

ARTICLE II.

THE CHURCH AT ANTIOCH.

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IT is the intent of this article to inquire into the origin and character of the church at Antioch, and to contrast it with the church in Jerusalem.

A church is an organization through which Jesus Christ does his gracious and beneficent work in the world. It is not an artificial organization, like human government, whose form, and whose function even, may vary; not an organization like a monastery, a missionary society, or the Young Men's Christian Association. In all these, men come together and work together, only because they have a common sentiment and a common aim. In the church men have a common sentiment and a common aim, but these are not its organic force. If they were, the church would be an artificial body, subject to change of form and function, just as political states are, and our inquiry about the character of the apostolic or any ancient church would be merely an antiquarian question. It would settle nothing for us to-day. But the church is a vital organization, like a vine, or like a human body, whose unity depends on an inherent force that cannot vary, and so the organization does not vary. If the church is compared to a temple,—and a temple was its earliest symbol (Matt. xvi. 18),—it is a temple built of living stones (1 Pet. ii. 3), “a building fitly framed together . . . for a habitation of God in the Spirit” (Eph. ii. 22). And he does not dwell in this sacred temple as a man dwells in his home, being in no sense any

part of it; God dwells in the church by dwelling in every man who is in it.

The church, then, is a spiritual body, the direct product of God's Holy Spirit, and has a character and life generically its own. It is unlike any other corporate existence on earth, not only in its originating and cohesive principle, but also in its function. It is a new thing, not only on earth, but before heaven, and exhibits in itself the " manifold wisdom of God " (Eph. iii. 10). Being, as it is, a living body, the body of Christ, it can neither die nor even change. It has outlived all nations on earth; and where it is worthy of the name of church, it is to-day what he made it, just as the fig-tree of to-day is the same as that which grew in Palestine in Christ's day. With the function of the church we are not now concerned, any further than to note, that, the function being ever the same, the organism cannot change. The church is a self-perpetuating body, ever after its own kind, having neither extraneous law nor constitution, but living by its own inherent vital force. If we know what it was in the first century, we know what it is at the present day.

In appealing to the New Testament, principally the book of Acts, we are confronted at the outset with two bodies having marked differences,—the church in Jerusalem and the church in Antioch in Syria. Both bodies were the product of the Holy Spirit, organizations exclusive and inclusive of the elements that fitted them for their aim. But was the aim the same? This must not be assumed.

The origin of the church in Jerusalem is well known. In one day the Holy Spirit, under the preaching of the apostles, brought three thousand persons into a common faith, that Jesus was the Messiah. Aside from this common faith, the new community differed from the mass of the Jews in three points: (1) they accepted the apostles as religious guides; (2) they had an extraordinary regard

for their own poor; and (3) they accepted two new ordinances. They dropped nothing that belonged to Judaism. Such was the origin and organization of this church; and to the last syllable of the record little more is said about these, unless we include the appointment of the seven almoners. The leaders of the church were the Lord's apostles, through whom it expressed itself and did its work. This work was principally daily worship and the making of converts. Two things are striking in its life: First, no Gentile could cross its threshold. His exclusion was as complete as from the temple itself, to enter which would cost the Gentile his life. The second thing was inevitable—the utter absence of the foreign mission spirit. There was but a very sluggish home mission spirit. The tides did not run out of Jerusalem; they ran in (Acts v. 16). At just this time the apostles were a second time imprisoned. The angel who delivered them did not send them out of the city, but said, "Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life." Jerusalem was still their field. They never went abroad until forced out by persecution, and then they did not go beyond Judaism. If Peter by a series of supernatural visions was forced to offer the gospel to a Gentile household, this was not to bring that household into the church, but for a very different purpose. Peter at once withdrew from the house of Cornelius, and there is no record that he ever visited it again. Such, then, was the church in Jerusalem,—a Jewish organization, zealous for the law of Moses, lacking the missionary spirit, and guided by the twelve apostles.

At Antioch all is different. This church originated somewhere about the year 40 A. D. The persecution in which Stephen was slain drove the Hellenistic, or progressive, element out of the church of Jerusalem. The apostles remained; for they did not belong to the broader-minded, liberal wing of the church. Some of these fugitives, who

were foreign-born Jews, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, uncramped by Phariseism, went as far north as Antioch, and here for the first time offered the gospel to the Greeks. The reading of Westcott and Hort here is overwhelmingly refuted by the internal evidence. The daring of these evangelists was approved by the Lord: "The hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number [of heathen] believed, and turned to the Lord" (Acts xi. 21). Thus the first Gentile church sprang into being. Three things are to be noted:—

First, the names of these northern evangelists are not given. It was Peter in Jerusalem and in the house of Cornelius, Philip in Samaria, and Paul everywhere else, Rome excepted; but the origin of the church at Antioch is anonymous. Instead of names, we have a phrase, solitary in such connections—"the hand of the Lord was with them." Such details are not to be overlooked. They *are* not overlooked. For ages it has been debated, Who founded the church at Rome? If we ask the more important question, Who founded the church at Antioch? but one name is prominent: the hand of the *Lord* was with them. The most that we know of the human agents is that, while they were men *from* Jerusalem, they were not *of* Jerusalem, but antipharisaic men of Cyprus and Cyrene, places far distant from the capital of Judaism.

The second thing to be said about the origin of this church is, that the "great number that believed, and turned to the Lord," were either baptized by these Cypriotes and Cyrenians or they were not baptized at all. But in New Testament times baptism was the prescribed means of professing faith in Christ, and this multitude could not have turned to him in any other way. Before ever Saul from Tarsus or Barnabas from Jerusalem reached Antioch, the believing number there was a complete church. The unnamed men of Cyprus and Cyrene had baptized these mul-

titudes, and had no doubt officiated at the other ordinance. If these evangelists were ordained, or ever had hands laid on them, every syllable of the record of such ordination has perished. Every aspect of the story suggests that these evangelists were not ordained, and he who claims that they were, claims it without proof. The unofficial persons who brought Antioch the knowledge of the Lord brought them also the ordinances.

Third, there is no hint that this church had the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost. At Pentecost and in the household of Cornelius these gifts came directly from Christ. Afterward they were conferred only by the laying on of the hands of an apostle. Philip could lead the Samaritans into the truth, and baptize them, filling the city with joy; but not until Peter and John came down from Jerusalem, and laid hands on the Samaritans, did they receive the power to speak with tongues. This gift did not come with believing. It could not come except by the laying on of the hands of the apostles. Where they did not go, it was not conferred. It ceased with their death. There is no evidence that the church at Antioch had this gift. So far as the record goes, they did not have it.

Here, then, we have a church in Antioch widely different in its origin and character from that in Jerusalem. It is not apostolic in its origin, but came into existence through the labors of laymen. Its ordinances have no direct apostolic sanction. Its membership is from a class of people to whom apostles would not preach. Its doors are open to all who come. It has not the apostolic gifts of the Spirit. It belongs to the genus of the Jerusalem church, but it is a different species. That it was specifically different from the church in Jerusalem appears by the conduct of the latter, "when tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem" (Acts xi. 22). At once Jerusalem sends forth Barnabas to go to Antioch.

He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith; and, having such qualities of heart, he saw at once that this Antioch church was the Lord's. The man who had the Holy Spirit recognized the Spirit's work, and so he had nothing to alter, propose, or amend, but rejoiced in seeing "the grace of God," and exhorted all to go on unhesitatingly as they had begun. Only so far then, but it is far enough, this laymen's church has the indorsement of the apostolic church through the latter's delegate. It is a sister church, born of the same Father, but having a different mother. The indorsement of Barnabas would give confidence in Antioch, so that the very next note in the record is, that "much people was added unto the Lord." We may safely assume that among those now coming into this church many would be Jews.

After the visit of Barnabas, Peter visited Antioch. It must have been some years later. He finds himself in a new spiritual atmosphere, very different from that in Jerusalem; and so great is the difference, that he cannot adjust himself to it. He falls under public rebuke, the stern admonition of Paul (Gal. ii. 11 ff.). Even Barnabas falls out of line with the new order of things (Gal. ii. 13). So far as we know, Peter visited the Gentiles but twice in his ministry, and each time involved himself in trouble, so different were religious opinions between Jerusalem and the Gentiles. In his qualifications Peter was adapted to Jerusalem, and not elsewhere. He was the apostle of the circumcision (Gal. ii. 8); but to found a church with world-wide tendencies was beyond the grace and gifts given him. Let the Jew look to him; Antioch must look elsewhere.

The church in Antioch being now founded and greatly enlarged, help in teaching must be multiplied. It is significant that Barnabas does not go south for Peter, but north for Saul of Tarsus, who becomes one of the teachers

at Antioch. And who is Saul? He was converted at Damascus. A layman baptized him, "one Ananias, a devout man according to the law" (Acts xxii. 12). Though Ananias is several times mentioned in the book of Acts, there is no hint that he was an official person. Saul certainly had the official gift of the Holy Spirit, and could impart the Spirit's extraordinary power. If he did not receive this power directly from the Lord, he got it through the hands of Ananias, who, on meeting Saul for the first time at Damascus, laid his hands on him, and said: "Brother Saul, the Lord sent me, even Jesus . . . that thou mayest receive sight, and be filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts ix. 17). This language appears to teach that Saul's endowment came through the hands of the "devout man," Ananias, in which case we should have another exception to the rule that the Spirit was given only through the hands of an apostle. The exception is easily explained. For authoritative and independent work among the Gentiles, Paul must be in no wise subordinate to the other apostles, but must stand as directly related to the ascended Lord as they did; so that he could say that he "was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles" (2 Cor. xi. 5). He stood on a level with them, an apostle equal in authority with them. It was three years after his conversion that he visited Jerusalem for a few days only. He is now hurried off to Tarsus, where Barnabas found him, and brought him to Antioch. When, some years later, he again visited Jerusalem, he did not learn the gospel from the apostles, but, as he says, "I laid before them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles" (Gal. ii. 2), and "to me" they "imparted nothing" (Gal. ii. 6). Such was the man who with Barnabas taught a whole year at Antioch. It was not the teaching of Jerusalem. Paul could say nothing against lay baptism. He was baptized so himself. The teaching at Antioch was original. Paul again and again calls it his

own—"my gospel." In a layman-founded church we have an apostle baptized and endowed at the hands of a layman.

Of this year's teaching only one fact of the three recorded is made prominent, that the disciples were called Christians first at Antioch. The teachers met for a year, they taught much people, and the name Christian arose. This name gives us to understand nothing else than this, that here we have a new and unique body of believers. If it were not new and distinct from Jerusalem, why should the name arise? This verse has been singularly misapprehended. The King James Revisers did not even understand the Greek in which it is written, as is shown by their inserting a period in the sentence. It is just one sentence, and cannot possibly be converted into two, having just one principal verb with three infinitives depending on it. Omitting the two minor infinitives, which give the two details about the length of time and the multitude taught, Luke's principal assertion is: "It came to pass . . . that the disciples were first called Christians at Antioch." This sacred name did not arise from the jibes of the heathen, it did not come directly from the church, but was the result of the year's teaching by Barnabas and Saul. The church's character was developed and settled under this instruction, and stood forth so distinct from anything hitherto seen, that the name for it was inevitable. The verb "to call," *χρηματίζειν*, as Josephus and the Septuagint clearly show, means a divine call, an oracular response. Of the nine instances of the verb in the New Testament there is not an exception, unless it is the case before us. The wise men were *named* from God (*χρηματίζειν*); Joseph was *warned* in a dream. To Simeon, waiting for the Messiah, it was *revealed* by the Holy Spirit. The noun occurs just once, where the answer of God, *χρηματισμός*, assures Elias of the seven thousand loyal souls in Israel. This word "call," being used of these disciples, shows that their name Chris-

tian came in connection with the teaching that came from Christ. The believers in Judæa were not in name Christians; for, as a body, they were different from these saints in Antioch, a new body, necessitating a new name.

Now it was this new organization that spread itself over the Roman Empire. Antioch became the fountain, the solitary fountain, of the world's evangelization. The stream flowed from here, and not from Jerusalem. Jerusalem went to the Jews, and could not without violence go beyond. Antioch went to the world, and could not without revolution flow towards Judæa. Believers of the Jerusalem type made heroic, prolonged, and conscientious efforts to bring the church at Antioch, and those which sprang from it, to conformity with themselves, but Antioch triumphed (Acts xv.). The church at Jerusalem was limited in its field to the descendants of Abraham. It could take no other to its fold. It was the Jewish church, not a world church. When the nation failed, the church of the nation went down with it, and it is doubtful whether one Jewish church can be found surviving beyond the first century. There is no church to-day that can trace its origin to Jerusalem, except by way of Antioch; and, if it could, it would find itself utterly unlike the church at Jerusalem, radically unlike it in organization, for it was a church of one nationality, observing Mosaic rites and officered by apostles. Had the immediate followers of Edward Irving, whom Carlyle called "the best man he ever found in this world, or hoped to find"—had Irving and his followers imitated Antioch, instead of Jerusalem, the "Catholic Apostolic Church" would have had but one apostle, instead of twelve. And if to-day we follow Antioch, or Jerusalem by way of Antioch, for Jerusalem can be reached by no other route, what comes of Baptist or any other succession? The chain of Baptist succession breaks completely off at its very first link. It cannot be made to reach John at the Jordan,

nor even Jerusalem. It begins no further back than Antioch with its laymen as founders. And the figment of tactual succession fares no better, unless it can be shown that we can get to Jerusalem by some other route than Antioch. But he who should do this, leaves Paul out of the line of succession, and comes nearer the apostolate than the apostle himself; for he never had apostolic hands on his head. But worse yet, Baptist and all other successionists have Jerusalem against them; for through its delegate Barnabas, it indorsed this church that was founded by laymen. Jerusalem gave it apostolic credentials without apostolic hands. Antioch as a church has the indorsement of Jerusalem as a church, though each differs widely from the other.

But is not Rome the center and source from which succession proceeds? No. Rome itself must be a child of Antioch. That the church of Rome was formed by returning pilgrims from that first great Pentecost is not only devoid of proof, but its origin at that time was a sheer impossibility. The church at Rome was a Gentile church, with a proportion of Jews in its membership. The gospel was not offered to Gentiles until Antioch arose. Indeed, there was no *formal* offer to any one until Saul and Barnabas started from Antioch on their first missionary journey, about the year 45. At this stage of this article, space is not left to speak at length of the origin of the Roman church, but knowing, as we do from the Epistle to the Romans, its complete gospel liberty, its freedom from the pharisaic questions which distracted the earlier churches, questions which were not formally settled until the council in Jerusalem, A. D. 50, its origin cannot be assigned to a date earlier than this. It, too, was founded by laymen, the converts of Paul in Corinth and other contiguous cities. One evidence of its non-apostolic origin appears in Paul's purpose to visit them—"that I may impart to you some

spiritual gift." This gift could not be sent them by letter. Paul himself must be present, that he may lay hands upon them, and convey the gift. But there is much additional evidence in the book of Acts, and in the Epistle to the Romans, of the non-apostolic and late origin of the church at Rome. Peter is wholly out of the question. Rome, then, was later than Antioch,—not the mother of churches, but the daughter of Antioch.

Now is not Antioch the model organization? Should not the church of Jesus Christ fashion itself after it? That the church is an organization will not be denied. But of what kind,—human or spiritual? And, if spiritual, how framed together? By the cohesive attraction of men of a common sentiment, or is it also indwelt by that same Spirit that gave its members the common sentiment? It is not a voluntary body, but a divine creation. God made the little Chinese girl's foot in the proper shape, made it a normal foot, and for one definite purpose. To deform that foot is to impeach his wisdom, and to defeat the purpose for which the foot was made. He made the church at Antioch the normal church, and he made it for a definite spiritual purpose, to which it was as aptly adapted as the uncramped foot is suited for walking. The church is not an end; it is also a means. If it were an end, perhaps there is no harm in decking it all over with ecclesiastical toggery. When a tree is dead, it may be used as an apt frame on which to grow the honeysuckle vine or the morning-glory. But the tree that is grown to bear fruit is kept free from these; and, indeed, all its own superfluous branches are sharply pruned away. And every succeeding tree grows and is treated in the same way. It is an organism that perpetuates itself after its own kind; and God's church does so. We know what that church is by knowing Antioch. They who make something different are impeaching God's wisdom. Is there no divine direction

for church order? Is one form of church and of church order as good as another, because there is no Scripture for any? In nothing does God more clearly reveal his will than in what he has *done*. His creation is legislation. He who departs from the standard of Antioch, or adds to it, does not trust God's organization, the house which he built as his own habitation, and as a safe shelter for weary souls that come to him. Such a departure may be in the way of filling the house, not with God's guests, but with churchly frippery, so much of it that there is little room for the stifled occupants.

But did not God make the church at Jerusalem, which we have seen to be in sharp contrast with Antioch? Yes; and he also made and blessed Judaism in its day. But when Judaism had served its purpose, it passed over its sacred deposit to the Gentile, and was then made to vacate the field. Now what if Jerusalem proves to have a like place in the economy of salvation, served its purpose in making the gospel known to the Jews, and then handed the work over to Antioch to make the gospel known to the world, the latter work needing an organization somewhat different from Jerusalem? Is there any proof of this? Is there not sufficient proof in the fact that the church in Jerusalem and all its kind did pass away?

Twelve years before the destruction of Jerusalem, Luke records the fact that the thousands of believers in the city were "all zealous of the law." These Judaic churches could not affiliate with the Gentile churches. Had the former remained, the first centuries would have seen two kinds of churches with wider differences than those existing to-day between Protestant and Roman Catholic.

There is an argument in the name church. It is a question whether the believing Jews anywhere ever called themselves a church. Luke and Paul apply the word to them sparingly, but the Hebrew believers seem to have

avoided it. We have come to the fifth chapter of Acts before Luke calls the believing body in Jerusalem a church. He promptly designates that at Antioch so. The word would be offensive to the Jew. It means a mixed body, where the Jew loses caste by being put on a level with the Gentile. In the five epistles of the circumcision,—Hebrews James, Peter, and Jude,—no one of them is addressed to a church or to churches. Hebrews is anonymous both in address and in authorship. James is addressed to “the twelve tribes.” Peter writes to the “dispersion,” and Jude to those whom he calls simply “beloved.” In the body of these epistles the word occurs just three times, against twenty-two in First Corinthians alone. It is met twice in Hebrews,—one instance being a quotation from the LXX., and in the other the angels are called a church. This leaves the solitary instance in James where the sick man is to call for the elders of the church; and here the word refers most likely to the synagogue. In these five epistles, then, there is no clear case of the use of the word church in its Gentile sense.

But most of all Paul speaks of the church, of its origin and character, in terms that wholly exclude Jerusalem. He says (Eph. iii.), that it was a revelation to him—a mystery not known before, that Gentiles should be with Jews one body in Christ, and this mixed company he calls the church. This shuts Jerusalem out; for it never was a mixed body, and could not be. He exhorts the Colossians, vexed with a philosophic Judaism, to put on the new man “where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ is all, and in all” (Col. iii. 11). Now this Scripture, so far as it is a definition of the church, leaves Jerusalem out again. Indeed, Paul seldom uses the word,—and he employs it sixty-two times,—that he does not mean one of these mixed bodies. The argument then comes to this,

that while he does call the body of believers in Jerusalem a church, "the church of God," "the churches of Judæa," yet his teaching about the origin and character of the church shuts Jerusalem out. This teaching came many years after Pentecost, twenty-five or thirty years later, and is applicable only to Antioch, and not to Jerusalem. Whatever else it may mean, surely this is evident in Paul's instruction concerning the church, that Jerusalem did not come up to his conception of the sacred body. The earlier notion of the church,—if there ever was at that time a notion of it—at least the earlier name, the earlier meaning of the word, must give place to the later. The organization that can claim the word is one, not like Jerusalem, with its single nationality and its apostolic authority, but one like Antioch, that arose wholly apart from the apostolate, became the mother of churches, and perpetuated itself, which Jerusalem did not.

The study of Antioch is well intended to make one modest and careful about all ecclesiastical and clerical claims, and to lead one to ask whether the correct conception of the church can be a composite, made up of elements selected from both Jerusalem and Antioch, a *tertium quid*, unlike either original body. But if Antioch is the model, Antioch that has a clear title to the name church, Antioch from which the Gentile churches sprung—if Antioch, founded without the presence of even one of the original Twelve, is the model, then apostolic succession has no foundation, and is no part of the Christian church. And succession of ordinances, especially of baptism, if such succession can be proved back through the centuries, either begins with the laymen who formed the church at Antioch, or, if pushed further back, the succession breaks down at Antioch. Jerusalem is not the model church. That honor belongs to Antioch, which has its origin and its character as directly from Christ as Jerusalem itself. And to add ele-

ments of one church to differing elements belonging to the other is to confound things which the Holy Spirit made and left separate.