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A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

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THE  
CHURCHMAN

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SEPTEMBER, 1904.

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ART. I.—LOISY'S SYNTHESIS OF CHRISTIANITY.

V.

I NOW approach an issue in the two rival syntheses of Harnack and Loisy which is by no means so easily determined as the claim of Jesus when on earth to be Divine. The subject of this paper is the "kingdom of God," or "kingdom of heaven" as presented by the teaching of Jesus. In my second paper I showed how very differently this theme of our Lord's parables and discourses is treated by the two Professors. Harnack tells us that we are to get our ideas of the kingdom from the Saviour's parables, and he depicts it thus: "It is the rule of the holy God in the hearts of individuals: it is God Himself in His power." He goes on to say that amidst all the subsequent transmutations of Christianity this conception was "never quite lost," and that the kingdom has essentially a triple significance. "It is supernatural, not a product of ordinary life. It is a purely religious blessing, as the inner link between man and the Living God. It is the most important experience that a man can have, and permeates his whole existence."<sup>1</sup> Loisy, on the other hand, presents the kingdom in its social aspect. For him, "l'idée du royaume céleste n'est donc pas autre chose qu'une grande espérance." It is a "conception eschatologique," to be realized more and more by objective agencies;<sup>2</sup> and "l'idée du royaume renfermait le germe de l'Église." "Selon la rigueur des termes l'Église n'est pas plus le royaume des cieux que ne l'était l'Évangile, mais l'Évangile et l'Église sont dans un rapport identique avec le royaume."<sup>3</sup> The Church

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<sup>1</sup> Harnack, "Das Wesen," etc., chap. iii.

<sup>2</sup> "L'Év. et l'Égl.," pp. 41-49.

<sup>3</sup> "Autour," etc., p. 159.

continues the Gospel, holding out before men the same ideal of righteousness to be realized for the accomplishment of the same ideal of happiness. This interpretation leads up to what is really an identification of "l'Église" with the Roman Church exclusively. Broadly, Harnack's readers would understand that this "kingdom of God" is to be realized by an inner experience of the individual soul; Loisy's, that it can only be appreciated through the agencies of a close society.

The divergence of thought is of ancient date. In some sort these two critics revive the controversy of the Donatists and Augustine, and one is struck by the omission on Loisy's part of the parables to which the Carthaginian Father made his appeal—those of the tares and the wheat, and of the net with bad fish mingled with the good. For it is, I think, obvious that these parables do contemplate a federation of Christian disciples. So far they tell against Harnack's limited ideal of a purely individualistic Christianity, even as they told against the Donatist theory of a Church on earth purified from all corruptions and retaining no unworthy members.

But the controversy really hinges on the question whether we may not interpret Christianity not only by the light of the Synoptic Gospels, but by that of the Acts and the Epistles. Christians generally do this. It is a pity that Loisy did not boldly adopt this course against Harnack, and instead of needlessly questioning the authenticity of certain Gospel texts, confront his adversary's impugner of the genuineness and authenticity of the Acts of the Apostles. The "fait chrétien" is, we must admit, so far on the Abbé's side. Loisy's emphasis on the social aspects of the kingdom may be unwarrantably strained, and his delimitation of them by an assumption of Roman hegemony is, of course, contradicted not only by primitive history, but by the actual condition of Christendom. Yet for all Christians, except some very insignificant sects, there is some appreciation of the federation depicted in the Acts, as a matter included in the idea of their religion. Most, in fact, would say that while Harnack's Christianity might serve the purpose of a hermit or a shipwrecked mariner, such cases are the exception and not the rule, and that the establishment of the Christian principle in the human society must necessarily be regulated by the ordinary conditions of human life.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Harnack's opinion, "History of Dogma," vol. ii., chap. ii., is that the Acts is a "late book," which had been, till Irenæus' times, only "in private use," and then became "the central structure of an edifice otherwise possessed of but two wings." Of course, the date of the Acts is a question inextricably connected with that of the third Gospel. On this I have treated in former numbers of the *Churchman*. I must assume here

But first let us survey these teachings of the kingdom in the Saviour's parables. By anyone who has not a theory to press, or a license to suspect as spurious such Scriptural passages as he does not sympathize with, I imagine they will be found to include both the interpretations involved in the professorial controversy. It is simply the old case of the wrangle about the quarterings on two opposite sides of the shield. The very power of the Gospel consists in its presenting many facets. Christ's parables especially are of many-sided character. They indicate various traits in a system which, if as yet independent of ecclesiastical organization, by no means on that account excludes it. They are professedly proleptic in their trend, and the future disciple is to find in them things new as well as old. It is consistent that such discourses should present the kingdom in varying, almost conflicting aspects. The majority emphasize the individual relations of the soul to the God revealed by Christ. Yet here and there we catch glimpses of the social relations of Christianity, and we may say that the setting of the Gospel is the Church. It is perhaps thus when the kingdom, by appropriation of an old prophetic figure (*cf.* Dan. iv. 10-12; Ezek. xxxi. 3-9), is likened to the "great tree," on the branches of which the fowls of the air can lodge, this same tree springing from the smallest and most insignificant of seed. It may be so possibly in the simile of the leaven quickly permeating the whole lump of dough and giving it a certain peculiar character, though here it must be recognised that the individual application is primary, the social only secondary. The reference to the Church is, at any rate, undeniable in the two parables cited above, where we read of a field in which are noxious weeds as well as wheat, a net in whose meshes are many fish unserviceable for food.

In these two parables we see that objective or social side of the kingdom which we connect with our belief in a "universal Church." On the other hand, that there is no virtue proceeding mechanically from the social relationship is plain enough. Indeed, the figures themselves prohibit such an idea. We see at once that the field or the net do not of themselves insure the purposes of the Gospel *ex opere operato*, and that there are potentialities beyond. These two parables are thus in strict harmony with that of the Sower, where the crop is dependent on the character of the soil and on the care spent in preparing and cleaning it.

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that the book is written throughout by Luke, the companion of Paul, and refer those who demand evidences to the commentaries and Biblical dictionaries.

Further, there are parables and sayings which sufficiently express what this potentiality is. They tell of active forces which are as yet almost devoid of social setting, and might, if the New Testament only included the Synoptic Gospels, be regarded as so working to all future time. The conclusion is thus forced on us that the power of the Saviour's religion is centred, not in any association *per se*, but in its author, and that, however useful the association may be as a secondary agency, the first condition for realizing the kingdom is to realize the kingdom's Lord.

Thus, Matt. xii. 30 speaks of the powers of the kingdom already demonstrated at a time when there was certainly no delimited company of believers. That the forces of evil are already overthrown in human hearts is a clear sign that "the kingdom of God" is already "come unto you." The "kingdom" is here clearly the spiritual sway of that Christ who is elsewhere entitled the King. There are no social agencies concerned. It denotes evidently a personal realization of the Saviour, and nothing more. There is, of course, no reason to doubt this saying of Jesus; indeed, it is just the sort of teaching that later and more organized Christianity would never have invented. I say this because Loisy suggests that "cette assertion pourrait appartenir à une couche secondaire de la tradition évangélique." He adds, however: "Supposé qu'elle vienne de Jésus, elle présenterait le royaume réalisé dans son commencement,"<sup>1</sup> which is all I contend for.

An equally telling proof that this potentiality may work independently of the society is to be found, as Harnack recognises, in Luke xvii. 20, 21. The "kingdom" is here said distinctly *not* to be itself a visible organization, provoking men's attention, but a secretly working force. It "cometh not with observation; neither shall men say 'lo here' or 'lo there,' for behold the kingdom of God is within you" (or "in the midst of you"). Again Loisy fences vainly with the passage, and casts most unwarrantable aspersions on its genuineness as a saying of Christ.<sup>2</sup> "Cette déclaration ne se lit pas que dans Luc." "Il y a beaucoup de chance . . . que la parole citée vienne de Luc ou de sa tradition particulière." The Saviour could not be holding out a conception of a spiritual kingdom to His hearers, for they were Pharisees, and "ces pharisiens ne croient pas à l'Évangile, et n'ont point de part au royaume." As an eschatological prophecy follows, it is most probable that "le rédacteur" only meant to make Jesus say "que le royaume surviendra

<sup>1</sup> "L'Év. et l'Égl.," pp. 43, 44.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54-56.

sans qu'on s'y attende, et sans qu'on ait le temps d'annoncer qu'il est apparu en tel ou tel endroit."<sup>1</sup>

"On serait fort embarrassé de prouver par des textes authentiques et clairs que le royaume, don surnaturel, est un bien purement religieux, l'union avec le Dieu vivant, et l'expérience capitale d'un homme." So says Loisy in his insistence on the social aspect of the kingdom, and the delimitations evidenced by such external organization as the choice of twelve Apostles. Yet when we turn from parables to other teachings we have clear proof to the contrary: "Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is [not shall be] the kingdom of heaven." Thus the note of discipleship is set at the beginning of the Ministry. Later on we have these words addressed to the Apostles themselves: "Except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven." Men, therefore, might be even in the inner circle of discipleship, and yet have never realized the potentiality of the kingdom. Of this Judas Iscariot, of course, furnishes an illustration. Was Judas from our Saviour's point of view ever one of the "children of the kingdom"? Was he ever as near affiliation as that unattached questioner who, because he had realized the binding force of the two great commandments, was told, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God."

It would seem, indeed, as if the Saviour was at pains to warn men against this confusion of "un bien purement religieux, l'union avec le Dieu vivant," with mere federation in a visible society. This was precisely the mistake of the contemporary Jews; and the very term "kingdom" takes one to current Jewish terminology, and to crude material ideas of glory accruing to Israel as a sacred community apart from spiritual qualifications. When, therefore, the charity and faith of the centurion indicate him as a true disciple, our Lord contrasts him with those who, relying on ecclesiastical privilege, called themselves the "children of the kingdom" (Matt. viii. 10-12). The very error of the Jews was this

<sup>1</sup> The answer to such criticisms is that we have no right to read as future what our Lord clearly puts in the present. That the kingdom is being manifested *now* is plain from the next verse, "The days will come when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man and shall not see it." Some of the Pharisees did believe, and the "you" may only indicate Christ's hearers generally. That the phrase *ἐν μέσῳ ὑμῶν* really = "in animis vestris" is clear from the context. As for the attempt to impugn the genuineness of the passage the reader may be reminded that by the same reasoning we should say that the parables of the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son are the creations "de Luc ou de sa tradition particulière."

limitation of a term to which Christ gave a sense ethical and spiritual. How utterly independent this "kingdom" might be of ecclesiastical privileges—even of a knowledge of Him who is its Lord—is shown in two utterances, of which Loisy can hardly doubt the authenticity. Many, Christ says distinctly, shall claim to have prophesied and done wonderful works in His Name, and yet shall be found to have missed the essentials of the kingdom: "And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, all ye workers of iniquity." On the other hand, a loving, merciful disposition itself attaches men to the kingdom, and insures its final rewards. For in an eschatological discourse,<sup>1</sup> which has too frequently been overlooked by theologians, Christ plainly teaches that it is this ethical trait which determines the final separation of the saved from the lost. All mankind are arraigned before the Son of man as Judge. The standard for acceptance is not any enrolment in a visible religious body, but a personal compliance with ethical laws, written, as St. Paul tells us,<sup>2</sup> sufficiently plainly in the human conscience. We have still the familiar Jewish imagery: the King and the "kingdom prepared from the foundations of the world." But whatever is vague or figurative in the parables is sunk here in the light of most distinct legislative pronouncement: "Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me."

I have dealt thus exhaustively with Loisy's exposition of the "kingdom," rather with the view of showing how he has failed to realize the enlarged significance which Jesus gave to a familiar Jewish conception, than because I sympathize with his adversary Harnack. Both critics appear to me to miss the essential truth that the "kingdom" as expounded by Christ itself connoted *the King*, and that all His teachings lead up to those final scenes where He, who has claimed sway over the consciences of men, determines all human destinies as the Divine Judge. I have treated in my former papers of these personal claims to the Divine attributes. Just as we read into all the parables the Personality of the Teacher, they fall into line in subordination to a profounder central truth. Just as we exclude it, they seem to strike discordant notes, and we are involved in endless "logomachy," dissociation of the "subjective" and "objective," and arbitrary pronouncements about what "le rédacteur" added from his own resources to the Saviour's words.

But we have still to consider the relations of the individual to the society in this Gospel of "the kingdom of God."

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxxv. 31-46.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. ii. 14, 15.

The Gospels are not the whole story of the establishment of the faith; nor can parables and discourses be regarded apart from the Saviour's own acts of appointment. Side by side with this ideal of a spiritual kingdom we have to place all that Christ Himself set up in the way of objective institution. We must add, too, that stratum of Scripture testimony in which is portrayed the life of a society claiming to have received from Him the power of the Holy Spirit. Extending our gaze in this way, we find the ideal of the "kingdom," even from the first, including the germs of new social relations among those who have realized its essential significance. It takes in external agencies, not, of course, as an alternative to subjective realization, but as means to free this from the dangers of a self-absorbed pietism, and to communicate its blessings with greater facility. All this is quite ignored in the jejune synthesis of Harnack's "Wesen des Christentums."

Thus, first, there is the use not only of private, but united, prayer. From Christ attaching His special blessing to the occasions when but two or three were gathered together in His Name, we can trace on that idea of Christian federation which, in the Acts, is called *κοινωνία*, or "fellowship." It is the kingdom realized thus socially that Jesus calls His *ἐκκλησία* in Matt. xvi. It will be based, He says, on the recognition of His Divinity, and contain in itself the forms of perpetual life; and its ethical power is to be the proof of continual Divine inspirations. Though the great starting-point of this social life is the Pentecostal illumination of Acts ii., this Church exists in embryo ere our Saviour leaves the world. Baptism—its future external rite of initiation—marks the Saviour's followers quite early in the Ministry.<sup>1</sup> It is borrowed from Jewish practice, but in its potentiality it connotes new and higher teachings. A Nicodemus, who limits himself to admiration of Christ's preternatural powers, has to be told of the need of a regenerate heart and its close connection with this symbolic Baptism which is being administered by Christ's leading disciples. The passage, of course, attaches no mechanical virtue to Baptism, but it plainly invests the rite with the most hallowed associations. Baptism even thus early speaks to the believer as in a parable of the cleansing influence of the Divine Christ on the life, just as afterwards the Eucharist attests the truth that He is

<sup>1</sup> I assume here that John iii. is historical, and that John iv. 1, 2 has the meaning ordinarily given. Loisy, however, supposes that Christian baptism was not instituted before our Saviour's death, and remarks: "C'est peut-être par une sorte d'anticipation que le quatrième Évangile montre le baptême chrétien en vigueur pendant le ministère du Sauveur."—"Autour," etc., p. 239.



the food of the human spirit. The rite itself, moreover, connotes Christian federation. Nowhere do we hear of a believer baptizing himself.

Equally obvious is the social character of the Eucharist, an adaptation of a Jewish rite, in which the head of each household acts in an official capacity. It is plain that there will be a president at each Eucharistic gathering, and this itself will necessitate an official organization. The life of numerous Christian societies will have to be provided for as well as that of the individual Christian pietist.

On the other hand, the powers of this kingdom are in no way confined to officials. They are but representatives of a society which has received peculiar promises of blessing. There is no preference in the manifestations of the Resurrection for the eleven as distinguished from other believers. Nor can we connect the commission of remitting and retaining sins in John xx. with any idea of a "collège des Apôtres," since neither inclusively nor exclusively does the gathering in the upper room suggest the eleven Apostles. The commission is primarily the charter of the Christian society; it is that of Apostles or future clergy only as its representative officials.

There is, indeed, evidence at the beginning of the Acts of Peter maintaining the prominence familiar in the Gospel story, and the election of a twelfth Apostle to be a witness of the Resurrection, and to take the Ministry and Apostleship from which Judas fell, might lead us to expect a permanent retention of the actual organization adopted by Jesus; but the intention, if it existed, is altered by circumstances. It is plain, as we proceed with the story, that the primitive lines were broken up by the special consecration of Paul and by the unfettered grant of prophetic charismata.<sup>1</sup> Nor is there any inconsistency in such a narration. The Book of the Acts is professedly an account of Christianity developed by something more than memories of the Saviour. It describes a period of fresh revelations, which are recognised as fulfilling the promise of the Holy Spirit's guidance, and as supplementing the teachings of the Saviour's Ministry. It is a form of inspiration peculiar to the first age. The miraculous powers of which we read in the Acts apparently did not survive the sub-Apostolic period. Even at the time when the "Didaché" is written, prophetic gifts have been so abused as to be open to suspicion, and the writer presses the necessity of caution in recognising professed "prophets" and "apostles" (= mis-

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<sup>1</sup> St. Paul himself is confirmed by an ordinary disciple (Acts ix. 12, 17), and he and Barnabas are ordained for their missionary work by "prophets and teachers" (*Ibid.*, xiii. 8).

sioner-preachers), and the duty of acknowledging God's ordering in the less pretentious fixed organization of "bishops and deacons."<sup>1</sup>

The subject of the "Acts," then, is broadly the life of the Christian society as developed by special revelations of the Holy Spirit. On the one hand, it takes us far beyond Harnack's conception of individualistic Christianity. On the other, it has passages which one finds it hard to reconcile even with the second-century ideal of organized ecclesiasticism,<sup>2</sup> and this feature of itself attests the authenticity of the book. Reading the Acts side by side with the Epistles, we may, I think, find material for an answer to the question, "What is Christianity?" which, if not in harmony with either Loisy's or Harnack's, is in no way at variance with Christ's own portraiture in the parables of the kingdom, and seems to combine sufficiently the individualistic and social elements of our religion.

There is first a distinct recognition of a Christian fellowship permeating each society and connecting each with all, albeit admitting considerable divergence of the Gentile from the Judæo-Christian use in minor matters. Everywhere there is baptism recognised as the means of entrance into the Christian society. Everywhere there is the sacred rite of breaking of bread, and the observance of the Lord's Day in honour of the Saviour's Resurrection. There is everywhere the association of the charismata of the Holy Spirit with obsignatory rites such as the laying-on of hands, for completing the initiatory baptism, or for special ministerial appointment. Although the Churches are mutually independent, a realization of common brotherhood promotes sympathy and active charity, so that the richer societies are found subscribing for the maintenance of the poorer. The Acts thus portray a federative system, illustrating Paul's own parable of the body and the members—a parable hard to reconcile with Harnack's conception of Christianity as an individualistic religion.

On the other hand, there are in this book striking indications of the elasticity of the modes in which the permanent ordinances of Christianity are presented. The ideas of federation and unity do not exclude considerable individualism on the part of leading teachers and inspired men. Peter himself, instead of maintaining a permanent hegemony as we might expect, is evidently eclipsed in influence by the more cultured and peculiarly inspired Paul. It is on constitutional principles that the Church is governed, and whatever autocratic elements are at first discernible are soon effaced by a

<sup>1</sup> "Didaché," chaps. xi. and xv.

<sup>2</sup> *E.g.*, Acts xv. 20, xviii. 25, xix. 2, 3.

larger experience of the Holy Spirit's guidance. Thus, when Paul and Barnabas submit the question of compulsory circumcision to the "apostles" at Jerusalem, it is as to freely-chosen arbiters, and the presbyters there act conjointly with the Apostles in giving judgment. It is observable, too, that James takes the leading part, not Peter. Indeed, on an earlier occasion there has been an investigation on the part of this Church into Peter's own conduct in admitting the uncircumcised Cornelius, and the "brethren" are similarly associated with the Apostles in this inquiry. It is impossible to recognise in this freer and adaptive Christianity either Loisy's ideal "prince des apôtres" or his "collège des apôtres," and Luke's testimony on these points is of course confirmed by the evidence of Paul's Epistles.

It is easy, too, to find instances of the adaptation to circumstances by tacit consent, and quite independently of authority, even in important matters. The early rule that the Gentile converts are to eat "*kosher*" food like the Jews vanishes quite unexplainably. There is evidently the widest variation as to observance of the Jewish Sabbath, and we know that, despite Paul's protests against Judaizing, the seventh day was honoured either as a fast or a feast in most quarters to post-Nicene times. There is at first a universal commemoration of the Lord's Supper at night, and we have to conjecture why it is that in Pliny's time it has evidently been transferred to the early morning. The form of government is at first that of the Jewish synagogue, with its presbyters or associated overseers, and it is long, as Loisy sees, before their rights and powers are everywhere merged in the monarchical overseer or Bishop.<sup>1</sup>

As far as organization is concerned, the point of view of these first times is certainly somewhat different from that assumed at the end of the second century, when Christendom had been constrained by heresies within and persecution without to adopt a more elaborate official system providing for the unity and cohesion of the communities. As yet we are taken no further than an ideal of a single spiritual community on earth, itself appropriated from the Old Testament, and expressed by St. Paul in such phrases as "the bride of Christ," "the Israel of God." But the account of the development and materializing of this ideal and of its relation to Papal pretensions must be left for another paper. I conclude with two remarks on the story of the kingdom of God so far as we have traced it:

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<sup>1</sup> Bingham, "Antiquities," p. 1137 *et seq.*

1. I have noticed the elasticity which thus early effects changes automatically and silently even in the central Christian institutions. It is a fair inference that this age realized that these were in all cases a means and not an end, and that it was to lead men's souls to inward realization of Christ that they had been provided. It is plain that their efficacy is not mechanical *ex opere operato*. We seem to learn, too, that they may be continually modified, according to the Church's needs in various climes and ages, without affront to the Church's Head. Our survey of the Acts, in fact, repeats the teaching we get from the Gospel story—viz., that it is Christ Himself, and not a systematized Christianity, that is intended to occupy the central place in our religious conceptions.

2. While the value of all the institutions of the Christian society lies in their association with doctrinal or ethical truths, and they can claim no mechanical efficacy of their own, none the less is it plain that the Christian may claim to find in them a special blessing as appointed means of realizing the "kingdom of heaven." The accidental abuses of later times are not to debar us from a recognition of their inherent value. There is no *a priori* assumption that their influence will clash with the subjective principle emphasized by Harnack. We may still regard them as did the first generation of Christians, as obnoxious of those blessings of which Christ spoke. The only caveat is that they must always be set in connection with will and effort of our own. Their value will, of course, be affected by our ability to link our own faith with that of the Apostolic age; and it is in this view that the Christian bodies that can claim historical continuity have the advantage of those that have originated by way of schism or violent disruption. But even to the latter they may speak continually as suggestive of the works which the Holy Spirit enabled the age of Pentecostal illumination to achieve. They are designed to assure all Christians that, though miracles may cease, that Spirit still offers His assistance to the followers of Christ, and that, however much the conditions of the world may change, the Saviour's promises remain the same.

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