, in conferring upon Willibrord the pallium, Pope Sergius also thought it fitting to bestow upon him the name of 'Clement.' A similar instance of this practice of giving an additional name at consecration took place some years afterwards, when the English missionary, Wynfrith, was made a bishop by Pope Gregory II, with the name of 'Boniface.' But whereas 'Boniface' was universally accepted, the name 'Clement' seems never to have attached itself to Willibrord in quite the same way.¹ There is, in the margin of the November folio of Willibrord's 'Calendar' a note, almost certainly written in the saint's own hand, to the effect that 'Clement-Willibrord' who, 'in the 690th year of Christ's Incarnation had come by sea into the Frankish territory,' was in 695, 'although unworthy, ordained bishop at Rome by the Apostolic man the Lord Pope Sergius.'

Fourteen days after his consecration Willibrord set out once more from Rome for Frisia. Having arrived there he

¹ Dr. Moss has pointed out that Italians could not pronounce Willibrord or Wynfrith.

immediately sought a more central place than Antwerp for his residence as Archbishop. By this time Utrecht, of which he had caught a glimpse six years earlier, had passed completely out of Radbod's power. Pepin therefore gave him the town, and at once there began the work of building a church. Willibrord may have cast his mind back to the days at Ripon, when as a young man he had watched Wilfrid's great church going up. He may even have sent to England for some of his fellow-countrymen who were architects and craftsmen, to come and assist in the task at Utrecht. The sight of a new church dedicated to S. Saviour, as well as a monastery and school erected upon the ruins of the Roman camp of Traiectum, must have filled the archbishop and his companions with joy.

More than half a century later Boniface, writing to Pope Stephen III about a dispute, in which the then Bishop of Cologne was putting forward unwarranted claims to jurisdiction over Utrecht, told the Pope that Willibrord, besides building the church of S. Saviour, had discovered within Utrecht the ruins of the small chapel which had been destroyed by the heathen Frisians some years before, and that he had rebuilt this from the foundations with his own labour, and had dedicated it in honour of S. Martin. A distinguished scholar¹ has drawn attention to the fact that at Rome, Canterbury and Utrecht there were cathedrals dedicated to S. Saviour. He has pointed to the further parallels between Utrecht and Canterbury, each of which had smaller churches named after S. Martin, and where, in each case, the archbishop shared with his clergy and monks a common life.

Willibrord had now reached the summit of his career.

¹ W. Levison, *England and the Continent in the Eighth Century*, p. 60 (Oxford, 1946).

'In Labours more Abundant'

BY the time Willibrord had settled at Utrecht the year 696 had already begun. His task as a missionary bishop was to occupy the major part of the next forty-three years, and the remainder of his life. It is for this period in particular that we lack a good contemporary biography of the saint, even though, thanks to the efforts of modern historians, much has been done to fix dates and events in a very remarkable career.

For two years the work at Utrecht and in the immediate neighbourhood kept Willibrord and his colleagues fully occupied. Then, in 698, he paid a visit to Trier, where he met Irmina, abbess of a neighbouring convent at Oeren. According to an ancient tradition, Irmina was a daughter of the Frankish king Dagobert I, but a recent view has claimed her as being a noble lady of Austrasia, and the mother of Plectrude, wife of Pepin II. After obtaining permission of the Bishop of Trier, she gave Willibrord a church and monastery which she had built on land belonging to her at Echternach, on the banks of the river Sûre, now in the Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg.

Perhaps it was then that Willibrord conceived the idea of establishing the great Benedictine monastery at Echternach, which has ever since been linked with his name. At Utrecht he had his episcopal residence as well as a school for the training of his clergy and missionary workers. He decided to build, in a quiet spot in the interior of the

Frankish country, a monastery which would serve as a spiritual power-house for the whole future enterprise. The Benedictine Rule, as has already been mentioned, had a twofold ideal consisting of work and prayer. The archbishop himself would be increasingly occupied 'in labours more abundant.' But he would gain strength, as have countless others both before and since his day, in the knowledge that those labours were the subject of ceaseless intercession by a religious order.

Moreover, the monastery of Echternach might—as indeed it did—prove a haven of retreat for himself. If then, in other places the name of Willibrord has been forgotten, at least Echternach has preserved it. Whether or not the archbishop had this future vision, he set to work to build a church there, and dedicated it to the Blessed Virgin and the holy Apostles Peter and Paul.

Pepin II now urged Willibrord to undertake the task of evangelizing the northern parts of his domains where, owing to the lack of teachers and the unbending paganism of the inhabitants, Christianity had made very little progress. He set about this new enterprise with eagerness, and the measure of success which he achieved is shown by the number of churches that sprang up, as well as by the various communities of monks and nuns established in these regions.

Nevertheless, when it came to one of his dearest ambitions, the conversion of the Frisian king, Radbod, Willibrord found himself faced by an insuperable obstacle. Taking his life in his hands, he at last went so far as to present himself at Radbod's court. But although that king received him with superficial courtesy, he made it perfectly clear that he had not the slightest intention of abandoning his pagan beliefs.

Thus thwarted, Willibrord turned his steps towards

Denmark. Two considerations may have led him to this course: first, his disappointment at the unbending attitude of Radbod; secondly, his hope that should he succeed in converting the Danes, the Frisian king might be influenced by the sight of a neighbouring people won for Christ.

Denmark was occupied by fierce tribes, whose ruler was named Ongendus. He may very well have been the 'old and terrible' Ongentheow, of whom we read in *Beowulf*. He was a man 'more savage than any wild beast and harder than stone,' says Alcuin, with a possible touch of exaggeration. For if this had been true, it is remarkable that Ongendus should have received Willibrord with every token of honour; and even more, that the archbishop, after discovering that the Danes were steeped in idolatry and evil practices, and that they had no desire whatever to become Christians, should have been allowed to take away with him thirty boys or young men, whom he instructed and later baptized. His plan was undoubtedly that they should return to Denmark at a subsequent date as Christian missionaries, just as Gregory the Great, a little over a century before, had planned that the boys from England in Rome should one day go back as missionaries to their island.

Willibrord now decided to return to Utrecht, but on the journey the boat was caught in a storm, and he and his companions were compelled to seek shelter on one of the islands lying between Denmark and Frisia. This was probably Heligoland, the 'holy island' of the Saxons, but known at that time as 'Fositeland' after a local heathen god named Fosite, whom the islanders worshipped with great reverence. In fact, their dread of offending Fosite was such that they would neither interfere with any of the cattle which grazed in their island, nor would they draw water

from a spring except in complete silence. Any one who dared to violate these sacred objects or customs met with a cruel death at the hands of Radbod. As soon as he landed, Willibrord showed his utter contempt for these heathen superstitions by ordering the slaughter of some of the island cattle to serve as food for himself and his companions. He then proceeded to preach, and actually baptized three persons in the sacred spring, invoking the name of the Holy Trinity as he did so.

The inhabitants of Fositeland thought that their god would take vengeance upon those guilty of such sacrilegious conduct by striking them with madness or sudden death. But when nothing of the kind happened, they went with astonishment and terror to report to their king all that they had seen. Radbod was furious and resolved to punish Willibrord. In order that Fosite might be avenged he gave orders that every day for three days lots should be cast three times, and on whomsoever the lot fell he should suffer the penalty of death. Happily the lots never fell on Willibrord or on those with him, save one man who duly received the crown of martyrdom.

Radbod then sent for the archbishop and severely reproached him for his actions. Willibrord calmly gave him the reply which Alcuin has preserved: 'The object of your worship, O king, is not a god but a devil, and he holds you ensnared in rank falsehood in order that he may deliver your soul to eternal fire. For there is no God but one, who created heaven and earth, the seas and all that is in them: and those who worship Him in true faith will possess eternal life. As His servant, I call upon you this day to renounce the empty and inveterate errors to which your forbears have given their assent, and to believe in the one almighty God, our Lord Jesus Christ. Be baptized in the fountain of

life, and wash away all your sins, so that, forsaking all wickedness and unrighteousness, you may henceforth live as a new man in temperance, justice and holiness. If you do this you will enjoy everlasting glory with God and His saints; but if you spurn me, who set before you the way of life, be assured that with the devil whom you obey, you will suffer unending punishment and the flames of hell.'

Radbod may well have been surprised, as Alcuin suggests, at the utter fearlessness manifested by the saint; but it was probably expediency more than any other reason which led him to send Willibrord back to Pepin unharmed. The Frisian king or chief was still in a subordinate position; later on the opportunity would come for him to take his revenge, and he would not forget.

Pepin was delighted to welcome the archbishop back once more, and to be able to give him still further encouragement in his task of evangelization. It was perhaps in the year 704 that Willibrord came to an agreement with Pepin and Plectrude, his wife, to build a new monastery on a piece of land which had previously belonged to them, and which stretched in front of Irmina's small convent at Echternach. But no trace survives of the plans of this first building, or of the names of those who were responsible for it.

In the midst of much that cannot be very definitely determined, one event stands out clearly: the visit of Bishop Wilfrid to Utrecht, on his way to Rome to see the Pope, in 704. Bede has a reference to this visit in which he mentions how Acca, one of Wilfrid's companions on the journey, and afterwards Bishop of Hexham, used to tell what he had learned from Willibrord about the miraculous powers attaching to relics of S. Oswald, a former king of Northumbria, of which evidence had been afforded both in Ireland

and in Frisia. What actually passed between Wilfrid and Willibrord on this occasion we are not told. Even if, as has been conjectured, the two men had met when Willibrord was passing through England on his journey out to Frisia in 690, a good many years had passed since they had last seen each other. There would therefore be much talk of past times, and of more recent experiences. Eventually there came the final farewells; for, as far as is known, the two men never met again in this life.

If there was sorrow for Willibrord at the departure of Wilfrid there was, shortly afterwards, to be grief of a different kind, in tidings which must have then reached him. For some years Pepin II had lived in irreproachable wedlock with his wife, the pious Plectrude, who had borne him two sons. Then he entered into a liaison with a lady named Alpaïs, by whom he had a son, Charles Martel—the ‘Hammer.’ Lambert, the Bishop of Maastricht, like John the Baptist, denounced his overlord for his infidelity and, like John, paid the price of his courageous act. He was murdered, it was said, by the scheming of Alpaïs. To Willibrord such a tragedy befalling a fellow-worker must have come as a profound shock. He inserted in his ‘Calendar’ under the date September 17th the name of the martyr, Lambert.

We learn from Alcuin of a missionary expedition by the archbishop to the island of Walcheren, though he gives no indication as to when it took place. Here, coming upon a heathen idol, perhaps of the Germanic goddess Nehelamia, the protectress of sailors and fishermen, who had been worshipped there since the days of the Roman occupation, and in whose honour many votive stones were erected, Willibrord smashed it to pieces in front of the custodian’s eyes. The latter, in a fit of passion, struck the missionary

a heavy blow on the head with his sword. Willibrord escaped harm, but his companions instantly rushed upon the man and would have slain him, had not the saint intervened on his behalf. Three days later, we are told, the man ended his life miserably.

Towards the close of the year 709 an item of news which arrived from England must have saddened Willibrord’s heart, although it could scarcely have come as a surprise to him. On October 12th of that year, even as the monks of Oundle were chanting the words of Psalm 104, ‘When thou lettest thy breath go forth they shall be made, and thou shalt renew the face of the earth,’ the aged Bishop Wilfrid passed to his heavenly reward. His life had been turbulent and his actions had caused offence to many. But to his ‘spiritual son,’ Willibrord, looking back to those boyhood days at Ripon, there could only be thanksgiving for the man to whom he owed so much.

Some time between 710 and 714, as Willibrord was passing through Trier, Charles Martel invited him to baptize his little son. The boy was named Pepin after his grandfather, and later became Pepin III, or ‘the Short,’ and the father of Charlemagne. It may have been on the occasion of his baptism that Willibrord uttered the prediction concerning him, which Alcuin has carefully recorded: ‘Know that this child will be highly exalted and renowned. He will be greater than all the kings of the Franks who have gone before him.’

So, year after year, Willibrord continued to minister and to preach the Gospel to both high and low, with the utmost devotion, journeying through every part of those regions under his care, and exhorting the faithful in the places where he had already worked, to remain steadfast in their resolutions. Gifts of property and lands from numerous

benefactors poured in, which the archbishop gladly accepted. New churches were built, with their own clergy to minister to the growing number of converts. In March 714 a small monastery at Susteren was given to the archbishop by Pepin and his wife Plectrude. Willibrord continued as its abbot during the rest of his life.

Then, in the midst of all this activity and progress, there occurred a series of misfortunes. Pepin II, who had for so long wielded the Frankish power, and who had always given strong support to Willibrord, was seized with a serious illness, and was carried to his residence at Liège. His son, Grimoald, with customary devotion after paying a visit to his sick father, resorted to church to pray at the shrine of S. Lambert, the man who had boldly defended his mother Plectrude's marriage, and whose tomb had already become a place of veneration. As he knelt there, Grimoald was assassinated by a pagan from Frisia.

Pepin made a slight recovery, and as an old man of over eighty years, now left without any direct heir, he set about arranging for the future government of his domains. He appointed to succeed him as Mayor of the palace of Austrasia his grandson Theuwald, a child of six years of age. His illegitimate son, Charles Martel, then about twenty-six years old, was passed over. But the improvement in Pepin's condition was not long maintained. On December 16th, 714, he died at his villa of Jupille.

The boy Theuwald was left in the charge of his grandmother, Plectrude, who planned to govern on behalf of him and her other grandchildren, still minors. The nobles, however, refused to allow this arrangement. Plectrude had thought to make herself more secure by casting Charles Martel into prison, but the Neustrians rose in revolt, and in a battle which took place in the forest of Compiègne,

they gained a victory over the Austrasians. They then proceeded to enter into an alliance with the Frisian king, who immediately crossed the Rhine with his army and besieged Plectrude and her grandson in Cologne.

Radbod's hour of vengeance against the Franks, Archbishop Willibrord and the hated Christians in general had at last arrived.

Later Years

THE confused state of affairs which followed upon the death of Pepin II, leading to a fresh outbreak of strife, would in any event, have made it difficult for Willibrord to carry on his work. The intervention of Radbod rendered the position infinitely more serious. As soon as the archbishop received news that the pagan king and his army were preparing to cross the Rhine, he accepted it as a danger signal and retired with his brother-clergy and monks to Echternach.

He was only just in time. If he had hesitated they would most certainly have been massacred by the heathen marauders who, as it turned out, had instead to content themselves by wreaking their vengeance upon the Christian churches, which they totally destroyed. Willibrord remained at Echternach until peace returned. His solitude in that quiet retreat so dear to him, must at this time have been sadly marred by the knowledge that so much of the work he had done was being uprooted by the ruthless spoiler and his men.

During the summer of 716 a band of Anglo-Saxon monks from the English monastery of Nursling, near Romsey in Hampshire, arrived at Utrecht. Their leader was Wynfrith, later to become famous as Boniface, the future apostle of Germany. Perceiving the scenes of desolation everywhere, and the ruined churches, Wynfrith realized that this was no moment to undertake the task of preaching the Gospel of

Christ. The destruction was far worse than anything he had imagined, and it seemed that Christianity in Frisia would be exterminated. At the same time Wynfrith boldly demanded, and was granted, an interview with Radbod. We may picture the two men: the young Christian monk, fearless but in the position of a suppliant; the heathen king, defiant and uncompromising in the hour of victory. All Wynfrith's entreaties on behalf of the Frisian Christians and their churches met with a blunt refusal on Radbod's part. After doing what he could to retrieve the situation, the monk decided that there was nothing for it but for him and his brothers to return whence they had come.

Meanwhile, after four months of captivity, Charles Martel had contrived a means of escape from his prison. He then gained a victory in two successive battles against his Neustrian opponents, whom he compelled to come to terms of agreement. Providentially, the young Theuold had died whilst with his grandmother at Cologne, so that Charles Martel encountered little resistance from Plectrude when, in 717, he declared himself Mayor of the Palace of Austrasia. He became, as his father Pepin had been before him, virtual ruler of the Franks.

In the following year he led an expedition against the Frisians. Radbod was defeated and died in 719. His death gave Charles Martel the opportunity to re-establish the Frankish authority over the whole of Frisia. It also enabled Willibrord to return to Utrecht and to gather up the few fragments of his work which still remained.

It seems strange that Alcuin, in his *Life*, should explicitly state that 'at that time S. Willibrord was officially appointed to preach to the Frisian people, and his episcopal see was fixed at the fortress of Utrecht.' We can only assume that some definite act of confirmation, and perhaps even of

extension of his episcopal jurisdiction, was then granted to the archbishop by the Frankish conqueror.

There can be no doubt that in a truly Christ-like spirit, Willibrord forgave the injuries which he and his companions had suffered, and set about the work, not merely of rebuilding on the former foundations, but of once more converting the Frisian people. He now had the goodwill as well as the support of Radbod's son and successor, Aldgils II, who was a devout Christian, and welcomed the bishop's ministrations. Still more important was the coming of Wynfrith who, once again, in 718, had set out from England in order to undertake missionary labours on the continent of Europe. This time, however, he had gone straight to Rome in order to obtain a commission from Pope Gregory II, who gave him his blessing for the work. 'Boniface'—as from this time on Wynfrith was called—planned to preach in Germany as a missionary priest. But, on hearing of the changed situation in Frisia, he altered his plans and journeyed down the Rhine to Utrecht, where he offered his services to Willibrord.

The archbishop, now in his sixtieth year, was delighted to have the help of a young and vigorous colleague in the tremendous tasks which faced him. The partnership proved an ideal one. For nearly three years the two Englishmen worked side by side, rebuilding destroyed churches and founding new ones. Clergy and monks were brought back once more into the life of the nation, and the lapsed were received back into the Church, while many fresh converts were made.

If Boniface contributed much by his youthful enthusiasm and zeal, he himself gained even more from the experienced missionary-bishop under whose guidance he laboured. Indeed, the methods he learned during his stay in Utrecht

were those which he put into practice later on in his own mission to the German people. They were, moreover, the very same principles as Willibrord had himself learned from Wilfrid: principles as to organization and administration which had been determined at the Conference of Whitby more than fifty years before. Thus we may trace an unbroken line: Wilfrid, Willibrord, Boniface.

In 722 the archbishop, who was becoming increasingly aware of the burden of his years, begged Boniface to remain permanently in Frisia, and become assistant bishop. He even offered to consecrate him. Boniface declined on a number of grounds. He was, he said, unworthy; he was too young for so responsible an office; he longed for new adventures; furthermore, he had received from Pope Gregory II a definite commission to act as an apostle to the heathen, not to confine himself to any one particular diocese. Try as Willibrord did to dismiss the earlier excuses, this last, as Boniface stated it, proved unanswerable. 'Most holy bishop,' he said, 'you, as spiritual leader here, know full well that I came to Germany at the express command of Pope Gregory, of holy memory. As the envoy of the Apostolic See sent to the barbarian countries of the West, I freely gave my services to you and to your diocese without the knowledge of my master, to whose service I am bound by vow even to this day. Therefore without the counsel and permission of the Apostolic See and without its express command I dare not accept so exalted and sublime an office.' The archbishop agreed, and gave Boniface his blessing, whereupon he departed. Later that year he was consecrated by the Pope as Archbishop of Germany.

By the time of Boniface's departure a great deal had been done to restore the work of the Church in Frisia to its former footing. Among those who had come forward with

offers of help to Willibrord in his task of rebuilding was the powerful family of Wursing. Radbod had driven this nobleman into exile, but after the king's death Wursing regained his former lands. Moreover, Charles Martel, perceiving that he would exercise a Christian influence over his countrymen, had given him additional lands to the north of Utrecht. Wursing showed a strong affection for Willibrord. Many members of his family came to seek instruction at the school of Utrecht, among them—though this was not until after the archbishop's death—Wursing's grandson, Luidger, who became Bishop of Münster in Westphalia, where he carried on in several respects the traditions passed on by Willibrord.

While on a visit to Echternach in 726 Willibrord drew up the celebrated document known as his 'Testament.' Its contents, now generally considered to be authentic, have been preserved, and give details of the numerous gifts which he had received from various benefactors, and which he thereby bequeathed to the care of his monastery.

We have little information about the events of the later years in the archbishop's life. In fact, from 729 until his death ten years afterwards the sheet is almost entirely blank. Alcuin is useless at this point; and Bede who might have helped, died four years before Willibrord, though in the *History of the English Church and People*, written in 731, he bears testimony that Willibrord is 'still living, and is much revered for his great age; he has been thirty-six years a bishop, and after the countless spiritual battles he has fought, longs with all his heart for the prize of a heavenly reward.'

It is a pity that amongst the interesting and valuable correspondence of Boniface no letters written to Willibrord have survived, for there surely must have been some. But

one precious fragment of information concerning the archbishop is to be found in the letter of Boniface to Stephen III of 753, to which reference has already been made. Here Boniface writes that, in the see of Utrecht and in the church which he had built there, Willibrord 'continued preaching up to his feeble age.' This would suggest that he was engaged in his labours until the very end of his life. Boniface also mentions the fact that the archbishop appointed 'an auxiliary bishop as his substitute to carry on his ministry.' This raises an interesting point, since according to Canon Law, each diocese was allowed to have only one bishop, and during the lifetime of the occupant of the see, no other could be elected or designated as successor. How then could Willibrord, who by reason of his increasing age and infirmity felt the need of an assistant, overcome the difficulty and yet remain loyal to canonical obedience to Rome?

Willibrord found the answer, as did Boniface after him, by appointing what was known as a 'chorepiscopus' or 'regional-bishop' who, although he had no see, enjoyed full episcopal rights and privileges. The regional-bishop was entrusted with the inspection of churches, the instruction and examination of clergy, the visitation of rural parishes, as well as with the solemn administration of the sacraments both in towns and villages. He could, when need arose, take the place of the diocesan bishop at confirmations, consecration of churches, and even at ordinations to the major orders. Willibrord was the first person to make use of what, in his case, was an entirely new expedient, but was to become increasingly useful in missionary territories.

Little is recorded of the happenings during these years in Utrecht itself. But a major event occurred in 732, when Charles Martel gained a momentous triumph over the Saracens on the field of Poitiers, and thus saved the

Frankish domains from the fate which had befallen Spain. If Willibrord learned of this victory with joy it must have been with no less relief that he heard of the quelling of a fresh revolt of the Frisians which, for the moment, held out a new threat to his work.

There were continual visits between his see of Utrecht and the monastery of Echternach; and even if not much is known of the closing years of the archbishop's life, we can be certain that they were anything but idle. In the University Library of Cambridge there is a fine copy of the Venerable Bede's *History of the English Church* which, it has been conjectured, was written at Luxembourg not long after 731. As one gazes upon this handsome volume it is fascinating to reflect that Willibrord may himself have watched its completion, and may even have made suggestions and comments about it.

Several portraits of the archbishop exist; but there is no means of telling how accurate a representation of him they convey. The sole details of his features and characteristic traits are contained in a thumb-nail sketch by Alcuin: 'Now this holy man was distinguished by every kind of natural quality: he was of middle height, dignified mien, comely of face, cheerful in spirit, wise in counsel, pleasing in speech, grave in character and energetic in everything he undertook for God. His forbearance is shown by the actions we have recorded above. How great was his zeal in preaching the Gospel of Christ and how he was sustained in the labour of preaching by the grace of God we need not set forth in writing, since it is vouched for by the testimony of all. His personal life can be inferred from his vigils and prayers, his fasting and singing of psalms, the holiness of his conduct and his many miracles. His charity is made manifest in the unremitting labours which he bore daily for the name of Christ.'

It is Alcuin who again comes to our aid at the end, surrounding his hero's death, even as he had surrounded his coming into the world with signs and wonders. So, the marvellous dream vouchsafed to Willibrord's mother before her son's birth, finds its complement in the revelations granted to several of the monks immediately prior to the aged bishop's decease. One of those monks testified that 'he saw the soul of his saintly father surrounded by a bright radiance as it was being carried by a host of angels towards the realms above, all singing his praises'; while many others declared that they had 'frequently seen a wonderful light over the bed on which he gave back his blessed soul to his Creator, and perceived there a ravishing fragrance and most sweet odour.'

Alcuin's metrical *Life* of the saint, composed for recitation in the monasteries, and adding little to the earlier prose version which he had written for secular use, says that Willibrord was eighty-one years old when he died. The place of his death is generally assumed to have been his beloved Echternach. There, too, his body was laid to rest in accordance with the wish expressed by him in his 'Testament.'

Thus, on November 7th, 739, to quote the words of his friend and disciple Boniface, Willibrord 'at the close of his long life entered into the peace of God.'

To the tomb of S. Willibrord come many pilgrims, among them those who journey to Echternach for the annual Dancing Procession, which takes place in the city every Whit Tuesday.¹ The origin of this ceremony is obscure, although in 1542 it was described as being an 'ancient custom.'

¹ A recent description of the Dancing Procession is to be found in Beryl Miles, *Attic in Luxembourg*, ch. 25 (John Murray, 1956).

Interrupted several times—as during the Second World War, towards the close of which Echternach suffered grievous destruction—it has once again been resumed. In 1958, with a finely restored Abbey Church, from which the bells pealed out in honour of the 1300th anniversary of the birth of its founder, the festival was on an even grander scale than normally.

At the head of the procession are the singers chanting the Litany of S. Willibrord, together with the bishops and clergy. Then come the dancers, men, women and children, who dance to a simple but catchy tune which is played by various brass bands. The entire performance lasts about four hours, as the procession wends its way through the medieval streets, and ends at the marble shrine of the saint to whom Echternach and Europe owe so much.

PART II

Years of Perseverance

IN the second part of this book we find ourselves in a world totally different from that in which the English missionaries proclaimed the Gospel to the dwellers in northern Europe. The Faith for which Willibrord and others devoted their lives has been carried to vast continents which they did not even know to exist. The Church for which they felt such love and veneration has been divided and rent asunder. The feuds and passions of men have hindered its progress, and hampered the efforts of Christians trying to speak to multitudes who have grown indifferent to religion in all forms.

The successors of S. Willibrord were not Archbishops of Utrecht until 1560, when the Church in the Netherlands was reorganized. Utrecht then became a metropolitan see with five other dioceses under it. This organization continued until the eighteenth century. At the beginning of that century the Jesuits helped in fanning into flame a feud when, without trial or condemnation, Pope Clement XI deprived Peter Codde, the Archbishop of Utrecht, of his see on the grounds, it can only be supposed, that he was sympathetic towards the so-called Jansenists. The Pope then appointed in his place Theodore De Cock as Vicar-Apostolic. This led to a schism within the Dutch Roman Catholic Church between the followers of Codde and those of De Cock; the former held out for what they maintained were the ancient rights of the see of Utrecht. They claimed,

as against the Jesuits, that the occupants of that see were not merely Vicars-Apostolic of Rome, but were also Archbishops of Utrecht and canonical successors of S. Willibrord. Ultimately their action after Codde's death, in procuring the consecration in Holland of Cornelius van Steenoven as archbishop in 1724, brought about the first breach with Rome, and the beginning of independence for the church of Utrecht. It is important to bear in mind that these 'Old Catholics' of Holland, as they are now called, never broke away from the Roman Communion. They were turned out against their will. Even though they are now a small minority, at the time of the schism they were a two-thirds majority. Therefore the Dutch Old Catholics are indeed the old Church of their country, and truly represent S. Willibrord.

Writing of this church of Utrecht in his book, *A History of the So-called Jansenist Church of Holland*, published in 1858, Dr. J. M. Neale said: 'Engaged for a century and a half in a struggle of almost unparalleled inequality, where ecclesiastical power, wealth, prestige, and numbers a thousand times told, were on the one side, and simply justice and right on the other, she has come down to our times, persecuted but not forsaken, cast down but not destroyed.'

Shortly after Neale had set down those words the Vatican Council of the year 1870 enforced Papal Infallibility. A number of Roman Catholics in Germany, Switzerland and elsewhere, who felt unable to subscribe to this dogma, entered into negotiations with the Church of Holland, and duly received bishops of their own from the Dutch episcopate. In 1889 all the Old Catholic bishops met together, and issued a doctrinal statement which became known as 'The Declaration of Utrecht.'

The Church of England had, in several respects, a close link with these Christians abroad. Like them, it believed that it preserved in its entirety, and without unwarranted additions, the 'faith once for all delivered to the saints.' An Englishman had been the first occupant of the see of Utrecht, whilst another had recently drawn attention to its history. Following upon the events of 1870, three Lambeth Conferences had taken up the question of the Old Catholics. On the other side, the German and Swiss Old Catholics had from 1874 accepted Anglican Orders, and had formally admitted Anglicans to communion. So it was that early in the present century a number of people began to press for the formation of a body which would pray and work for closer relations between the Old Catholic and Anglican churches.

These moves were watched with sympathetic interest by some who could not themselves give them their own public support. Among them was the Roman Catholic priest, George Tyrrell, who deemed the movement towards reunion in this direction as of great value for the future of Christendom. In 1908 letters on the subject began to appear in the *Guardian* newspaper, as well as an article on 'The Old Catholics of Holland.' The issue for October 28th of that year contained a translation of the 'Declaration of Utrecht' and published beneath it this notice:

'THE SOCIETY OF S. WILLIBRORD

'The Society of S. Willibrord, which is now in process of formation, is intended to be a medium by which closer intercommunion between the Old Catholics and the Church of England may be brought about. The Archbishop of Utrecht is Patron. The Bishop of Gibraltar will be the first Anglican President, while Monseigneur J. J. van Thiel, D.D., will act in a similar capacity on the Old Catholic side.'

There followed a list of Anglican and Old Catholic Vice-Presidents, and a note that the Revds. G. E. Barber and D. Bridge would be General Secretaries of the new Society, and that its committee would consist of twelve clerical and twelve lay members.

So began the Society which, in 1958, celebrated its Golden Jubilee. By no means the least difficult part of its task has been to try to convince the ordinary member of the Church of England that an Old Catholic is someone quite distinct from an aged Roman Catholic! How far, even after fifty years of existence, it has succeeded on this particular point may be questioned.

Perhaps it was not the most propitious moment for the foundation of such a society. It is true that a good deal was being heard and talked just then about Old Catholics. But much of this publicity was not of the most desirable nature, and centred largely around the figure of Arnold Harris Mathew, a strange character who had mistakenly been consecrated at Utrecht in 1908 as 'regionary bishop' for the supposedly large number of Old Catholics living in England. In actual fact these were few, and Bishop Mathew's later defection from the Old Catholic Church caused considerable mischief, both to that church and to the Church of England.

At this time, however, Bishop Mathew appeared to be on the best of terms with his Anglican friends; and at the first meeting of the newly-formed Society of S. Willibrord in January 1909 he took the chair. The rules of the Society were then laid down and its objects defined as:

1. To publish tracts and papers containing accurate information with regard to the historical, theological and practical standpoints of both Communion.

2. To convey information concerning the Old Catholic churches to all Anglican chaplains residing in the Old Catholic centres.
3. To promote friendly relations between Anglicans and Old Catholics, both at home and abroad.

Later that year the Revd. G. E. Barber, one of the Society's General Secretaries, was present at the Old Catholic Congress at Vienna, as well as at Utrecht for the consecration of an Old Catholic bishop. In 1909 a practice began which has ever since continued, namely, the invitation to clergy sympathetic towards the Society and its objects, to celebrate the Holy Eucharist on its behalf on the Feast of S. Willibrord, November 7th.

But already the shadow cast by Bishop Mathew's activities was clouding the Society's work. Because of his early associations with it, it lost the support of the scholarly Bishop of Salisbury, John Wordsworth; and even though Mathew had ceased to represent the Church of Holland in this country, or to play any part in the Society's affairs, his name constantly occupied the attention of its members. Thus, in the December minutes of 1910, it is stated that 'the business mainly consisted of a discussion on the recent activities of Bishop Mathew.'

Moreover, Mathew's defection left the Old Catholics in England, who were in communion with the see of Utrecht and the other recognized continental Old Catholic churches, without any pastoral care or place of worship. That this unfortunate state of affairs was satisfactorily remedied was largely due to the efforts of the Revd. G. E. Barber. It was he who obtained the Bishop of London's permission for a German Old Catholic priest and member of the Society then living in London, the Revd. C. W. Bollman, to be

allowed the use of the church of S. Mary, Charing Cross Road, for the purpose of holding Old Catholic services in German and French. Here, on the morning of the Second Sunday in Advent 1911, the Old Catholic Liturgy in German was celebrated for the first time. Soon afterwards Bollman began to produce a monthly leaflet entitled *Londoner S. Marien-Bote*, the columns of which contained regular items of news relating to the Society and its activities. It was in fact a joint monthly organ of the Old Catholic community in London and of the Society of S. Willibrord.

The year 1911 saw the death of the Society's first Anglican President, Bishop Collins of Gibraltar. His keen interest in the work of Christian reunion in general, and his sympathy with the history and progress of the Old Catholic churches in particular, had been of enormous assistance in the foundation of the Society. Yet, if there were losses during these years, the Society gained strength by the addition of several important Vice-Presidents and new members of its committees. A branch had also been started in America, where the Polish Old Catholic Church was flourishing.

To further friendship with the Old Catholics in Europe Mr. Barber paid visits to their churches in Holland, Switzerland and Germany. In these countries the Old Catholics were making progress and were establishing cordial relations with some of the English chaplains; as, for example, at Neuchatel, where Old Catholic services began to be held regularly in the English church.

The most noteworthy year in the Society's early annals was 1913. In September of that year, at the Old Catholic Congress held in Cologne, the Rt. Revd. W. W. Perrin, Bishop of Willesden (who had lately become Anglican

President of the Society in place of Bishop Collins), greeted the Congress in the name of the Church of England, and said in his address: "The members of the Old Catholic Church may rest assured that we watch with prayerful interest their determined efforts to maintain the Faith in all its fullness, and if the day shall come when we shall be joined in close corporate union, may we together stand as a centre for that reunion of Christendom for which we daily pray, when the divisions of the Church shall be at an end, when East and West shall be once more united, and the prayer of our Lord be fulfilled, "That they all may be one." An English visitor attending the Congress remarked that he noted a distinct increase of friendship towards the Anglican Church, shown in several ways; and he came away both hopeful and encouraged.

All the Old Catholic bishops present at the Congress of Cologne took the opportunity of formally excommunicating Bishop Mathew. At a subsequent meeting of the S. Willibrord Society's committee this decision was 'noted with thankfulness'—we may almost hear sighs of relief on the part of its members.

But all the Society's troubles were forgotten at the news that its festival in the following November was to be graced by the presence of one of its Vice-Presidents, Monseigneur Prins, recently consecrated Old Catholic Bishop of Haarlem, who had accepted the committee's invitation to visit England. Much planning and preparation were necessary. For this Mr. Barber undertook full responsibility.

At length the great day dawned with the arrival of the bishop, accompanied by his chaplain, the Revd. W. Gol, parish priest of Gouda in Holland, a good friend to the Society for many years to come. The bishop lunched with the Archbishop of Canterbury, and with the Bishop of

London. A day was spent at Sackville College, East Grinstead, the home for many years of Dr. J. M. Neale. For two days the distinguished visitor was the guest of Bishop Gore at Cuddesdon Palace, Oxford; he did the round of the 'city of spires' and attended a specially arranged celebration of the Eucharist at S. Margaret's, Oxford, 'for the unity of the Church,' at which he himself gave the blessing.

The central feature of the occasion was the special services organized by the Society for S. Willibrord's day and the Sunday following. On the morning of November 7th in S. Mary's, Charing Cross Road, Fr. Gol celebrated the Dutch Old Catholic Liturgy. This was immediately succeeded by a solemn Eucharist at which the Bishop of Willesden, the Society's Anglican President, was celebrant, assisted by the Revd. G. E. Barber. The Bishop of Haarlem and other bishops and clergy were present; the sermon was preached by Fr. Puller of the Society of S. John the Evangelist. The preacher gave a résumé of the ancient church of Holland's history, referring particularly to the interest shown in it by Dr. J. M. Neale.

At a meeting held that evening in Church House, Westminster, Bishop Prins delivered a short speech in English. He brought, he said, hearty and fraternal greetings from the Old Catholic Church of Holland, and especially from the Archbishop of Utrecht and the Bishop of Deventer. Since the latter half of the nineteenth century there had been a more intimate acquaintance and an increasing mutual interest between the Church of England and the Old Catholic Church of Holland. The Vatican Council of the year 1870 had made the little Church of Utrecht to be no longer lonely and comfortless, for defenders had arisen in Germany, Switzerland, Poland and other countries. As to its relationship with the Church of England, the two

communions were on the friendliest of terms; and the visits which Anglican and Old Catholic clergy were able to pay each other afforded touching instances of the mutual love and regard that existed.

On the following Sunday evening, a concluding festival service was held at the church of S. James, Hampstead Road, where Mr. Barber was assistant priest. The climax came to a momentous week when the Bishop of Haarlem, with his brother Bishops of Willesden and Northern and Central Europe beside him, turned and with deep emotion pronounced the blessing.

This was the first time that a bishop of the Church of Holland had paid an official visit to England; and it marked the crowning achievement of all the efforts made by the Society of S. Willibrord during the early years of this century to encourage deeper understanding with Old Catholics.

Much of its success in the breaking of new ground as far as Dutch Old Catholics were concerned was due to the perseverance of the Revd. G. E. Barber who, because of his wide knowledge of the continent and its languages, had been able to make such valuable contact with the European churches. His untimely death in August 1914 would, in any circumstances, have been a loss to the Society. But its work was now stopped by the outbreak of a European war.

For more than two years the Revd. C. W. Bollman had ministered regularly and faithfully to his German and French Old Catholic congregations. Each month the *Londoner S. Marien-Bote* had made its appearance. In the summer of 1914 there was a joint issue for the months of July and August. It was the last number ever to be produced. Bollman was interned and his services came to an end.

Years of Achievement

THE Society of S. Willibrord suffered more than most church societies from the ravages of the 1914-18 war. Fourteen years were to pass before another meeting was held, by which time almost all of the original committee members were dead. Nevertheless, the Bishop of Willesden, Dr. Perrin, remained as President, at least in name; and that there was still a vestige of life is shown by the fact that Bishop Darlington of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, at the 1925 Old Catholic Congress at Berne, invited the Revd. J. A. Ozanne, rector of S. Pierre du Bois, a country parish in the Channel Island of Guernsey, to become Honorary Secretary. The bishop had no right to do this; and in any case the Society could not be worked from Guernsey.

The upheavals of war had led Christians of various denominations to lay to heart the seriousness of their unhappy divisions, and to make more determined efforts in the direction of reunion. About 1920 Canon J. A. Douglas—possibly with the thought in mind of that last message of the great patriarch of Constantinople, Joachim II, to his Anglican friends, 'Do not forget the Old Catholics'—entered into correspondence with Dr. Franciscus Kenninck, Archbishop of Utrecht, and seventy-eighth successor of S. Willibrord, on the matter of the recognition of Anglican Orders by the Old Catholics. A commission was duly set up by the archbishop to inquire into the question; and in June 1925 he was able to send a

letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury, Randall Davidson, informing him that the Dutch Old Catholic Church now recognized Anglican Orders. Mr. Ozanne took care that this letter was published in the *Church Times*. Happily, it appeared in the issue of November 6th, the eve of the Feast of S. Willibrord.

This step marked the beginning of much closer relations between members of the two communions. Henceforth, it became increasingly difficult to distinguish between the 'unofficial' activities of the Society of S. Willibrord and the 'official' engagements of bishops and other dignitaries; while at certain points some overlapping could scarcely be avoided.

However, two-and-a-half years elapsed before the Society was formally revived and was approved by the highest authorities of both the Anglican and Old Catholic communions. Future prospects were bright because of the recent formal recognition of Anglican Orders. The death of Bishop Mathew in 1919 had put an end to the embarrassment caused by his presence in England, but he had long been separated from the genuine Old Catholics.

After the Revd. J. A. Ozanne had left Guernsey for the Seychelles Islands a meeting of the reconstituted Society in March 1928 elected as its Honorary Anglican Secretaries the Revd. C. B. Moss and Mr. W. R. V. Brade, and as Honorary Librarian, Canon J. A. Douglas. Throughout this period until 1939, the latter was the dominating force behind the scenes. Shortly afterwards, Old Catholic priests in three European countries undertook to act as corresponding secretaries.

These corresponding secretaries were extremely active and proved to be of immense assistance to the Society in numerous ways. To give several instances: at the Twelfth

International Old Catholic Congress, held at Vienna in 1931, Pfarrer Hugo Flury, parish priest of Möhlin and the Society's secretary for Switzerland, gave an illuminating paper on the aims and development of the Society and the part it had to play; while later, in 1933, the centenary year of the Oxford Movement, he contributed two articles dealing with the Movement to that mine of information, the quarterly periodical of the Old Catholic churches, entitled *Internationale kirchliche Zeitschrift*. Again, the corresponding secretary for Germany, Pfarrer P. H. Vogel, wrote a series of articles for the periodical on liturgies, including one on the Anglican Book of Common Prayer. He also celebrated the Eucharist in English churches on the continent, preached and lectured on the relationship between Anglicans and Old Catholics, gave the Holy Communion in his own church to numbers of English visitors, and arranged a reading-circle for English-speaking members of the Society in Germany. About the year 1935 the Society's prayer was being used regularly with intention for its work, in the newly-built chapel of S. Willibrord at S. Polten, near Vienna, by the priest-in-charge, Pfarrer Heinz Brandl, who was corresponding secretary for Austria.

In August 1928 Canon Douglas and the Revd. C. B. Moss went as delegates of the Society to the Eleventh Old Catholic Congress held at Utrecht. They attended a service in S. Gertrude's Cathedral and a luncheon given by the Bishop of Haarlem to the Bishop of Fulham (the new title of the Bishop of Northern and Central Europe), who had recently succeeded Dr. Perrin as the Society's Anglican President. In December the Bishop of Haarlem and Professor Lagerway of Utrecht were present at the enthronement in Canterbury Cathedral of a new Archbishop of Canterbury, Cosmo Gordon Lang. They were the first

official delegates ever to be sent to England by the Church of Utrecht. On the day after the enthronement the Society had the honour of arranging a reception for the two guests, at which Bishop Gore presided.

About this time the Revd. C. B. Moss wrote a small book called *The Old Catholic Churches and Reunion*, as well as another on *The Anglican Church* which was serialized in Old Catholic papers on the continent. During the next summer he visited Holland, where he met the Archbishop of Utrecht as well as several Old Catholic clergy. Later, at the Society's annual meeting held in London, Dr. J. P. Whitney, Dixie Professor of Ecclesiastical History in the University of Cambridge, gave an account of the English missionaries to Holland, S. Willibrord and S. Boniface, and of the Church which they had founded.

In 1930 Archbishop Lang arranged for the invitation of an Old Catholic delegation as visitors to the Lambeth Conference of that year. It consisted of the Archbishop of Utrecht, Dr. Franciscus Kenninck, and Bishops van Vlijmen of Haarlem and Berends of Deventer—the latter had just become Old Catholic President of the S. Willibrord Society. A luncheon party for the delegation was arranged by the Society, at which the Bishop of London presided. The Archbishop of Utrecht, in a delightful speech, took the opportunity of apologizing to his audience for the fact that his Church had been so long in recognizing Anglican Orders. The atmosphere at this gathering was most friendly, as was that also at the Society's annual meeting in the following year, when Bishop Berends of Deventer was again present.

The year 1931 proved the most important in the history of the relations between the Anglican and Old Catholic Churches. In July that year an Anglican Commission, led

by the Bishop of Gloucester, Dr. A. C. Headlam, and consisting of a number of prominent churchmen, most of whom were members of the Society, met an Old Catholic Commission at Bonn in Germany. This joint Commission agreed unanimously upon the following terms for recommendation to the Synods of the National Churches of both communions :

1. Each communion recognizes the catholicity and independence of the other, and maintains its own.
2. Each communion agrees to admit members of the other communion to participate in the sacraments.
3. Intercommunion does not require from either communion the acceptance of all doctrinal opinion, sacramental devotion or liturgical practice characteristic of the other, but implies that each believes the other to hold all the essentials of the Christian Faith.

These terms were accepted unanimously by the bishops of all the Old Catholic Churches at the Twelfth International Congress in Vienna the following September, and in England by the Provincial Synods of Canterbury and York in January 1932. This example has been followed by all the other churches of the Anglican Communion, with the exception of two, which have not yet joined in, possibly owing to geographical reasons.

Thus, one of the main objects for which the Society of S. Willibrord had been founded was achieved. Yet, still much remained to be done. Indeed, the words of the Revd. C. B. Moss, at the end of the Society's annual report for 1932, are as applicable to-day, more than a quarter of a century after they were written, as they were then : 'It may be thought that now full communion has been restored,

the Society of S. Willibrord has done its work. But this is far from being true. There is still widespread ignorance about the Old Catholics among Anglicans, and also there are many Old Catholics who have never had any contact with the Anglican churches. The work of commendation, of arranging mutual visits, of doctrinal and liturgical publication, is now more important than ever. We need members in every part of England who will undertake to look after Old Catholic visitors and recommend them to suitable priests, for it is not every Anglican parish, unfortunately, which will take the trouble to look after foreigners and make them feel at home.'

The first-fruits of this newly-established inter-communion were to be seen at the Twelfth International Old Catholic Congress at Vienna. Each day's proceedings began with a celebration of the Eucharist, and on the third morning it fell to the turn of the Anglicans present. The Very Revd. A. Duncan-Jones, Dean of Chichester, then celebrated according to the rite of the 1928 Prayer Book. In June 1932 Bishop van Vlijmen of Haarlem acted as co-consecrator at the service in S. Paul's Cathedral, when the Revd. G. F. Graham-Brown, himself a member of the Society, was consecrated as Bishop in Jerusalem and the Revd. B. F. Simpson as Bishop of Kensington. This was the first time that such an event had taken place since the Reformation.

In the same autumn the Bishop of Deventer and eight Dutch Old Catholic priests paid a visit to England. Willibrordians arranged for them programmes of sight-seeing at Canterbury and at Oxford, where they were met by Fr. Puller of the Society of S. John the Evangelist, for many years a staunch friend of the Old Catholics, who was first given Holy Communion by the Old Catholics at Utrecht in 1879. The visitors also attended a Sung Eucharist in

S. Paul's Cathedral, where they all received the Sacrament. The annual meeting of the Society was arranged to coincide with this visit; and it was a happy thought that the Bishop of Kensington who was, as he reminded his audience, together with the Bishop in Jerusalem, the offspring of the two churches, should have been invited to give the address of welcome. The Dutch branch of the Society also had a particularly successful meeting at Utrecht on S. Willibrord's day that year, when a Roman Catholic friend, Mr. W. de Vries, gave a paper on the relics of S. Willibrord.

The Society's object had now been redrafted as 'To promote friendly relations between the Anglican Communion and the Old Catholic Churches, including the fullest possible use of the inter-communion now established between them.' With this in mind, a 'Directory of Old Catholic Churches,' giving as far as possible the names of churches and priests in Holland and German-speaking countries, together with days and times of services, was prepared by the Revd. C. B. Moss and published by the Faith Press. Another useful little work to be sponsored by the Society, and put in print by the same publishers was *Old Catholic Eucharistic Worship*, by the Revd. W. H. de Voil and Dr. H. Wynne-Bennett. This appeared in 1935 and contained a short history of the Old Catholic Movement, together with a translation of the Dutch, German and Swiss liturgies.

Various exchange visits between Anglican and Old Catholic priests continued to take place at regular intervals and, whenever possible, those concerned celebrated and preached in each other's churches. The Society was represented at the Thirteenth Old Catholic International Congress, held at Constance in 1934, when its Honorary Secretary, Mr. Moss, read a paper on 'Prayer and the Life of Worship in the Church of England.'

Intercommunion involves responsibilities as well as conferring privileges; and the moment arrived when the Society was to be asked to do something more than to arrange mutual visits or services of Holy Communion, important as these are. In the summer of 1934 the Archbishop of Canterbury received from the Old Catholics in Austria an appeal for financial help to enable them to build a new church in Vienna. Recently the Austrian authorities had issued an order compelling every one to register as a member of some religious body; with the result that many of those formerly registered as 'without religion' had turned to the Old Catholic communion at the rate of between three and five hundred a month. Consequently a situation of acute difficulty had arisen, especially in Vienna, where four small Old Catholic churches, with a seating accommodation for 1,500, had now to cater for more than 20,000 people, most of them from the working-classes, with a sprinkling of professional men and women. This meant not only the duplication of services, but also the holding of them in private houses, halls and any other suitable places available. To finance the building of another church out of their limited resources alone was more than the Old Catholics in Vienna could manage. Hence, they turned to their friends in England to help them to complete the task. The Archbishop of Canterbury passed on the appeal to the Society of S. Willibrord; and in due course its President, the Bishop of Fulham, addressed a letter to the *Church Times* stating the need and begging for immediate and generous help. As a result the sum of £100 was subscribed and sent to Vienna to help in paying off the building debt. It was an effective gesture of what inter-communion between the Anglican and Old Catholic Churches meant; and it formed a valuable contribution for which the Society was entirely responsible.

Early in 1937 the death occurred of the Archbishop of Utrecht, Dr. Kenninck. He had been a good friend to the Church of England and to the Society; it was largely due to his influence that the first steps had been taken in the recognition of Anglican Orders by Old Catholics. His death meant the election of a successor, and the choice fell upon Professor Andreas Rinkel, a distinguished theologian, who was at that time President of the Amersfoort Seminary, and for several years had been a member of the Society. He had also been the Old Catholic Secretary of the Commission at Bonn in 1931.

The Bishops of Gloucester and Fulham represented the Archbishop of Canterbury at Dr. Rinkel's consecration as nineteenth Archbishop of Utrecht and seventy-ninth successor of S. Willibrord. At the appropriate moment they laid their hands on his head and recited aloud the words 'Receive the Holy Ghost.' This was the first time that Anglican bishops had assisted in an Old Catholic consecration. The Society was represented at this service and again, in the following year, at the consecration of a new Old Catholic cathedral in Haarlem, built to replace one of the 'hidden' churches, dating from days when penal laws compelled all such places of worship to be concealed from view behind house-fronts and warehouses.

The year 1937 saw the birth of a development, which was to have a remarkable growth in the future for the Society. A party of church-people belonging to S. Michael's, South Yardley, near Birmingham, accompanied by friends from neighbouring parishes, set out on holiday in Germany with the express purpose of acquainting themselves with the life and worship of the Old Catholic Churches. At Koblenz, their headquarters, an Old Catholic Eucharist was arranged and Pfarrer Vogel, German corresponding secretary of the

Society, travelled many miles in order to be present at the service and to preach the sermon, in which he referred to the immense value of such personal contacts as these.

In the same year the Revd. A. H. Bransby Jones, who was then vicar of the Sussex parish of Moulscombe, lying on the outskirts of Brighton, attended a chapter meeting at which the Dean of Chichester gave an address on the Old Catholic Movement. The vicar's enthusiasm was fired and, in the following summer, under his leadership, a large party of young people from his parish visited the Hague. It was the first organized party from England to receive hospitality in the homes of Dutch Old Catholic families.

Next year a party of Old Catholics from Holland was invited to pay a return visit to England. Led by their chaplain, the Revd. P. Jans, these young people were in this country during the second half of August, and spent part of their time living with Moulscombe families. When they reached home again they set down their impressions in a magazine of the young Old Catholics, *Bondsleven*—impressions which give a vivid and interesting picture of England, and particularly of London, as they were a few days before the outbreak of the Second World War. Among others, there appears the name of Mr. C. J. Witten; more would be heard of him in days to come. For the moment world events were to put an end to mutual visits and friendly exchanges, although there remains one further adventurous journey to be recorded in this chapter.

In the autumn of 1938 Canon Douglas, then Honorary Secretary of the Church of England Council on Foreign Relations, received a letter from the Secretary of the Society of S. Willibrord in Holland, reminding him that November 7th, 1939, would be the twelfth centenary of the death of its patron. An exhibition dealing with the

culture of Willibrord's time was planned in Utrecht on the day of the festival, with special services in the churches. The letter expressed the hope that the Archbishop of Canterbury would endeavour to arrange some similar festival celebrations in England in thanksgiving for S. Willibrord's missionary work, so that Anglicans and Old Catholics would be linked together in observing the anniversary. Accordingly, at a meeting of the Society in London early in 1939, arrangements for the celebration were discussed. The Bishop of Fulham and other members planned to go to Holland for the occasion; it was also suggested that the Archbishop of Utrecht might be invited to preach at a special service to be held either in Westminster Abbey or in York Minster, since Yorkshire had been the saint's birth-place.

The events of September 1939, arising from the outbreak of war, put an end to the latter suggestion, though not to the former. After a hazardous and difficult journey, the official Anglican delegation, consisting of the Bishops of Gloucester and Fulham, Canon Douglas and the Revd. P. Usher, arrived at Utrecht on the eve of S. Willibrord's day; and, in view of the circumstances in which they had made the journey, they were given a singularly warm welcome by the Dutch authorities. As guests of the Dean and Chapter of S. Gertrude's Cathedral, they joined in all the ceremonies of the occasion, including the Solemn Liturgy on the morning of November 7th, celebrated by the Archbishop, Dr. Rinkel, at which they all communicated.

On the previous evening, at Vespers in the Cathedral, the Bishop of Gloucester preached a vigorous and memorable sermon on S. Willibrord, some extracts from which will make a fitting note on which to conclude a chapter of great achievements.

Dr. Headlam spoke of S. Willibrord's life, of his claim to be called the 'Apostle of the Netherlands,' and of the close spiritual union between the two nations as a result of that work. Three lessons, he said, were to be drawn from this history:

1. The friendship between England and the Netherlands had behind it a long spiritual history. If English bishops and priests preached to the people of Frisia the message of salvation, and some of them had become martyrs on Frisian soil, the English Church in turn owed a debt of gratitude for spiritual and intellectual gifts—of which Thomas à Kempis' *Imitation of Christ* and the writings of Erasmus of Rotterdam, were only two examples.
2. While it was a joy for Anglicans and Old Catholics to be able to share in one another's services and sacraments, this ought not to be the limit of their aspirations. It was a misfortune for the modern world that different types of Christianity were shut up in sealed compartments. The middle wall of partition needed to be broken down and the different types brought together.
3. The preaching of the Gospel and the foundation of the Church were the beginning of Holland's national life: the nurse of its freedom. It was its people's Christianity which had fostered their national growth and defended their liberties.

He ended: 'It is a time of darkness and gloom. There have been many such in history. We sometimes trouble for the future. But we believe that if we as Christians have faith, the troubles will pass. Let it make us work more earnestly that the kingdom of this world may become the Kingdom of Christ. And that God's will may prevail in the world.'

New Horizons

DURING the early hours of May 10th, 1940, the Nazis invaded Holland. Sir Winston Churchill, in his first volume of *The Second World War*, has left a vivid impression of what occurred as the news was brought to him in London later that morning:

'The Dutch Ministers were in my room. Haggard and worn, with horror in their eyes, they had just flown over from Amsterdam. Their country had been attacked without the slightest pretext or warning. The avalanche of fire and steel had rolled across the frontiers, and when resistance broke out and the Dutch frontier guards fired, an overwhelming onslaught was made from the air. The whole country was in a state of wild confusion; the long-prepared defence scheme had been put into operation; the dykes were opened; the waters spread far and wide.'¹

With the assistance of a Dutch-Anglican priest, who at that time had a parish in Liverpool, the Society of S. Willibrord did something to provide Old Catholics in England with services in their own language. Five years were to pass before correspondence could be resumed between Anglican and Old Catholic friends in Europe. When eventually, in June 1945, the Archbishop of Utrecht was able to send a letter to the Secretary of the Society, it was a sad tale he had to tell. The precious old 'hidden' church

¹ Winston Churchill, *The Second World War*, Vol. I, 'The Gathering Storm,' p. 524 (Cassell, 1948).

of S. Laurence and S. Mary Magdalene at Rotterdam had been entirely devastated in the German bombardment of that city; and, shortly afterwards, the church and parsonage at the naval base of Den Helder had been razed to the ground. Other churches and ecclesiastical buildings had suffered considerable damage. In response to suggested offers of help from parishes in England, Dr. Rinkel indicated that anything would be welcomed—'food and all dressing-articles, shoes and soap, furniture and window-pane curtains, and so on.' There was a special need for the clergy whose pastoral work was severely hampered by the lack of bicycles. Since all their own bicycles had either been stolen by the invaders or were completely worn out, it would, he said, be of tremendous assistance if arrangements could be made to supply twenty bicycles. He himself desperately needed new tyres for his car—his only means of maintaining a link between clergy and parishes, and of carrying out his episcopal duties.

A few weeks before the arrival of this letter the Bishop of Fulham, as President of the Society, together with its Secretary, the Revd. C. B. Moss, had sent a letter to the *Guardian* newspaper, asking that when English parishes gave collections for the reconstruction of the churches in Europe, some of the money collected might be earmarked for Old Catholic relief. They pointed out how, during the war years, the agreement between Anglicans and Old Catholics had been of immense practical value. An instance of this was seen in Switzerland, where Bishop Adolf Kury of the 'Christian Catholic Church' (the official title of Swiss Old Catholics) had, at the request of the Bishop of Fulham, confirmed Anglican candidates at a time when no English bishop was able to reach that country.

With the ending of hostilities there arose the question as

to the Society's future position. It was generally agreed that while relations between the Anglican and Old Catholic Communions at an official level were the concern of the Church of England Council on Foreign Relations, the Society of S. Willibrord still had its part to play in stimulating wider mutual interests among members of the two Communions as well as in promoting active co-operation between Anglicans and Old Catholics.

Canon J. A. Douglas had already written to the Secretary on 'this matter of bringing S. Willibrord to life' and, at a meeting in July 1945, he submitted a revised constitution for the Society. It was restored to activity, with the Revds. J. B. Dakin and Eric Kemp as Joint Honorary Secretaries to assist the Revd. C. B. Moss, who had for so long and faithfully served its interests. In order to extend knowledge of the two Communions as well as of the Society's own affairs, it was decided to publish at intervals, under Mr. Dakin's editorship, a paper called *The S. Willibrord Chronicle*, giving news and information about the life and activities of the Old Catholic Church. Owing to the lack of financial support only four numbers of this appeared: the first in January 1946 and the last in April 1947.

In June 1947 the Archbishop of Utrecht, Dr. Rinkel, paid an official visit to the Archbishop of Canterbury. At a full session of the Church Assembly he was received by both the Archbishops of Canterbury and York; and later on the same day, at a reception organized by the Nikean Club, Dr. Fisher presented him with the Lambeth Cross. During his visit Dr. Rinkel addressed a meeting of the Society on the past, present and future of his Church. More than twelve centuries had elapsed, he said, since S. Willibrord succeeded, where others had failed, in establishing the Church of Christ in the country of the Frisians. Through

this ambassador of God, who was himself a disciple of S. Wilfrid of York, the Old Catholic Church in Holland traced its connection with the Apostolic Church. Numerically they were a small body; yet it did not matter that they were unable to reckon their members in millions so long as they rightly understood and preserved their holy origin. The Archbishop went on to emphasize that the work of the reunion of all sections of Christendom was very near to the heart of Old Catholics. 'To lock oneself up in self-isolation and silence is an even greater sin than all the discord of the Churches themselves,' he remarked. The Ecumenical Movement had a whole-hearted co-operator in the Old Catholic Church.

The 'Ecumenical Movement' was also the main theme of the Fifteenth International Old Catholic Congress, held in Hilversum the following year, at which the presence of Anglican delegates was deeply appreciated as a source of encouragement and moral support. A few weeks earlier the Archbishop of Utrecht had been among the foreign visitors invited to attend the opening ceremonies in connection with the Eighth Lambeth Conference in England. In that year, 1948, there appeared an important book entitled *The Old Catholic Movement: its origin and history*, by the Revd. C. B. Moss, which as a thesis had, some years before, earned for its author the degree of Doctor of Divinity. Meanwhile the Revd. J. B. Dakin was trying, possibly not so successfully as he had hoped, to integrate the activities of the Society with his work on behalf of Christian Reconstruction in Europe.

A new era began for the Society in 1950 when Dr. J. W. C. Wand, as Bishop of London, accepted the office of President and the Revd. J. Anderson Burley became Honorary Secretary, with Mr. J. C. Witten as the first

Youth Secretary. This latter aspect of the Society's work, which has come to the forefront in post-war years, has opened up many new horizons. It seems to have been the hospitality which chaplains and others serving in the Forces stationed in Europe received from Old Catholic parishes during the period immediately following upon the ending of the Second World War—as for instance at the Hague, where the English church had been destroyed and the Old Catholic church there was used for Anglican services for some years—which first gave an impetus to the desire for exchange-visits and for the building up of more personal friendships. Hitherto, there had been only individual links between local groups of Anglicans and Old Catholics, but, from about 1947 onwards, these were to be on a very much wider scale. Parochial contacts, more especially in the Sussex parish of Moulscombe, with which Mr. Witten was then intimately connected, led to visits by Dutch, German and Swiss parties of young people to England and by English parties to Holland and Switzerland. In spite of currency restrictions and other difficulties of the immediate post-war period, these exchanges proved to be most fruitful.

Then, in the summer of 1951, the first Anglican-Old Catholic Conference was held at Brighton. One hundred and eight representatives attended, journeying from all parts of the United Kingdom, from Holland, Switzerland, Austria and Western Germany. Sharing English home life, worshipping together at the altar, listening to excellent speakers, talking over common problems, enjoying the pleasures of an 'International Evening' and the fellowship of a pilgrimage to Canterbury: such were the ingredients which went towards making the first Youth Conference an outstanding success. To this many of the subsequent developments in mutual relations have been due. From the

large number of people who have played a part here, two may be selected for special mention, namely Jan Schenk of Holland and Elfriede Kreuzeder of Austria.

From now on there were regular annual exchange visits of Anglican and Old Catholic young people, though the word 'young' was sometimes found to have a very flexible interpretation among those who applied to be included in the parties. One 'young' lady who sent in an application form was found to be sixty years of age! In 1952 Mr. Witten, with a small group of young Anglicans, made contact with the German Old Catholics at a conference held at Haus Beck, near Gladbach. In 1953 an International youth meeting of Anglicans and Old Catholics took place in the 'Meisenburg' House, near Essen. England, Holland, Western Germany, Switzerland and Sweden were represented; the fundamental theme being, 'Let us build a new life.'

After the success of the Brighton conference a full-scale Youth Conference was arranged every three years. Thus August 1954 witnessed the second Anglican-Old Catholic Conference at Saalbach, in the Austrian province of Salzburg. About the same number of delegates attended as at the first conference, though naturally there was a higher proportion of Austrians present. The result of this Saalbach gathering was to admit Anglicans for the first time to the League of Young Old Catholics, and to put into circulation a quarterly periodical *Internews*, which is published in German, Dutch and English. During that summer a party of German and Swiss Old Catholics visited England, staying in the homes of churchpeople at Moulscombe and in the Revd. J. Burley's parish of S. Peter, close by Epping Forest on the outskirts of London.

In 1955 more than sixty younger members of the Society

became guests of Old Catholics in Cologne and Bonn. In Cologne they communicated at an Old Catholic Eucharist in the Church of the Resurrection, where later their hosts joined them in an Anglican Evensong. At Bonn, Bishop Demmel welcomed the party, and greetings were exchanged—altogether an historic occasion, for it was the first time since intercommunion had been established at Bonn in 1931 that an Anglican youth group had visited the city as official representatives of the Society of S. Willibrord.

In England, 1955 was a year of activity for the Society. The Archbishop of Utrecht paid a visit to Exeter for the special celebrations arranged in honour of the twelfth centenary of the martyrdom of Willibrord's friend and disciple, Boniface. Later he took part in the consecration of three bishops at S. Paul's and, on the following Sunday, preached at both Westminster Abbey and S. Paul's Cathedral. Subsequently, he was formally introduced to the Church Assembly by the Archbishop of Canterbury, and he addressed a meeting of the Society and members of the Assembly on 'The Old Catholic Position in the Ecumenical Movement.' The fact that there were at this time many small groups in England using the title of 'Old Catholic' for themselves, some even claiming that their orders were derived from Utrecht, led the Archbishop, soon after his return to Holland, to issue a statement making it clear that there are no Old Catholic clergy working in England, either independently or under his jurisdiction, and that the only church in England with which Old Catholics are in communion is the Anglican Church itself.

More Willibrordian parties journeyed to Switzerland in 1956, spending a week as guests of Christian Catholic families. Dutch Old Catholics visited England staying in the homes of members of John Keble Church, Mill Hill, London.

The year 1957 was very significant in the history of Anglican-Old Catholic relations, since it marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of the ratification by both the Anglican Convocations of intercommunion between the two Churches. To celebrate this anniversary a conference on the Eucharist between theologians of both Communion was organized at Rheinfelden, near Basel in Switzerland, immediately before the Eighteenth Old Catholic Congress in September. Daily services were held in the attractive baroque church of S. Martin, Rheinfelden, including a great corporate Communion service, with many hundreds of communicants. Dr. Moss has written of this: 'It was by far the most spectacular proof of Anglican-Old Catholic union that I have ever seen.' There was also a general meeting of the Society of S. Willibrord, at which a revised form of constitution was adopted, representatives were appointed for the United States of America, and arrangements made for a notice to be displayed in all Anglican and Old Catholic continental churches drawing attention to the facilities for intercommunion.

The other important event of 1957 was the third Anglican-Old Catholic Youth Conference, held in August at Woudschoten, a modern conference building and the property of the Dutch Student Christian Movement, set among quiet woodlands not far from Utrecht. Some two hundred delegates attended this gathering, no fewer than thirteen different nationalities being represented. Ordinands and university students mingled with members of the Anglican Young People's Association and other youth fellowships, and differences of language and custom were soon overcome. At its first session letters of greeting were read, among them being one from the Archbishop of Canterbury. The Conference chose as its main

topics for discussion: 'The Value and Significance of Catholicism To-day' and 'Youth's Obligation and Opportunities in the Life of the Church.' A memorable address was delivered by the Abbé Bekkens concerning the Old Catholic movement in France, as well as the work of his own Mission. Another highlight of the week was a visit to the fine new Old Catholic Seminary at Amersfoort. As one of those present at Woudschoten afterwards wrote to Mr. Witten, whose efforts on behalf of these youth gatherings and in interesting young people in the activities of the Society have been so valuable, 'It was a great spiritual experience.'

The Ninth Lambeth Conference, held in England in the summer of 1958, brought Dr. Rinkel once again to these shores. Obviously, the celebration of the Society's Golden Jubilee had to be linked with this visit; and so, on Monday, June 30th, in Church House, Westminster, the archbishop delivered to Willibrordians and others an important address on 'The Society of S. Willibrord and Intercommunion.' Next morning he celebrated the Old Catholic Liturgy for the first time in S. Paul's Cathedral. This Lambeth Conference, through its fourteenth Resolution, declared that henceforth the relation between Churches of the Anglican Communion and those of the Old Catholics will be described as '*full communion*'—a most pleasing official seal upon the labours of the Society during its first fifty years of life, and a source of profound satisfaction to every member.

After half a century of existence, a pattern for future activities of the Society appears to have been formulated. At one level there are theological congresses between distinguished scholars of both communions on subjects of mutual interest and importance. At the other level there are exchange visits between young people, with youth con-

ferences once in every three years for mutual discussion, with all the opportunities for understanding each other better which such meetings afford, including the fun and games of an international evening. And, at the root of both levels there is that joining together at the altar, in prayer, in communion and in thanksgiving.

With such a pattern the Society of S. Willibrord may surely look forward to its next fifty years with hope and confidence.

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