

THE HOLY COMMUNION : ITS ORIGIN ACCORDING TO ST. PAUL.

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“For I received of the Lord that which also I delivered
unto you” (1 Cor. xi. 23, R.V.).

HAVE these words of St. Paul obtained in recent years the attention they deserve ?

The question is asked because the writer has been studying the origins of the Eucharist. In particular he has consulted the essay of the Bishop of Truro in the volume *Evangelical Doctrine of the Holy Communion*, and the translation by the Rev. A. G. Herbert of Dean Brioth's *Eucharistic Faith and Practice*. And it seems to him that many modern scholars have not given the weight to St. Paul's account which is its due.

The writer, it must be admitted at once, has only been a parochial parson, and unable therefore to keep abreast of much modern criticism. But have such as he no claim to be heard on critical problems and their supposed assured results ? Are not many of us entitled to the position of jurymen in an English court of justice ? May we not be allowed to bring the experience of ordinary religious life, and our practical intelligence, to bear on questions which are raised by experts ? Problems of critical theology are not capable of exact measurement such as are many of the facts of natural science. Inference and hypothesis follow upon the often meagre facts which alone are undisputed. When it comes to inference and hypothesis the reasoning of the ordinary student, provided he has some true logical sense, may surely be as valid as that of the expert.

The writer begs leave therefore to approach the question of the origin of the Eucharist as a jurymen in a court of law, and he asks, Why is St. Paul's account, the earliest we possess, held, as it would seem, in such slight esteem ? For if accepted at its face value where is there room for some of the theories which are put forward ? St. Paul plainly states the fact of the institution by “The Lord Jesus,” and His command to repeat it. Why seek for its origin in the Kiddush, or other theories ?

That the “Breaking of Bread” in the Acts of the Apostles may have been of the nature of a fellowship meal ; that the Agape of

1 Corinthians may have grown out of the Last Supper, seems to be quite consistent with the account of the Institution as given by St. Paul. But that our Lord and His disciples were accustomed to hold fellowship meals such as the Kiddushim is surely a pure hypothesis. Is there any such meal recorded in the Gospels?

Our Lord and His disciples, of course, had meals in common; it is an obvious deduction from the Gospel narrative, but that they were of a special religious character out of which the Eucharist took its origin is a conjecture, to my mind, quite unnecessary as an explanation, in face of St. Paul's words, "In the same night that He was betrayed The Lord Jesus took Bread. . . . Do this in Remembrance of me."

Why should not this statement be conclusive? It is the earliest account of the Last Supper we possess. The Epistle from which it comes was written about A.D. 58. It records the instruction on the subject given by the Apostle during his first visit to Corinth some six years earlier. Putting the date of the crucifixion at A.D. 30, less than twenty-five years had elapsed since St. Paul gave his account verbally to the Corinthians. How short a time this really is! How easy it is to remember important events less than twenty-five years ago! What time is there for an uncertain "tradition" to grow up? It is almost contemporary history that St. Paul gives us.

True, St. Paul was not present at the Last Supper, but he claims to have received his knowledge of what transpired "from the Lord," the most authentic source possible. "For I (emphatic) received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you." St. Paul claims to be in this respect, as in others, "in no way behind the very chiefest Apostles."

The Bishop of Truro's comment on this is "St. Paul himself had received *the tradition* which he believed *traceable* to the Lord Himself." Why a tradition? Why a "belief traceable"? To my mind it is an assertion the Apostle makes, a claim of supreme authority for his account of the Last Supper.

In a footnote the Bishop sees support for his view in the use of the preposition *apo* rather than *para*, and in the use of the verb *parelabon* which, he says, elsewhere is used of receiving instruction from a Christian Teacher. Let us examine these points a little more closely.

First in regard to *apo* not *para*. It may be said that *para* would more certainly have expressed *direct* reception from the Lord, though even this, as the invariable meaning of *para* has been questioned. But does *apo* exclude such reception? This preposition lays stress on the *source* of what we know, receive, possess, the point St. Paul is chiefly concerned with. Does it do more? Does it *exclude* direct transmission,—from the source to the recipient? What shall we say of 1 John i. 5. "And this is the message which we have heard of him"; (*ap' autou*); or of 1 John iii. 22: "Whatsoever we ask we receive of him" (*ap' autou*); or of Rom. i. 7. "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (*apo Theou tov patros hēmōn*). Surely here are direct receptions, without any suggestions of intermediaries.

And does *para* always imply direct reception? Bishop Lightfoot (Gal. i. 12) says, No. "It is true that while *apo* contemplates only the giver, *para* connects the giver with the receiver, denoting the passage from the one to the other, but the links of the chain between the two may be numerous, and in all cases where the idea of transmission is prominent *para* may be used in preference to *apo*, be the communication direct or indirect." He quotes Phil. iv. 18, "Having received of (*para*) Epaphroditus the things which came from you (*ta par' humōn*)." Thus, according to Lightfoot, if we had *para* in the text it would not in itself certainly have meant direct reception. But St. Paul is laying stress not so much on the transmission as on the source—that his statement to the Corinthians had the authority of the Lord Himself; and therefore he used *apo*.

In regard to the use of *parelabon*, which is also in the Bishop of Truro's note, Lightfoot says it may be used either (1) to receive as transmitted to oneself, 2 Thess. iii. 6, or (2) to receive so as to transmit to others. "In the latter sense it is used of the Apostles, *who receiving the Gospel directly from the Lord* passed it to others, 1 Cor. xi. 23, xv. 1, 3" (My italics). It would appear from this that Bishop Lightfoot understood by our passage that St. Paul, in some way not specified, owed his knowledge of the Institution, as he did the rest of his "Gospel," through a revelation from the Lord (*di' apokalup-seōs Iēsou Christou*), the sense for which the present writer is contending.

Many of the older commentators seem to have found no difficulty in so understanding the words. Thus Canon Evans, who was one of the foremost Greek scholars of his day, in the S.C. says, "Meyer here quite wrong . . . 'of' means 'straight from.'" He quotes with approval Olshausen, "This authentic narrative given by the Risen Christ, how calculated to shock into sobriety the frivolity of the Corinthian Agape."

The oldest account then, that we have of the Lord's Supper clearly states the dominical institution of the Eucharist, and also the command to repeat it. It is urged that the latter is not found in Mark, and therefore we must look upon it with suspicion or at least not build anything upon it; that the Eucharist grew out of Fellowship meals, or that, as a secondary theory, the ideal of commemorating Christ's death was brought in as an addition by St. Paul (see Brilioth, p. 7). But is omission prohibition? Mark's Gospel it is supposed owes much to the teaching of St. Peter. There were adherents, or at least professed followers, of St. Peter at Corinth. There were parties there not loyal to St. Paul. Would St. Paul have ventured to make assertions about the Last Supper which these parties could have easily contradicted had they conflicted with the account of St. Peter? The argument *a silentio* is a very unsafe one. That Mark does not fully record the words of the Lord is no proof that they were not spoken. We are surely entitled to rely on the earliest account, written when we know and by whom we know, quite as much as on a Gospel which bears in itself no name and is only attributed by tradition (however reliable we may believe it to be) to the companion of St. Peter.

The Bishop of Truro says that modern scholars on the whole are inclined to date the Crucifixion, on the authority of the Fourth Gospel,

as taking place on Nisan 14th, and that therefore the Last Supper was not the proper Passover Meal. Most modern scholars, I suppose, reject the Zebedean authorship, and place the date of the Fourth Gospel comparatively late. It would be interesting to know if these two classes more or less coincide. If they do the statements of a late and uncertain author are preferred to those of an earlier and fairly certain one. But do the statements in the Fourth Gospel contradict those of the Synoptists ?

This much debated question was exhaustively considered by the Rev. J. B. McClellan in his book on the Four Gospels published in 1875—a long while ago, it may be said. But have his arguments ever been answered ? The Rev. J. B. McClellan was a double first at Cambridge (Wrangler and First Class Class. Trip. 1858), Scholar, and later Fellow, of Trinity College. He shows, the present writer thinks convincingly, that the language of the Fourth Gospel, rightly understood, so far from being contradictory of the other Gospels, supports and confirms them. But this book seems to be little known, and it is now probably hard to obtain, except in libraries.

With all deference to the far wider reading and greater scholarship of the writers quoted it is suggested that much of what they have put forward is beside the mark. It is urged that we have in St. Paul a reliable account of the institution of the Eucharist derived from our Lord Himself, with a command to repeat it ; and a warrant for the use in it both of the Bread and of the Cup.

Since this paper was written the writer has met with Prof. Percy Gardiner's treatment of the phrase discussed. He appears to agree in general with the view advocated above, and in particular quotes Col. iii. 24 to show that *apo* can include direct transmission.

GUIDANCE FROM THE MOUNT. By J. B. Lancelot, M.A., Vicar of St. James', Birkdale, and Hon. Canon of Liverpool Cathedral. *The Church Book Room. 2s. net.*

Canon Lancelot's special gift of making practical application of the words of Scripture are well exemplified in this little volume in which he deals with the lessons of the Sermon on the Mount. After an introductory chapter explaining the scope and general purpose of the Sermon he goes on to consider the most important passages. A special section is given to the "Poor in Spirit," and then the other Beatitudes are considered. Their contrast with worldly maxims of prosperity are indicated. The place and position of Christian men in the world is set out in a chapter on "Salt and Light." Two sections are given to the contrast between "The Old Law and the New." After treating of "Rewards and Motives," attention is given to "Prayer and the Lord's Prayer," and the main points of our Lord's teaching and example are summarized. Man's Chief Good and the Golden Rule are fully explained. The final chapters deal with "Warnings and Admonitions," and "The Authority of Christ." Although the treatment of each section is naturally brief the book will be found most helpful and suggestive.