CHAPTER XVIII

THE EUROPEAN MISSIONS

The European missions in modern times took care of the Catholics whose intention it was to remain faithful to Rome in the States and territories where the Reformation had triumphed, England, Scotland, Ireland, Holland, Germany, a part of Switzerland and the Scandinavian countries. They included also the Catholics of Latin rite in Poland and the Catholics of Ruthenian rite whom, in both Poland and Russia, the orthodox Russian Church had not succeeded in winning over.

In England, the position of the Catholics, scattered and very small in numbers, remained lamentable until O'Connell's campaigns had secured their emancipation throughout the United Kingdom and the British colonies. Once this was done, the revival of Catholicism began to expand, thanks to the Oxford movement for which Newman was responsible and which Wiseman supported at the English College in Rome, thanks too to the fervour and pugnacity of the Irish Catholics who had settled in considerable numbers on English soil. From 120,000 members in 1800, the Catholic community in England rose to 700,000 by 1850 (450,000 Irish). Pius IX gave recognition to this progress by substituting an archbishopric with ten suffragan sees for the eight vicariates.

Catholicism in Scotland passed through similar stages. After more than two centuries of oppression, the Relief Bill of 1793, a measure due to the efforts of George Hay, restored to it the ownership of its property. In 1829, the Emancipation Bill made it free and the Irish immigration reinvigorated it and

brought about the establishment of numbers of religious communities of both men and women. Leo XIII re-established the hierarchy in 1878.

At the end of the eighteenth century, in 1775, the major part of North Germany and all Scandinavia formed the vicariate of the North, which was divided several times during the nineteenth century. Propaganda separated Norway and Sweden from the vicariate in 1783, the year in which an edict granted to foreigners alone the right to practise any religion other than Lutheranism. Sweden then had a few hundred Catholics. In 1842, they numbered 1,000 with four priests and two churches. This figure had exactly quadrupled by the beginning of the twentieth century. In Norway, the first Mass since the Reformation was celebrated in 1843. Norway became an independent prefecture apostolic in 1855 and a vicariate in 1892. It also allowed religious Orders to settle in its territory. At the beginning of the present century, the Catholics numbered 2,000.

In 1855, Propaganda incorporated in one prefecture, known as that of the North Pole, Lapland, the Faroes, Iceland, Greenland, the far North of the American continent, then the Orkneys and Shetlands. In 1866, this prefecture had only seven stations, of which the most active was that of the Faroes. In all there were 250 Catholics. It was suppressed in 1869.

Catholics were a little more numerous in the vicariate of North Germany which was attached to the see of Osnabrück, and in the prefecture of Schleswig-Holstein. But they were scattered and divided in a number of parishes that was minute by comparison with the dimensions of the territory.

The prefecture of Denmark, established in 1868 and in which the Faroe Islands, Iceland and Greenland were incorporated after the suppression of the prefecture of the North Pole, became a vicariate in 1892. The Sisters of St Joseph had made a foundation there in 1856. The progress of Catholicism was less slow than in Sweden and Norway. In 1892, there were 19,750 Catholics and twenty-nine parishes.

Catholicism was reintroduced into Finland, at Viborg, in

1721 by Polish soldiers serving in the Russian army. In 1781, it was authorized in the Swedish-speaking area. Missionaries from Germany arrived in Helsinki in 1860 but returned home discouraged. The Fathers of St Quentin came in 1906 after the abolition of the laws against toleration, but they could not stay more than two years. They returned again in 1917 and had the assistance of some Dominicans. Together they succeeded in making a few converts.

In Iceland, where Catholicism had disappeared at the Reformation, a French priest, Abbé Baudoin, founded at Reykjavik and Grundavjorden, two mission stations which for a long time had as their only parishioners the Breton fishermen. However, one native family was converted, but the departure of Abbé Baudoin left them without anyone to minister to them (1876).

In 1892, the vicariate apostolic of Denmark to which Iceland had been attached, sent a priest to Reykjavik and he established a parish there. In the following year, the Sisters of St Joseph of Chambéry arrived and soon founded a school and a hospital. Yet in 1897 there were only thirty-seven Catholics and ninety-two in 1902. In 1903 the de Montfort Fathers were given the responsibility of evangelizing Iceland and their efforts succeeded in establishing a few Christian families on this stony soil.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, there was no territory in which the Sacred Congregation had not attempted to establish missions. The latter, it is true, did not always have the supranational character she wished to stamp upon them. They did not always give the native clergy the place which it should hold in the new Christian communities as time goes on. It was to reform them in these two particulars that the Holy See applied itself during and after the pontificate of Benedict XV. The purpose of the sequel to this book is to describe the precise circumstances in which these reforms were undertaken.