

nounced that He will return visibly from heaven to earth to close the present order of things and to pronounce and execute judgment on all men good and bad ; that He taught that at His coming evil will be prevalent on earth, and that consequently to some men His appearance will bring sudden destruction, but to the righteous deliverance and eternal blessing. The exact time of His return, Christ did not specify. But He spoke words which evoked in the hearts of some of His disciples a hope that some then living would survive His coming. St. Paul, however, taught that the Day of the Lord was not at hand, and that before Christ comes some new and terrible form of evil will first appear. That Christ left in the minds of some of His disciples this hope of an early return, and that He actually and conspicuously taught that He will come to close the present order of things and to judge all men living and dead, must be accepted, on reliable documentary evidence as an assured result of New Testament scholarship.

In my next paper I shall consider the teaching of the Johannine Writings.

JOSEPH AGAR BEET.

ST. PAUL'S CONCEPTION OF CHRISTIANITY.

XX. THE CHURCH.

IT is natural that one should desire to know what is taught in the Pauline letters, and especially in the controversial group, on the subject of the Church, and in what relation the Pauline idea of the Church stands to the idea of the Kingdom of God so prominent in the teaching of Christ as reported in the Synoptical Gospels.

As to the latter topic, for we may begin with it, it is to be noted that both ideas, Church and Kingdom, and the terms corresponding, occur both in Synoptic Gospels, and in Paul-

ine Epistles, but in an inverse order of prominence. The Kingdom is the leading idea in our Lord's teaching; the Church is named only twice in the Evangelic narratives, and the question has been discussed whether Jesus ever used the word at all, or even contemplated the thing. The Church, on the other hand, is the leading category in St. Paul's epistles; the Kingdom of God is mentioned only five times in the four great epistles, while the terms "Church" and "Churches" occur many times. From these facts the natural inference might seem to be that in the view both of Jesus and of Paul, the Kingdom and the Church were practically equivalent, the Church being the ideal of the Kingdom realized; from Christ's point of view the ideal to be realized in the future, therefore rarely mentioned; from Paul's point of view the ideal already realized, therefore most frequently spoken of. Broadly viewed, this is the truth. Yet the statement must be taken with qualification, for neither in the teaching of our Lord nor in that of St. Paul do the two conceptions exactly cover each other. In both the Kingdom possesses a certain transcendental character not belonging to the Church. This amounts to saying that it is a pure ideal hovering over the reality, or in advance of it, a goal which the Church seeks to approximate, but never overtakes. Along with this transcendent character goes an *apocalyptic* aspect revealing itself in Evangelic and Pauline representations of the Kingdom. These two attributes of transcendency and futurity are very recognisable in the passages referring to the Kingdom in the Pauline letters. The eschatological aspect is apparent in the texts, *Gal.* v. 21; *1 Cor.* vi. 9, 10; *1 Cor.* xv. 50, in the two former of which it is declared concerning men guilty of certain specified sins, that they shall not inherit the Kingdom, while in the latter the same declaration is made concerning *flesh and blood*, that is our present mortal corruptible bodies. The transcendent character of the Kingdom is plainly implied in

the remaining two texts in which it is mentioned, 1 *Cor.* iv. 20 and *Rom.* xiv. 17. "Not in word," says the Apostle in the former place, "(is) the kingdom of God, but in power." It is clear that for the writer of such a sentence, at the moment, the Kingdom is not identical with the Church, but something rising far above it in ideal purity, and beauty, and dignity. For the statement quoted could not have been made concerning the Church as represented by the Christian community in Corinth. The very opposite was the truth as regarded it. The Church at Corinth was in word not in power. It was a society wholly given up to talk, to oratory, to prophesying, to speaking with tongues. The one phenomenon visible there was a universally diffused talent for speech; there was a sad dearth of all that tends to give a religious community spiritual power, of wisdom and charity, or even common morality. A state of things like that would compel one to distinguish between Church and Kingdom, and to think of the latter as exalted above the former as far as heaven is above the earth. Similar observations apply to the other text, which runs: "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit." The obvious meaning is that in the Kingdom ritual cleanness and uncleanness are of no account; nothing is of value there that is merely ceremonial, nothing but the moral and spiritual; the qualification for citizenship is not eating or abstaining from eating a given sort of food, but possessing a righteous, loving, sunny spirit; the men to whom belongs the Kingdom are those who have a passion for righteousness, who are peacemakers, and who can rejoice even in tribulation, because they have chosen God for their *summum bonum*.

The very fact that the apostle thought it needful to make the observation just commented on, proves that the Church of Rome was far enough from realizing the idea of a community in which questions about meats and drinks were

nothing, and righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit everything. There were in it, on the one hand, many whose consciences were enslaved by petty scruples, and on the other, many who treated such scruples with contempt; consequently there prevailed a great forgetfulness in opposite directions of the great things of the law: justice, mercy, and faith. Such a state of matters is a disappointing and depressing spectacle wherever exhibited, and the soul of a good man naturally takes to itself wings of a dove, and flies away in quest of a refuge from despair and scepticism to the fair Kingdom of Heaven, where naught but what is noble and benignant and bright finds entrance. It is well for one who lives in evil times to be able thus mentally to see the transcendent commonwealth. It is his salvation from unbelief, his quietive amid disgusts, his consolation amid disappointments and disenchantments; a temple wherein he may behold the beauty of the Lord, when there is nowhere else anything beautiful to look upon; a pavilion in which he can hide himself in the time of trouble. There is no other refuge than the Church transcendent. However disappointing any particular religious society may be, it is not worth while to leave it for any other. The Church at Corinth was bad, but the Church at Rome was also far from perfect. In the one was licentious liberty, in the other religious narrowness and petty scrupulosity. Therefore a truly Christ-like man whose lot was cast in either might well say: "I had rather bear the ills I have than fly to others that I know not of." St. Paul's comfort in reference to both was to lift up his thoughts to the transcendent Kingdom of God.

It thus appears that in the mind of the apostle the divine Kingdom was by no means immediately identical with the Christian Church. Yet, while this is true, it is at the same time also true that in his writings we observe a constant effort to contemplate the Church in the bright light of the

ideal, and not merely in the dim, disenchanting light of vulgar reality. He desired ever to invest the Church with the attributes of the divine Kingdom, and loved to think of it as a glorious Church, without spot of defilement or wrinkles of age, holy, free from blemish, as became the bride of Christ.¹ Various traces of this idealizing tendency are discoverable in the leading epistles. First we may note the generalizing conception of the Church as a *unity*. Sometimes the apostle speaks of churches in the plural, as in *Galatians* i. 2, where he salutes "the Churches of Galatia," and in i. 22, where he states that he was unknown to "the Churches of Judæa." The Churches in these texts are little communities of Christians in different towns who associated together as believers in Jesus, and met in one place for divine worship. In other texts the apostle uses the word "Church" collectively to denote the whole body of believers, as in *Galatians* i. 13, where he persistently refers to the time when he persecuted "the Church of God," and in 1 *Corinthians* x. 32, where he counsels the Christians in Corinth to give no occasion of stumbling to Jews or to Greeks, or to the Church of God, where it is clear, from the reference to Jews and Greeks, that he has a wide public in view, the whole world, in fact, divided into three classes: the Jews, the Gentiles represented by the Greeks, these two embracing all unbelievers, and the Church, embracing all believers.

Another indication of the tendency to invest the Church with the ideal attributes of the divine Kingdom may be found in the representation of the Church as a society in which all outward distinctions are cancelled, and the sole qualification for membership is purely spiritual—union to Christ by faith. The conception of the new humanity in which Christ is all and in all occurs chiefly in the later

¹ *Ephes.* v. 27. The epistle, whether one of St. Paul's or not, utters here genuinely Pauline sentiment.

epistles, especially in that to the Ephesians, but it is found also in the earlier, very distinctly in *Galatians* iii. 27, 28: "As many of you as were baptized into Christ put on Christ. There is (in Him) neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor freeman, there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." Here is sketched a spiritual society in which nothing is taken into account but the personal relation of each member to the common object of faith. While the attribute of spirituality is accentuated, the kindred attribute of universality is plainly implied. There is neither Jew, Greek, bond, free, male and female, because all are there together. This new society of the apostles, like the Kingdom of Jesus, is open to all comers, just because it negates all distinctions, and insists only on the one condition of faith possible for all alike. It may here be noted that the expression, "the Israel of God," used in the close of the Epistle to the Galatians, shows how closely the ideas of the Church and the Kingdom were connected in the writer's mind. The new creation presented to view in the Christian Church was for him the ideal commonwealth whereof the theocratic kingdom of Israel was an adumbration.

One other indication of this idealizing tendency is to be found in the high moral attributes ascribed by St. Paul to the members of the Church. Though not unaware of the prevalent shortcoming in faith and life, he nevertheless speaks of the members of the various Churches as "saints," sanctified, holy. Even the Corinthian Christians are saluted as "sanctified in Christ Jesus,"¹ and the title saints is extended to all Christians in the province of Achaia.² This might seem to be a mere matter of courtesy, did we not find in the body of the first Epistle to the Corinthians a deliberate statement to the effect that the members of the Church were a body of sanctified men, a statement rendered

¹ 1 Cor. i. 2.

² 2 Cor. i. 1.

all the more emphatic by the plainness with which the apostle indicates that the Corinthians had been the reverse of holy before they became converts to the Christian religion. "Such were some of you, but ye were washed, but ye were sanctified."¹

From the foregoing discussion we have obtained a sufficiently clear general idea of the Christian Church as conceived by St. Paul. It is a society of men united by a common faith in Jesus Christ as the Saviour, and a common devotion to Him as their Lord, gathered together from all classes, conditions, and races of men. It does not need to be said that the members of such a society would have very close fellowship with each other. There is no brotherhood so intimate and precious as one based on a pure religion sincerely professed. It may be taken for granted that those who belong to such a brotherhood will avail themselves of all possible opportunities of meeting together for the interchange of thought and affection in mutual converse, and for united worship of the common object of faith, and for ministering to each other's wants and comforts. The Westminster Confession says: "Saints by profession are *bound* to maintain an holy fellowship and communion in the worship of God, and in performing such other spiritual services as tend to their mutual edification; as also in relieving each other in outward things, according to their several abilities and necessities."² In the initial period of fresh enthusiasm, Christians would do all this instinctively without needing to be told it was their duty.

Accordingly, we are not surprised to find in the letters of St. Paul to the Churches he had planted traces of a very lively fellowship in worship, religious intercourse, and mutual benefit prevalent among those bearing the Christian name. They met together in public assembly, how often does not appear, but certainly at least once a week,

¹ 1 Cor. vi. 11.

² Chap. xxvi. 2.

and on the first day of the week; and when they met they prayed, sang, prophesied for mutual edification. They also ate together, and while doing so they set apart a portion of the bread and wine to be memorials of Christ's death, and partook of these with reverent, grateful thoughts of Him who died for them, and in token of mutual love to each other as His disciples.¹ At first, apparently, all members of the community took part indiscriminately in the religious exercises. Every one had his psalm, his doctrine, his revelation, or his still more mysterious utterance called a tongue (*γλῶσσα*), or his interpretation of a brother's tongue. All were on a level: there was perfect equality of privilege, unrestricted liberty of speech for the common good. It is easy to see that in a city like Corinth, among an excitable race like the Greeks, a religious meeting conducted in this manner would be more lively than orderly. It would not be long before a need for some little measure of order and organization would be felt, a need for dividing the Church into two classes: those, on the one hand, who would best serve the brotherhood by silence, and those, on the other, whose special business it should be to contribute to the common benefit by speech. The question, who were to be silent and who were to speak, would settle itself by a process of natural selection. It would be seen by degrees who could speak to profit and who could not, and means would be found for silencing the unprofitable speaker and for giving those who could speak profitably the position of a recognised teacher. In a similar way spontaneous differentiation would take place in reference to other gifts, and certain persons would gradually come to be recognised as possessing the charism of healing, of succouring the needy, of government, and so on. Recognition would follow

¹ Weizsäcker thinks that this took place at a separate meeting from that at which the ordinary worship was carried on. (*Vide Das apostolische Zeitalter*, p. 548 f.).

experimental proof of possession of the function. The honour of recognition would be the reward of service actually rendered. For in the primitive Church the law enunciated by Christ, distinction to be reached through service, was thoroughly understood and acted on. The law is clearly proclaimed in St. Paul's epistles. He represents the Church as an organism like the human body, wherein each part has a function to perform for the good of the whole, and in which, if one part has more honour than another, it is because of its serviceableness.¹

How far the process of differentiation into distinctiveness of function, and of corresponding recognition of fitness for distinct functions had been carried at the time the four great epistles were written it is not easy to determine. It seems pretty certain that by that time an order of teachers had arisen, but it is not so clear that all the communities were furnished with an order of rulers. No certain trace of such an order can be discovered in the sources of information concerning the Churches of Galatia and Corinth. One might indeed suppose that 1 *Corinthians* xvi. 15, 16 contained a reference to something of the kind. "I beseech you, brethren, (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they gave themselves for service to the saints,) that ye also be in subjection to such, and to every fellow-worker and labourer." But this is too vague an exhortation to serve as a proof text, especially when it is remembered that in connection with the case of immoral conduct in the Corinthian Church the apostle does not anywhere summon church rulers to exercise needful discipline, but simply appeals to the congregation to purge themselves of complicity with the sin. A more reliable indication of the existence of a ruling function in rudimentary form is to be found in what we have reason to regard as the earliest of the Pauline epistles, the first to the Thessalonians.

¹ 1 *Cor.* xii. 12-26.

In that epistle (v. 12) the apostle exhorts the Thessalonian Church to know those that laboured among them, and *were over them in the Lord* (*προϊσταμένους*) and admonished them. A real authority is doubtless here pointed at, only we are not to conceive of it as of an official character originating in ecclesiastical ordination. It arose naturally and spontaneously, probably out of priority in faith, or from the fact that the *προϊσταμένοι* held the meetings of the congregation in their own houses and with the expenditure of their own means.¹

As regards *teachers* on the other hand, distinct allusions to such an order occur in the leading epistles. The apostle thus exhorts the Galatians: "Let him that is taught in the word—the catechumen—communicate unto him that teacheth (*τῷ κατηχούντι*) in all good things." The exhortation seems to imply not only the existence of teachers, but of teachers who gave their whole time to the work, and therefore needed to be supported by the Church. In Corinth the position of teacher was occupied by Apollos, to whom reference is made in 1 *Corinthians* iii. 4. That Apollos was more than an occasional speaker, even a regular instructor, is evident from the terms in which the apostle speaks of him. Claiming for himself the function of planter, he assigns to Apollos the function of watering, a task which in its nature requires to be performed systematically. In

¹ Vide on this Weizsäcker's *Apostolic Age*, vol. i. p. 291. The reader may also consult two articles by Heinrici in the *Zeitschrift für wissenschaftliche Theologie*, 1876, 1877, on *Die Christengemeinde Korinths und die religiösen Genossenschaften der Griechen*, and *Zur Geschichte der Anfänge Paulinischen Gemeinde*. Heinrici's view is that the Gentile churches founded by Paul were not modelled on the Jewish synagogue but assumed the characteristics of the religious associations of the Pagan world. These as they existed in Greece, according to Heinrici, "bore a purely republican character. All members possessed the same rights, all were expected to show equal zeal. All were alike sovereign and alike responsible. The collective body ruled, resolved, rewarded, punished." *Zeitschrift f. w. T.*, p. 501. The *προϊστάμενος* mentioned in 1 *Thessalonians* v. 12 and in *Romans* xii. 8 Heinrici compares to the *patronus* of an association who as a person of influence guarded its legal rights.

1 *Corinthians* iv. he describes both Apollos and himself as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God, phrases implying that both exercised functions of great importance, the one as a founder of churches moving about from land to land, the other as a stationary instructor in a particular church.

But the passage which beyond all others shows what an importance and dignity belonged to the teaching ministry in St. Paul's esteem is that in 2 *Corinthians*, where he describes himself as a fit servant of the New Testament.¹ It is implied that it is no small matter to be a fit minister of the Christian religion. That this is the thought in the apostle's mind is proved by the fact that, having claimed for himself to be such a minister, he goes on to pronounce a eulogium on the Christian dispensation in impassioned language, describing it as the religion of the spirit, the dispensation of life, the ministration of righteousness, and in virtue of these attributes as the abiding perennial religion, as opposed to the transient religion of the old covenant. He claims for himself fitness for the service of this new order of things, basing his claims on his ability to appreciate the distinctive excellence and glory of the New Testament, an ability for which he is indebted to his whole past religious experience. And the service which he has in view is just the preaching of the gospel ; for in the foregoing context he repudiates all complicity in the arts of those who huckster the word of God, and in the following he protests that if his gospel be hid it is hid from them that are lost. So then it is the word of God that is concerned in this New Testament service, it is the preaching of the gospel in which the service consists.

But it may be thought that this eulogy of the New Testament and by implication of its ministry, affects only the preaching of an apostle, and cannot legitimately be extended

¹ 2 *Cor.* iii. 6.

to an ordinary gospel ministry. This inference however is contrary to the spirit, I may say even to the language, of the passage in question. For it is observable that the apostle employs the plural pronoun throughout, as if, while asserting his own importance against assailants,¹ with express intent to include others, like Apollos, Titus and Timothy, in his eulogy. Then it is to be noted that at the end of the chapter the expression "we" is replaced by "we all,"² in which the writer certainly has in view more than himself. But indeed no one who enters into the drift of the argument throughout can possibly imagine that St. Paul is thinking merely of his own apostleship when he speaks of the ministry of the New Testament. The kind of argument he uses to defend his apostleship is such as to serve a wider purpose, *viz.*, to legitimise the ministry of all who with unveiled face see the glory of Christ and of Christianity. For him the ultimate ground of a right to preach is insight into the genius of the New Testament religion. That carries with it the right of every one who has the insight. Whoever has the open eye and the unveiled face may take part in the ministry. "The tools to him that can use them" was a principle for St. Paul as well as for Napoleon. He that had the open eye was, in his judgment, not only entitled but bound to take part in the New Testament ministry. God made the sun in order that it might shine, and He gives the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus to Christian men that they in turn may be lights to the world.

There is another thing in this great passage which clearly shows that in the writer's view a teaching or preaching ministry was a most congenial and fitting feature of the New Testament dispensation. It is the remark about

¹ For the bearing of the whole passage on the defence of St. Paul's apostolic standing against the Judaists *vide* Art. iv. in this series.

² *2 Cor.* iii. 18.

παρρησία: "seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech."¹ The frankness with which the apostle is wont to utter himself as a preacher he here connects with the hopeful character of the faith he preaches, which is a feature naturally rising out of all the others previously mentioned. The religion of the Spirit of life and of righteousness cannot but be a religion of good hope. But a religion of good hope is sure to be a religion of free speech. For it puts men in good spirits, it gives them heart to speak, it makes them feel that they have good news to tell. Who would care to be a preaching minister of a religion of condemnation and despair and death? But how pleasant to be the messenger of mercy, the publisher of good tidings! How beautiful are the feet of them that preach a gospel of peace; beautiful because they move so nimbly and gracefully, as no feet can move but those of him that goes on a glad errand. It may be taken for granted that under a religion of good hope great will be the company of preachers characterized by *παρρησία*, boldness, frankness. The more the better, St. Paul would have said, provided they be of the right kind, men in sympathy with the new era of grace and the genius of the New Testament; hopeful, outspoken, eloquent, as only those can be who are at once sincere and happy. To men of another spirit, gloomy, reserved, prudent, he would have said: You are not fit for this ministry; you are fit only for a ministry like that of Moses, who put a veil on his face. You are living not in the new era, but in the old one, which I for my part am glad to be done with. Go and take service under the Levitical system; you are of no use in the Christian Church.

The upshot of what has been said is that evangelism, frank, fervent speech about the common faith, may be expected as a prominent feature of organized Christianity, in proportion as the organization is filled with the spirit of St.

¹ 2 Cor. iii. 12.

Paul and of the apostolic age. Whether a systematically trained class of professional preachers be a legitimate development out of such evangelism is a question of grave concern for all the Churches in the present time. Preaching is a very outstanding feature in our church life, and all the modern Churches have with more or less decision adopted as their ideal "a learned ministry." Is the ideal justified by results? In reply I have to say that my sympathies are very strongly with the advocates of a learned ministry. In my view what we have to complain of is not that the Churches have adopted this as their ideal, but that the ministry turned out of their theological seminaries can only by courtesy be described as learned. What we need is not less learning but a great deal more, and of the right sort. At the same time it has to be acknowledged that the programme involves dangers. Learning may kill enthusiasm and transform the prophet into a Rabbi. That will mean decay of the evangelic spirit, lapse into legalism. This is the form in which the legal temper is apt to invade Churches which magnify the importance of the preacher. The bane of other Churches is sacramentarianism and priestcraft, under which prophetic *παρρησία* disappears and mystery takes its place. The bane to be dreaded by Churches not sacramentarian in tendency is a Rabbinized pulpit, offering the people scholastic dogmas or philosophic ideas in place of the gospel. Religious teachers ought to know theology and to be deep, earnest, thinkers, but in the *concio ad populum* the prophet should be more prominent than the theologian, and the poet than the philosopher.

One other topic remains to be noticed briefly, the view presented in the Pauline epistles of the Church's relation to Christ. In the Christological epistles the Church is conceived as the body of Christ, He being the Head. This idea is found also in the controversial letters, more especially in *1 Corinthians*. It is stated with great distinctness

in these words: "But ye are the body of Christ and members individually" (*ἐκ μέρους*);¹ well paraphrased by Stanley: "You, the Christian Society, as distinct from the bodily organization, of which I have just been speaking, you are, collectively speaking, the body of Christ, as individually you are His limbs." The value of this idea is the use made of it in assigning a *rationale* for the diversity of gifts in the Church. In order to a complete Church, such is the apostle's thought, there must be a great variety of gifts, just as there is a great variety of members in the human body. It would not be well if all had the same gifts, any more than if the whole body were an eye or an ear. There must be differentiation of function: apostles, prophets, teachers, gifts of healings, talent for administration, the power of speaking with tongues. The diversity need not create disorder. It finds its unity in Christ. "There are diversities of services, and the same Lord."² A splendid ideal, if only it were wisely and conscientiously worked out. But, alas, to carry out the programme there is wanted a spirit of self-abnegation and magnanimity such as animated the apostle Paul. We are so apt to imagine that our function is the only important or even legitimate one, and to regard men of other gifts as aliens and rebels. It is so hard to realize our own limits, and to see in our brethren the complement of our own defects; and to grasp the thought that it takes all Christians together, with all their diverse talents and graces, to shadow forth even imperfectly the fulness of wisdom and goodness that is in Christ.

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¹ 1 Cor. xi. 27.

² 1 Cor. xii. 5.