Our Lady of Walsingham

By C. G. Mortimer, B.A.
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The Prince of Walsingham

[Poem by Francis C. Devas]

The little Prince of Walsingham
Is Prince no longer there.
His Mother's shrine is desolate
Her home laid bare.

An English Herod drove her forth
In exile, from the place
Where she had been so bountiful
With heavenly grace.

And in her absence from the land
Such lies were put abroad
That scorning Mary seemed to be
Praising Our Lord.

Alas! that any Englishman
Should think dishonour done
To that sweet Mother, would not be
Grief to her Son.

The little Prince of Walsingham
Will not reign there alone.
He will not come till we restore
His Mother's throne.

Rebuild, rebuild at Walsingham
Our Lady's ancient shrine!
Then will He give us through her hands
His gifts divine!

Foreword

A few years ago the pre-Reformation Chapel of St. Catherine — sometimes called the Slipper Chapel — became the property of the Diocese of Northampton. It is not difficult to see the Finger of God in the recovery of this beautiful chapel — the resting place of pilgrims on their way to Our

Lady's Shrine. For many years, the nearest church was at King's Lynn, where Our Lady of Walsingham has been honoured these last forty years. But, at long last, we have been given the opportunity of restoring devotion to Our Blessed Lady in the very neighbourhood itself, where, for hundreds of years, her Shrine stood as the centre of England's devotion to her. This chapel has been restored, and is now being made beautiful and devotional as it must have been in the days when England gloried in the title of Dowry of Mary.

But what we really need at the present time is the restoration of a National Devotion to Our Lady of Walsingham. The conversion of England will not be far off when, in every Catholic church in the land, Our Lady of Walsingham is loved, honoured, and invoked as she was in the days of Faith. This is why we welcome very cordially Mr. C. G. Mortimer's interesting little book, and wish it a wide circulation, for it is sure to help very considerably the restoration of this National Devotion which we have so much at heart.

† Laurence,
Bishop of Northampton,

Feast of Corpus Christi, 1934.

"As Jacob of old, having seen the vision in his sleep, on rising set up for a title the stone he had laid under his head, calling the place Bethel, which is, the House of God, and returning after his vow, offered there his tithes unto God; and as the people who feared God during many generations afterwards went up to Bethel to sacrifice there unto Our Lord; so the people of Christ in England went to pray in certain places where the images of our Blessed Lady and the Saints had been placed, and which had been made famous by the marvellous works of God: such places were Walsingham..."

— Nicolas Sander

Our Lady of Walsingham

We are taught by the Church that worship is due to God alone, and devotion to the Saints of God. Worship and devotion are different in kind, and are called, respectively, Latria and Dulia; but a special degree of devotion — which is yet distinct from Divine worship — is accorded to the Mother of Christ, and this is called Hyperdulia. This age-long veneration shown to Our Lady was not introduced by the decree of a Council, nor at the command of any particular Pope; at all times the faithful have been accustomed to pay this homage to the Queen of heaven. She herself foresaw that this would be so; that all generations would call her blessed.[^1] Her great titles were defined by the Church — Theotokos, the Mother of God, and "conceived without sin."[^2]

England, at least, has never been remiss in its respect for Our Lady. Indeed, at some early date in our history England was dedicated to Mary and became her Dowry — Dos Mariae;[^3] and of all the shrines at which homage was paid to Mary, none was more famous in England, or perhaps in Europe, than Our Lady's Shrine in the "Holy land"[^4] of Walsingham.

[^1]: St. Luke 1. 48.
[^2]: The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception was defined in 1854.

[^3]: This title was established and recognised by the reign of Richard II (1377-1399).
[^4]: "As I came from the Holy Lande of Walsingham," Percy's Relics.

Where is Walsingham?

Walsingham is a little country village hidden away in a Norfolk dale, enfolded by the river Stiffkey. It is over a hundred miles from London, and twenty-eight miles north-west of Norwich. Its nearest port is Wells, seven miles away; but in former days the pilgrims who came by sea would land at King's Lynn, or Bishop's Lynn, as it was then called. This remote spot was chosen by Our Lady, we are told, for her Nazareth or English home, and here for about five centuries there came an unbroken stream of pilgrims, among them the greatest kings and the poorest peasants; till at last, in the reign of Henry VIII, the hand of the despoiler fell upon this place and sought to obliterate the shrine and its devotion. And so it lay for centuries after, till, within our own lifetime, the breath of revival began to stir, and to-day once more Mary is not without honour in her "Holy land."

Let us trace now, in greater detail, this long and wonderful story. It falls into three periods. The first period, from 1061 — the founding of the shrine — to 1534, we may call the Period of Glory. The second period, following the year 1534, we may call the Period of Destruction, which endured for three-and-a-half centuries; but the third period, which falls within the last forty or fifty years, is the Period of Revival.

I. The Period of Glory

The Founding of the Shrine and its subsequent History

The traditional account, long-established and not lacking in confirmation, is as follows. In or about the year 1061, a widow of the name of Richeldis[^5] received in a vision from the Blessed Virgin Mary a special injunction to build her a shrine. Both the site and the nature of the shrine were appointed, according to this legend, by Our Lady. The sanctuary was to be a counterpart of the Holy House itself as it then existed at Nazareth.[^6] The story of the foundation and how the shrine was borne by angels' hands at Walsingham is narrated in an old English ballad, printed by Robert Pynson and preserved in the Pepysian Library, and composed, perhaps, in 1460. Now this traditional belief is the very keynote of our story, for we hold that it was Our Lady's own choice that her name should be especially revered at Walsingham, and for the next five centuries at least there can be no question that Our Lady's will was kept and honoured. Of course, the little shrine did not stand alone. It was sheltered by a great conventual church that sprang up beside it, a priory of the Austin Canons. The foundation of this church was due to Geoffrey de Faveraches, who, before his departure on pilgrimage to Jerusalem, gave the charter of its foundation to the Austin Canons, confirmed at subsequent dates, so that the shrine of Our Lady and the priory church stood together through the centuries. The shrine stood upon the north side of the church, like a tiny chancel, and was entered by a door from the church and had its own means of exit for the endless stream of pilgrims. The shrine was encased, at some later date, perhaps for its protection, in what was called a new work, novum opus, a building of stone resembling the outer covering of the Holy House at Loretto.

[^5]: This is an old Norfolk name. [^6]: The miraculous translation of the home at Nazareth to Loretto in Italy, though it may sound incredible to modern ears, is not merely a pious fancy. The evidence for the miracle can be studied in Loretto and the Holy House, G. F. Philips.

Walsingham thus became the central point of devotion in that Norfolk country where it is possible even to-day to trace the routes of the great pilgrimages. The principal road passed by Newmarket, Brandon, and Fakenham, and is still known as the Palmer's Way. It may be traced for nearly sixty miles through the diocese. From the north the pilgrims crossed the Wash, near Long Sutton, and went through Lynn and past the priories of Flitcham, Rudham, and Cokesford. Another great road came from the east through Norwich and Attlebridge, by Bee Hospital, where thirteen poor pilgrims were provided for every night. The whole district was studded with little shrines and chapels[^7] where the pilgrims stopped to pray as they passed on towards the famous central shrine of Walsingham.

[^7]: One remarkable building remains to this day, called "Our Lady of Red Mount."

The town itself throve mightily upon the crowds of pilgrims, and inns and hostelries were built in abundance.

Something is known, too, of the many pilgrims who visited the shrine, and among them we find most of the reigning kings. Henry III, in 1248, is the first English king who is recorded as a pilgrim to Walsingham; Edward I was twice there; Edward II in 1315 and Isabella of France in 1332; Edward III in 1361; David Bruce, King of Scotland in 1364; the widow of Henry IV in 1427; while other pilgrims were the Duke of Norfolk about 1457; Edward IV and his queen in 1469; Henry VII in 1489, and last of all, Henry VIII and Queen Catherine.[^8]

[^8]: After the victory of Flodden Field, Queen Catherine went on pilgrimage to Our Lady of Walsingham in fulfilment of her vow. In her Will the Queen supplicates that some personage go to Our Lady of Walsingham on pilgrimage and in going by the way dole twenty nobles. Henry VIII, probably in 1511, started on pilgrimage from East Barsham Hall to Walsingham, and is said to have walked barefoot and offered a valuable necklace to Our Lady.

Henry VIII, well known for his early piety, made special offerings to Our Lady of Walsingham and yet it was his hand which, a few years later, struck down the very object he revered and brought ruin and desolation to the "Holy land."

Certain records have been left by those who visited the shrine, the two most celebrated being the Itinerary of William of Worcester, about 1479, and the account given by Erasmus, the great Renaissance scholar, who was at Walsingham about thirty-two years later, i.e., in 1511. From this first authority, William of Worcester, we receive the earliest extant details of the church and other buildings. It is he who tells us that the shrine of Mary, like its prototype at Loretto, was covered in by an outer building of recent construction. He gives also the measurements of the various buildings. The Lady chapel, i.e., the original shrine, was in length 23 ft. 6 ins., in breadth 12 ft. 10 ins.[^9] The whole church, from the end of the chancel, was 136 paces long and 36 paces broad. South of the church lay the other monastic buildings, the dormitory, the refectory and chapter house, enclosing the three sides of a cloister which was roughly a square of a little under 100 feet. Not many paces away in the grounds of the monastery were two holy wells which exist to this day.

[^9]: The dimensions of Loretto are about 31 ft. by 13 ft.

Of course it must not be imagined that all these buildings were completed at once. Even a slight knowledge of our famous English cathedrals shows us that there was a great deal of building and re-building throughout the medieval period, and yet the results achieved were often strikingly harmonious, as at the great fane of Canterbury. So it was, doubtless, at the smaller churches and abbeys and monasteries; and since enormous riches were always flowing into the priory at Walsingham, it would have given the builders scope for splendid additions and alterations.

Next we may turn to the visit of Erasmus to Walsingham probably in the year 1511, and not long before its fall. We are not concerned here with the satirical humours of the great Dutch writer, nor with the sincerity of his devotion. Perhaps the new wine of the Renaissance had gone to his head, and self-conceit and self-advertisement may seem to mar his writings and his behaviour. But we must make full allowance for the style of literary composition in his day, and it must be remembered always that Erasmus never approved of the reforming methods of Luther. He belonged to the party who hoped that the Church would reform itself from within and never contemplated the cleavage with the Papacy. Erasmus gives a detailed account of all he saw and heard, both on his pilgrimage to St Mary of Walsingham and St Thomas of Canterbury. To the shrine of Our Lady he made a characteristic offering, a votive prayer in Greek iambics. He stood for a few moments in that wonderful chapel where so many thousands had preceded him and was himself moved by the richness and beauty of what he saw and the sweet fragrance that surrounded him. By this date the shrine glittered in the candle-light with all the magnificent offerings of gold and silver that had accumulated through the centuries. One of the canons stood always on duty within the shrine to receive the offerings of the faithful and to display its treasures to the curious. Erasmus tells us that the outer building of stone was still unfinished in his day, and through the unglazed windows came the strong winds of the ocean about seven miles away. He tells us that the little shrine was built with wooden planking[^10] and he alone describes the venerable image of Our Lady. "A little image," he says, "remarkable neither for size, material, or execution."[^11] The altar stood probably at the east end, and the image of Our Lady in the south-east angle. It is interesting to know that the windows of the outer building, which Erasmus found unglazed, were completed not much later by the special charity of Henry VIII, for we read in the exchequer books of the third and fourth years of his reign:

June 1511. Part payment for glazing Our Lady's Chapel at Walsingham £20 1s
November 1512. For glazing Our Lady's Chapel at Walsingham £23 11s 4d

[^10]: "ligneo tabulatu constructum." It is doubtful if this can mean "built of wood" throughout.
[^11]: The Seal of Walsingham represents Our Lady as seated; her foot rested on a toadstone to symbolise victory over evil.

Erasmus was also shown many of the votive offerings the shrine contained, and says that a day would not suffice to describe the wealth of admirable things which he saw there. They were kept under the altar of Our Lady, whence they were brought out by the careful hands of the assistant canon for him to see. At one time a register existed of the principal offerings and donations to Our Lady, but these annals have perished and only scraps of information can now be obtained, but sufficient to make it abundantly clear that the shrine at Walsingham must have rivalled the glories of St Thomas a Becket at Canterbury. Here are a few scattered notices. In the reign of Edward I: "The King offered to the Image of Our Lady of Walsingham a clasp of gold of the value of eight marks, and the Queen a clasp of the value of six-and-a-half marks. Henry, Duke of Lancaster, gave a vase with handles of the value of four hundred marks; and his father presented an Angelical Salutation[^12] with precious stones, also valued at four hundred marks. In 1376 Sir Thomas de

Uvedale gave a tablet of silver-gilt with a painted image." These gifts are merely typical of the wealth showered upon this holy place. There were also annual offerings and bequests in wills and endless contributions for candles and votive lamps.

[^12]: Probably a tablet with a representation of the Annunciation.

Such then was Walsingham in the days of its glory, and we may well ask: How was it that a terrible fate could befall so fair and holy a place? What brought to an end this ceaseless devotion? Who stemmed the mighty flood of pilgrims who had done honour to Our Lady, day by day, at her own appointed shrine?

II. The Period of Destruction

There is still a lingering sentiment in many English minds that the days of King Henry VIII cannot have been as black as they are painted; that there was justification and sound political motive in his work of pillage and demolition, and that we can view, without tears and without abhorrence, the passing of the old ecclesiastical system, of the glory of the Middle Age, and of the close companionship of man with his Creator and of widespread devotion to the Saints. For, from this apparent wreck, so the Englishman argues, did there not rise the new, reformed England that we know — with its honest intellectual outlook, its new learning, new conquests, and imperial grandeur?

It is scarcely surprising that some such conviction should remain in English hearts after four centuries of Protestantism, and when generations have been steeped in the biassed teachings of some, but not all, of our English Histories; and when, alas! the very savour of the faith has gradually died away in places and institutions where for long it lingered. Now I would ask all fair-minded critics to regard these transactions at Walsingham, which we are about to sketch, as typical of what happened up and down England at many another shrine, monastery, abbey, and cathedral. Let us try first to put the position fairly as it existed in the reign of Henry VIII. Let it be conceded then, that there were scandals and abuses within the Church that needed reform; that too much wealth had accumulated in certain hands; that there was need, perhaps, for financial reform and social improvement to meet the conditions of the coming age. Let us agree that all systems, however venerable, may stand in need of overhauling and repair — all save one, for the actual system of the Church and its foundation upon the Rock of Peter may not be abandoned without widespread calamity to the persons or to the countries entailed.

The merest outline of the historical position must here suffice. Henry, unable to secure his divorce from Catherine, was encouraged by his advisers to take the whole affair into his own hands and arrogate to himself powers which had never lain in the English monarchy. He claimed to be the "Supreme Head" of the Church and it was from this that all the mischief flowed. This claim was qualified immediately by the English Hierarchy; "So far as the law of Christ allows," they added. It was openly withstood by priest and people alike, and More and Fisher[^13] and others in the reign of Henry were martyred in their resistance to it. But it must be remembered that in the earlier days of the sixteenth century it was not and could not be realised what exactly was involved by the words "Supremum Caput," It was a dark cloud, menacing and ambiguous, and who could then foretell how terrible would be the lightnings that would burst from its womb? This is an excuse that can be offered for those who seemed weak and time-serving in the days of Henry. Some such claims had

been advanced before, like gambits, on the part of rulers against the Holy See, but had been afterwards withdrawn. No one in England could yet tell how deep and final the severance was destined to be, nor indeed till the days of Elizabeth was the whole cleavage accomplished.

[^13]: Sir Thomas More, Henry's Chancellor, and Cardinal Fisher, Bishop of Rochester.

If we examine step by step what happened at Walsingham we shall find that it was an attack, first, upon revenues, next, upon persons, and finally upon those sacred things of which they were custodians. Henry himself must bear full responsibility for the Pillage; but except for his own extravagant and schismatic claims, he remained a Catholic at heart probably to his dying day. To the end of his life he worshipped and adored the Mystery of the Blessed Sacrament, and even entertained, for all we know, a love and devotion for the Saints and for the Mother of God.[^14] So dark a mystery is the human heart.

[^14]: The King's Candles, as they were called, burned on incessantly at the Shrine right up to the time of its destruction. There are many proofs of Henry's early devotion to Our Lady and in his Will he desires her prayers; but the extent of Henry's pillage may be gathered from a roll of parchment, 54 feet long, in the Bodleian Library, Oxford. This is an account kept by Sir John Williams, his treasurer, of all the jewels and plate taken from religious places at His Majesty's visitation.

To return to Walsingham. In the year 1534, the Canons of Walsingham acknowledged the Royal Supremacy, in Chapter assembled, as shown by the original document still preserved in the Chapter-house, Westminster. It is not known whether the whole community signed the deed, but we find thereon the signature of twenty-two Canons, including the Prior, Richard Vowel, and the Sub-prior. This document, wrung from the helpless Canons against their will, was clearly the beginning of the end, for by it they had been allured into the trap of the King. The next step was the arrival of the King's appointed commissioners armed with all too pregnant Articles of Inquiry. Two results followed. First, the enrichment of the King's treasury, and next the suppression of the monastery. The yearly revenues of the monastery were valued at about £446, a considerable sum in those days. The smaller monasteries with a revenue of less than £200 a year had been previously suppressed. The next step was inevitable — popular insurrection at Walsingham in 1537. This was occurring all over England, for men were being ruined by the break-up of the religious houses and the suppression of pilgrimages. In the north of England the rebellion proved most menacing to the Tudor government, and here Henry was compelled to meet the Pilgrimage of Grace in 1536. But there was not much trouble in suppressing the little rustic rising at Walsingham. The strength of the Tudor monarchy was centralized and overpowering. It was an age of strong central governments. Henry worked, moreover, with considerable skill. He played upon human motives and English national sentiments of his day and used a ruthless brutality in stamping out rebellion, which never overlooked a detail or failed to grind under heel the last remaining spark of opposition. At the suppression, fifteen of the Canons of Walsingham were condemned for high treason; five were executed. The deed of the surrender of Walsingham and all its property was signed in the Chapter house on the 4th August in the 30th year of Henry's reign, 1539, and the prior and convent caused their common seal to be put to it. The property was subsequently handed over, in fee simple, by Henry VIII to his friends. Long since had all the rich and wonderful offerings from Our Lady's shrine been removed, but there was one last insult remaining. Her venerated image was taken away and burned at Chelsea.[^15]

[^15]: A few details are recorded as to the destruction of the statue. On July 18, 1538, it reached London and the suggestion was made by Latimer that this and other sacred images would make a "jolly muster" in Smithfield for a public burning. This idea was not carried out; perhaps they dreaded a popular riot. Thomas Cromwell, probably, destroyed the images in his own courtyard.

We see, then, that Henry's political reformation — whatever it may be called and whatever its motive — led inevitably to impious results. Why was this? It was because by his action Henry had loosed a torrent that he could not stem. The Reformation was a European movement, taking different shapes in different countries. In England it was never a popular movement. It was engineered by the monarchy in the teeth of popular rebellion, but in its wake came the flood of foreign religious teaching from the lands of Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin. This, then, is a rough outline of what occurred, and we can leave it now to the reader to judge of its effects upon Walsingham. It was the end. Not one trace of the little shrine was left. It was a tale of utter ruin and demolition. Henry's reign meant, too, for England at large, that the tie had been snapped which bound this country to the Holy See. It soon meant the substitution of a totally different form of Church authority and of doctrinal and moral standards. And yet it was not the end. For when Our Lord founded His Church upon the Rock of Peter He looked down the centuries and saw the coming of even such floods of destruction and He added a promise: "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

III. The Period of Revival

It must never be thought that the Catholic Church in this country became extinct. In the first place, there is the testimony of the martyrs who died in England for the old faith, and of countless others who suffered loss and indignity during what are called the penal times. Next, the vital functions of our religion never ceased. Mass was said; confessions were heard, and the old belief professed throughout the most obscure and perilous days. The link with the Holy See was never snapped for the Catholic remnant, nor could jurisdiction be lost since it is of Divine right, and Catholics in England were supported and controlled in their long agony by various methods of organization, until at last the Catholic Hierarchy was restored in 1850. Here is the true thread of continuity. Anglicans are perfectly right when they claim that the life of the true Church must be continuous and unbroken; but there cannot be two threads of continuity, each thread, so to speak, disclaiming the other. There cannot be two developments from a single organism, unless both are scions of a single parent. The Church cannot consist of "branch" churches cut off from external communion with one another, for the Body of Christ cannot be dismembered. Among such bodies one must be the True Church, the rest in schism. Is not the simple and logical view of the situation this: that the Catholic body of to-day is continuous with the Catholic body of pre-Reformation times, sustained by it and derived from it; and that the Anglican Church is, in effect, what it originally claimed to be, a State Church established by novel legislation? Yet there must have been times during those dark centuries when our Catholic forefathers may well have thought their cause was dying or irretrievably lost. If they could have looked forth from this black gulf of depression to the beauty and promise of the Second Spring which has long since dawned upon England, their hearts would have been raised in wonder and gratitude to God.[^16]

[^16]: After the repeal of the penal laws, the first great public procession in honour of Our Lady took place at Stonyhurst, Lanes., on the 26th May, 1842.

There seemed no break whatever in the dereliction that had fallen upon Walsingham. The misery of a Catholic is enshrined in a remarkable Elegy preserved in the Bodleian Library at Oxford. It was written by Philip, Earl of Arundel, heir to the dukedom of Norfolk, who suffered for the faith in the reign of Elizabeth and has since been beatified[^17] by the Church. Apparently the writer visited Walsingham, and choosing there the Queen of Walsingham to guide his muse, meditated on the fallen glory of this dear place. He speaks of the sheep murdered by ravening wolves while the shepherds did sleep; of the sacred vine uprooted by the swine; and of the grass grown rank and lush, where of old the stately walls of Walsingham did show.

[^17]: Dec, 15th, 1930.

Levell, Levell with the ground
the towers do lye,
Which, with their golden glitteringe tops,
pearsed once to the skye.

Toades and serpentes hold their dennes
where the Palmers did thronge.
Weepe, weepe, O Walsingham!
whose dayes are nightes.

Blessinges turned to blasphemies,
holy deedes to dispites.
Sinne is wher our Ladie sate
heauen turned into hell,
Sathan sittes wher our Lord did swaye,
Walsingham, O farewell.

So we can imagine that the Earl of Arundel turned away broken-hearted from this scene of former love and devotion, little dreaming how his words would be cherished, his example revered by Catholics, or that the miracle of Spring would one day shine and blossom again in that Norfolk neighbourhood.

Let us now trace the modern history of Walsingham and its district and see by what slow and difficult stages the light of devotion was rekindled in this deserted place.

1. The Catholic Revival in Lynn

There are records of Catholic life in this place going back to the eighteenth century, but in later days the great pioneer was Father Wrigglesworth, Rector of the King's Lynn Mission, assisted by Father Philip Fletcher, Master of the Guild of Ransom, and by their efforts and with the sanction of Pope Leo XIII, a new shrine for Our Lady of Walsingham was opened at the Parish Church and a new image was carved at Oberammergau and blessed at Rome in February, 1897. On August 19th of that year this new image was escorted by a large Catholic pilgrimage and enthroned above the altar in the church at King's Lynn. Ever since that day devotions have been held constantly at this shrine for the conversion of England, and for about forty years now annual pilgrimages have been made to this shrine.

2. The Slipper Chapel

Some thirty years ago a convert lady, Miss Charlotte Boyd, bought the famous Slipper Chapel at Houghton-le-Dale, in which the pilgrims of ancient times were wont to leave their slippers before making the last stage of their journey to the shrine at Walsingham, one mile away. This chapel had been converted into three cottages, and Miss Boyd, at her own expense, rehabilitated the chapel and endowed it with a sum of money in order that Holy Mass might be said there again. The property was handed over to the English Congregation of the Benedictine Order to whom it appears to have belonged formerly and whose corporate continuity has never been broken.

3. St. Georges, Sudbury

Father C. L. Russell, the parish priest of this church, has erected a shrine for Our Lady of Walsingham in his parish church, trusting by this means to further Our Lady's cause and her final restoration to Walsingham itself.

It will be gathered from the above account that English piety has been re-awakened concerning a great treasure lost and found again. It must be remembered that the actual site of the original chapel built in that spot by Our Lady's express command is still untenanted. The site is known and it is to-day in the grounds of the Lord of the Manor, Sir Robert Gurney, who has the gift of the Anglican parish church and is himself a Quaker.

Conclusion

It may seem to some who have read this brief history that too much stress has been laid upon particular sites and places and traditional miracles. After all, it might be argued, the Catholic religion can pursue its course through the centuries even if it is shorn from time to time of some local devotion or famous resort of pilgrims. It may be a mistake to set too much store in spiritual matters upon this image or that, however venerable; upon names and titles and customs once respected and now obsolete. This argument may appear at first sight plausible and it is true, of course, that the worship of God is not interrupted by local calamity or the endless changes to which our human life is subject. None the less it would be a fatal error if we pressed this argument too far. The honour of Walsingham itself rests, as we believe, not upon the will or predilection of man, but upon Our Lady's revealed desire, and who would dare to turn a deaf ear to that voice that whispers across the centuries?

The real argument for sacred shrines, for relics, images, and pilgrimages,[^18] rests in the instinctive need of human nature. The main fault of this age, and of many another age, is that we are apt to pursue with such tragic intensity things that can never finally satisfy, and may indeed betray and injure us. The human race fell, so we are told in scripture, by its abuse of material things; and it is God's will that man should regain his happiness by the proper use of material things. The religion of the Incarnation means that all our natural instincts and desires can be directed and uplifted to their proper channels. It is a natural instinct to love a certain place, a certain thing. Who does not cherish some old letter, or likeness it may be, as the sole memento of a departed friend? How many millions of tourists, year by year, stream all over the world in their curiosity to see some rare and lovely sight; to explore some famous town; or to stand for a moment in some place where men great and honoured in history have lived and died? Why should not this great volume of human instinct

and desire be regulated, uplifted, and satisfied by the homely customs of Mother Church? Why should not recreation take the form, not merely of physical or intellectual exercise, but of something that will indeed refresh the very springs of our being? Devotion to Our Lady supplied such a service in bygone centuries. It helped to tame and humanise rough nature; it taught reverence for all women; it gave a motive for self-denial and led the votary of the Blessed Virgin nearer and nearer, as it always must, to her Divine Son. The love of Mary was a great unconscious protection to the doctrine of Our Lord's Divinity. How often when Mary's honour is forgotten, Christ, too, is denied, and the worship of God abandoned!

[^18]: Heretics have often inveighed against pilgrimages, e.g., the followers of Wicliff in 1389 and the Lollards, who said it was "a vain waste and idle for to trotte to Walsingham." We may note that a Statue of Our Lady of Walsingham, placed some years ago by Anglicans in their Parish Church, was removed by order of the Bishop of Norwich and has since been set up in another part of the parish.

But in any case, the name of Walsingham must surely be magnified again — to-day, to-morrow, or in some coming century. It would be as impossible to imagine that a shrine like Lourdes could be forever eclipsed as to think that this signal place of Mary's favour shall not rise again to wider and wider glory and recognition.

Appendix I: The Topography of Walsingham

If the reader will glance at the sketch map facing this page, he will readily understand the position of the various buildings referred to in the text.

A. The Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham. It is believed that Our Lord faced towards the west at His Crucifixion, with His back towards Jerusalem. We are told that His Blessed Mother stood upon His right hand. From this the custom arose of building the Lady Chapel on the north side of the church, as at Walsingham. Nothing is now left of the shrine, but the foundations were exposed by excavation and there can be no doubt as to its actual site.

B. The Priory Church and the Monastic Buildings. Remains of these may still be seen, e.g., a fine perpendicular east front with two stair turrets and buttresses connected by the arch and gable over the east window. Other ruins are thought to be a portion of the refectory; a range of four early decorated windows with a staircase to a pulpit in the wall.

C. These are the Holy Wells, still in existence.

D. The Gateway of the Knight, which may still be seen. There is an old tradition that a Knight, pursued by his enemies, found a miraculous means of safety within this gate.

E. The Church of the Franciscans (the remains).

F. The Slipper Chapel, not shown in the plan, is one mile from the Shrine along the Houghton Road.

Appendix II: Authorities

1. Since it would be a mistake to overload a short tract with references, I will make here a general acknowledgement to the work of Edmund Waterton, F.S.A., Knight of the Order of Christ, of Rome. The book to which I allude is *Pietas Mariana Britannica*, and the copy now in my possession was published in London in 1879 by St Joseph's Catholic Library and is inscribed to the famous Jesuit College at Stonyhurst in Lancashire, where Waterton was educated. This book presents one with a marvellous picture of the universality of the devotion to Our Lady before the Reformation, and shows how deeply ingrained was this religious practice in the hearts of our ancestors. The second part of this book Waterton calls "The Series," i.e., a catalogue of about 250 places in England alone where particular devotion was shown to the Mother of God. Of all these shrines, the most famous, of course, was Walsingham, and the most frequented. Erasmus tells us that Our Lady's shrine in the crypt at Canterbury was at first glance even more splendid than Walsingham, but many of the treasures at Walsingham were kept beneath the altar and were displayed only at particular request. Waterton gives a detailed description of Walsingham, Book II, pp. 155 to 220. He agrees with the traditional date of the founding of the shrine (1061) and considers the chain of evidence satisfactory, page 158.
2. Another valuable book is *Our Lady of Walsingham*, by Dom H. Philibert Feasey, O.S.B. It was published at Weston-super-Mare in 1901, and was approved by the then Bishop of Northampton. This book gives an excellent account of the chapel at Houghton-le-Dale (the Slipper Chapel) and a picture showing its partial restoration.
3. The Pilgrimages of Erasmus to Walsingham and Canterbury were composed, of course, in Latin, have been frequently translated, and are accessible to any student. They contain a great deal of valuable information by an eye-witness on the eve of the Reformation. It can always be debated how far the writings of Erasmus consciously or unconsciously assisted the Protestant movements of the sixteenth century. His mind was keenly alive to the abuses of his day, but the object of his raillery was to remove extravagance rather than overturn religious faith and practice. The accuracy of his description of Walsingham cannot be doubted, though it is not certain if he visited the shrine more than once.
