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THE EARLY CHURCH

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BY

ROBERT F. HORTON, M.A., D.D.

FORMERLY FELLOW OF NEW COLLEGE, OXFORD

LONDON

T. C. & E. C. JACK

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THE EARLY CHURCH

CHAPTER I

THE WORD "CHURCH" IN THE GOSPELS

§ 1. WHEN the word "church," or in Greek, "ecclesia," first meets us in the New Testament, it is already a Biblical word with an established meaning. Naturally we read into the word all the associations which have gathered round it in the course of the Christian centuries; and it is quite legitimate to do so, for the oak is implicit in the acorn. But it is well, before reading into the word what the future elicited from it, to grasp firmly what the past had contributed to it.

If our first Gospel is correct in saying that Jesus Himself used the word—and some doubt rests on it, because it is not confirmed by the other three Gospels—it is more than likely that the word He used was not the Greek "ecclesia," but the Aramaic equivalent. We must trace the word in the Old Testament writings; and remembering how familiar He was with them, we obtain the first light on what He meant when He said: "On

this rock will I build my church" (Matt. xvi. 18), or "If he refuse to hear the church also, let him be unto thee as the Gentile" (Matt. xviii. 17). We must not read back into the word what has grown out of it, until we are sure that we find in it what He found. For in this as in other matters the corruptions of the present are corrected by referring to the past. The connection of the word with the Old Testament, lost to the English reader, is recovered by the reader of the Greek Bible. The word "ecclesia" which occurs in the New Testament one hundred and fifteen times, occurs in the Greek Old Testament (LXX) seventy-six times, or in some readings seventy-seven; and if we may add the twenty times of the Apocrypha, we may say that the increased use of the word "ecclesia" in the New Testament, as compared with the Old, is represented by the proportion of a hundred and fifteen to ninety-seven. When Jesus, therefore, or if Jesus, used the word, in Greek or Aramaic, speaking to a Palestinian audience, familiar with the Old Testament, He conveyed, and must have intended to convey, a meaning which was already settled by ancient usage.

In the LXX the Greek word "ecclesia" is used to translate a Hebrew word, which by an odd accident is very similar in sound, *qahal*. In the vast majority of instances it is *qahal* itself which lies behind the Greek; in five cases it is a modification of the Hebrew word; and in one case, I. *Chron.* xxviii. 2, the LXX say that David stood up in the midst of the "ecclesia," though the Hebrew has no equivalent expression at all. The Hebrew *qahal* is commonly rendered "congregation." It is the

general assembly of Israel, as it was gathered by Moses or Solomon or Ezra, the whole community of the Lord's people in the Theocracy.

Now, to put the English reader into possession of the Old Testament presuppositions of the New Testament word "ecclesia" or church, a careful study of the ninety-seven passages in which "ecclesia" occurs would be necessary. To render this study possible we may point out in the English Bible where the Greek word is latent.

The earliest instance is peculiarly interesting for this reason: we shall have to trace the connection between the Early Church and the Jewish synagogue; and the first time that the word "ecclesia" occurs in the Bible it is actually joined with the word "synagogue"; for *Lev.* viii. 3 reads in the Greek, "Assemble thou all the synagogue of the ecclesia." That is the designation of the congregation of Israel gathered at the door of the tent of meeting. The next occurrence of the word which we should notice is in I. *Sam.* xix. 20, where the "ecclesia" is not the whole assembly of Israel, but the company of prophets prophesying. Thus early in the Bible is the suggestion of that church assembly which is depicted in the first *Epistle to the Corinthians.* A third instance presents the church as a worshipping congregation. This is *Psalm* xxvi. 12, with *Psalm* lxviii. 26: "In the congregations (churches) will I bless the Lord," and "Bless ye God in the congregations."

In *Deuteronomy* and *Joshua* the *qahal* or "ecclesia" is sometimes the assembly gathered together to hear the word of the Lord (Deut. xviii. 16, xxxi. 30; Joshua viii. 35),

sometimes the whole community of Israel, conceived as a church-nation (Deut. xxiii. 1, 2, 3, 8).

In *Judges*, in accordance with the disturbed times which the book describes, the assembly is a church-militant, the "ecclesia" is the muster of the folk for battle (Judges xx. 2, xxi. 5, 8). It is the same in I. *Sam.* xvii. 47, where David wins his victory over Goliath in the presence of the "ecclesia."—In the peaceful times of Solomon the church is again the worshipping assembly, dedicating the new house of prayer (I. Kings viii. 14, 22, 55, 65), though in the break-up of the congregation (ver. 65) the "ecclesia" continues to be the whole community of the Lord's people.

In the *Book of Chronicles*, the book which represents the later usages of the Jewish Church, the word "ecclesia" is of very frequent occurrence. In fact, forty out of the seventy-seven instances are found in *Chronicles* and the connected works, *Ezra* and *Nehemiah*. Here we are to think of the whole assembly of Israel, ideally conceived as a church under the presidency of David, or under the anxious leadership of the men of the restoration, Ezra and Nehemiah. The church is assembled to bring back the ark (I. Chron. xiii. 2, 4), or to receive the last charge of David (I. Chron. xxviii. 8) and to worship with him before he departs (xxix. 1, 10, 20). Again it assembles to establish Solomon (II. Chron. i. 3, 5), and as in the older narrative of I. *Kings*, to dedicate the Temple and to receive the blessing of the pious king (II. Chron. vi. 3, 12, 13); breaking up as a church assembly only to continue as a church-nation (vii. 8). The church

under Jehoshaphat is again in arms (II. Chron. xx. 5, 15), and under the guidance of the priest Jehoiada it acts as a political assembly (xxiii. 3). In chap. xxviii. 14, it is the church-state. In chap. xxix. 23, 28, 31, 32, under Hezekiah it is engaged in the acts of the cultus. Again, in chap. xxx., as a church it ordains the passover (vers. 2, 4), and as a nation it keeps it (vers. 13, 17) and prolongs it (vers. 23, 24, 25). In verse 28 the church of Israel is distinguished from the church of Judah, but the church is one. The minished church of the return from exile is 42,360 (Ezra ii. 64; Neh. vii. 66). It is penitent (x. 1.), the church of the captivity (x. 8) bent on reform (x. 12, 14). It responds to its leader and teacher (Neh. v. 13). It is the disciplinary authority (Neh. v. 7). It assembles to hear the law (viii. 5, 18); in this chapter the LXX translate "people" by "church," and also "solemn assembly." In chap. xiii. 1, the assembly is again the church-nation.

In the poetical and wisdom literature the "ecclesia" is several times mentioned. Job stands up in the assembly and cries for help (Job xxx. 28). In *Proverbs* the assembly is the church of warning and exhortation (Prov. v. 14). The psalmists are always thinking of the church praising the Lord (xxii. 23, 25; xxxv. 18; xl. 10; lxxxix. 5; cvii. 32; cxlix. 1); but there is a congregation of the wicked too, which is described as an "ecclesia" (xxvi. 5).

In *Lam.* i. 10, the church is the chosen people.

The prophets rarely mention the "ecclesia" (Joel ii. 16; Micah ii. 5). Ezekiel only uses the word in a strained, metaphorical sense, "a company ('ecclesia') of

many peoples." In *Jer.* xxxi. 8, some readings render "company" by "ecclesia."

To these Old Testament instances we should add the twenty which occur in the Apocrypha; these are the more interesting because the Apocrypha stand in point of time between the Old Testament and the New, and often help us to trace the modifications of meaning which words underwent in the interval. In *Judith* the "ecclesia" is the assembly of all Israel (vi. 22, vii. 29, xiv. 6). In *Ecclesiasticus* the church is generally the assembly of Israel (xv. 5, xxiii. 24), as the disciplinary authority (xxiv. 2), as the company of worshippers (xxxi. 11, xxxiii. 18, xxxviii. 33, xxxix. 10, xliv. 15, l. 13, 20), but once it is the congregation of wicked men (xxi. 9). Finally, in I. *Macc.* the church is the ancient congregation of Israel (ii. 56), or the assembly in Maccabean times (iv. 59, v. 16, xiv. 19), or in one instance a special band of the faithful (iii. 13). Thus the last occasion of the use of "ecclesia" in the older writings is very significant. An echo is borne across the gulf which lies in darkness between the Old Testament and the New, words beautiful in themselves, destined to receive a richer and deeper meaning, "ecclesia of faithful men," the Church of Believers, not a general and mixed assembly, but, according to the Article of the Church of England, "a church is a congregation of faithful men."

It will be seen, then, that if Jesus used the word *qahal*, or "ecclesia," He had before His mind a definite idea, established in the usage of Scripture; whatever addition or modification He intended to give to the

word in the development of His own institutions, the word brought with it a meaning which must remain. An "ecclesia" was a chosen people, a community of those who believed in God, that people of Israel who were called out of Egypt and established in Canaan, to be the servants and witnesses of a revealed religion. Viewed in the broadest possible way the whole nation, men, women, and children, constituted this congregation. Just as, in Greek politics, the "ecclesia" of a city like Athens was the sovereign assembly, the whole body of free citizens called together to legislate or to determine the policy of the state, so the "ecclesia" of Israel was the whole people, under the rule of their God, guided by His servants the prophets, the judges, the kings, the lawyers; for it must be remembered that the Church of Israel was the same in idea when Moses was forming the earliest constitution, when Joshua was establishing it in the Holy Land, when judges like Jephthah or Gideon were rallying the forces for defence, when a prophet like Samuel or a king like David directed the government, when it was in exile, instructed by Ezekiel and Jeremiah, or when, restored to Jerusalem, it worshipped in a rebuilt temple under Ezra the scribe. The forms varied with the ages, with the sins, with the discipline, of time, but the church was always the same.

But while in the broadest sense the church and the nation were identical, there was an assembly for specific purposes which represented the nation. That *qahal* or "ecclesia" was most characteristically employed, when it was worshipping. Praise, sacrifice, the joy of

the great festivals, the dedication of a temple, the confession of sin, the protest of penitence and amendment, were the true notes and occupations of the church. The ritual connected with the Tabernacle or the Temple, the choric songs represented in the Psalter, all the solemn observances of religion illustrated its inner meaning. But the assembly had also judicial and disciplinary functions. Guilty people were brought before it and judged; punishment was administered; expulsion from the congregation was a penalty, equal to death. The assembly was charged with administering the theocracy. It secured the purity of the worship, and restrained the excesses of individuals. So far as the Law was written it preserved the Code; so far as it was customary or traditional, it applied the principles to new cases.

It does not appear how the Assembly which represented the whole nation was constituted. Ideally there was no distinction between assembly and people: the same term, congregation or church, is applied to both. It is assumed that the assembly is the people. In the service of God, or in the administration of law, or in the determination of policy, the nation acts through the assembly. This was the *qahal*, the "ecclesia," the church, with which Jesus was familiar.

§ 2. But now, before we go further, it is necessary to face the question, whether we have any authentic evidence that our Lord employed the word "church" at all. Where a narrative is common to two or three of the Gospels, and the several accounts run very closely together, the intrusion of a singular episode or element in one cannot but have the appearance of a later

interpolation, unless there can be found independent evidence or probability to confirm it. Now the passage (Matt. xvi. 17–19) in which the word "church" occurs in the mouth of Jesus, is just one of those passages which, when the narratives are placed in parallel columns, seem like interpolations. Take Dr. Wright's "Synopsis of the Gospels in Greek," p. 80; here is what he calls the Marcan Cycle, that main body of the Gospel story, which is commonly thought to be nearest its original form in *Mark*, but which appears, with slight modifications in *Matthew* and in *Luke*.

Looking at the parallel columns you see that Peter's confession is given, with very slight alterations, as if from a sure and established tradition, the same in the three Gospels (Matt. xvi. 13–16; Mark viii. 27–29; Luke ix. 18–20). All the three also pass on at once to the first prediction of the Passion (Matt. xvi. 21; Mark viii. 31; Luke ix. 22). All three close the story of the confession with the injunction of silence (Matt. xvi. 20; Mark viii. 30; Luke ix. 21). But now Matthew, between the confession and the injunction, inserts the words: "And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (vers. 17–19).

Whence did the Evangelist derive these words? Why does Mark omit them? If, as is now commonly supposed, Mark's Gospel is the record of Peter's preaching, how comes it that Peter passed over words which had for him so vast a personal significance?—Why does Luke, who had before him a great variety of Gospel narratives, and had traced the course of all things accurately from the first, in order to establish the certainty of Christian teaching (Luke i. 1–5), omit this saying of Jesus which, if it had been uttered by Him, would have been fundamental and vital? And even John adds to the doubt, for though he does not give the precise narrative of the confession which occurs in the Synoptics, he also gives a confession of Peter, which is very similar to the one which they record. In *John* vi. 67–68, Peter says: "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we have believed and know that thou art the Holy One of God"—Jesus makes a suitable answer to this confession, but says nothing about the church or the rock. As this is evidently John's version of the Confession which was the starting-point, the foundation-stone, of the church; and as it is generally assumed that the fourth evangelist was familiar with the other three; we can only conclude that John deliberately omitted the remarkable words addressed to Peter. He could hardly, therefore, have attributed to them a fundamental importance.

The other writers of the New Testament seem to be equally ignorant of the passage. If the writer of the *Epistle to the Ephesians* had known it, he would have said that the church was built upon Peter; what he

actually says is, "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner-stone" (Eph. ii. 20). And if the writer of I. *Peter* had known it, he would hardly have written I. *Pet.* ii. 4–8, making Christ Himself the living stone, on which Christians are built up, as living stones, a spiritual house, a holy priesthood.

The passage, then, in *Matt.* xvi. 17–19, must lie under the strong suspicion of representing not the actual words of Jesus, but the idea which was attributed to Him by His first followers.

At the same time it must be remembered that the Gospel was written about A.D. 65–75, and there is not the least ground for regarding the passage as an interpolation of a subsequent hand. It represents, therefore, what was believed to be the thought of Jesus in the first generation after His death. By that time the word "ecclesia" was in current use, as we know from St. Paul's letters, *Hebrews*, *James*, *John*, *Acts*, *Revelation*. And Mr. Allen in the International Critical Commentary on St. Matthew justly says: "There is no difficulty at all in supposing that Christ used some Aramaic phrase or word which would signify the community or society of His disciples, knit together by their belief in His Divine Sonship, and pledged to the work of propagating His teaching" (p. 176).[1]

[1] The same writer says elsewhere (p. lxxxv): "The 'Church' may well be the Palestinian community of Jewish Christian disciples of Christ in the middle of the century, and the prominence given to St. Peter probably reflects his position in the Palestinian Church during that period. If we regard the writer of the Gospel

It will be seen, therefore, that in an attempt to study the Early Church it is very necessary to understand this famous passage, and if, in the silence of the other evangelists, we cannot be sure that Jesus used the word "ecclesia," or that we have the exact words which He addressed to Peter, we at least find here what the church itself in the very earliest times understood to be her Lord's intention. So much has been elicited from, or read into, these words, that it requires some effort to understand them in precisely the sense they bore, when the Temple at Jerusalem was in ashes, and the old Community of Israel was broken up, and apparently annihilated.

§ 3. The church which Jesus had in view would necessarily be that of the Old Testament, with the significant alteration "my." The idea was familiar to His hearers, the congregation of Israel, assembled now for worship, now for the exercise of judgment and discipline, now for government, now for war. This Church of the Old Testament was the model, the people of the Lord, existing in the world as the scene and centre of the Lord's self-manifestation and as the agent of His will. But the church of Jesus was not to be identical with the older church. He intends to build *His* church, and there is a new beginning, a new foundation. He had not come

as a Jewish Christian, and do not read into his record of Christ's words ideas which the later Church quite naturally found there in the light of the development of Christianity, there seems no reason to suppose that he may not have written his book within the period 65-75 A.D."

to destroy; He never abolished Judaism; His new building would only rise when the old, by other hands, was destroyed.

With the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 the Jewish Church ceased. The Temple was razed to the ground, not one stone remained on another. All the ordinances of the Jewish Church had, since Deuteronomic times, centred in the one sanctuary. The sacrifices, the cultus, the annual feasts, could only be celebrated there. In a way which is the more remarkable the more it is considered, the Jewish Church not only ceased to be, but became impossible from that time forward. Well do the Jews in Jerusalem wail against the wall which they take to be a remnant of the Temple structure. Well do Zionists plead for a return to the holy city. Judaism, as it is presented in its authoritative documents, the Law of Moses, cannot be carried out in practice while the Mosque of Omar stands on the site of the Temple. There can be in no strict sense a "congregation of the children of Israel." Jesus was always keenly aware of the approaching dissolution. Jew as He was, devoted to the Law and the Prophets, He could not regard with composure the passing of the ancient church. But evidently He was fully and increasingly assured, as His mission became clear to Himself, that He was to found a new church in the place of the one that was passing away. How far the new was to reproduce the old He did not in his lifetime attempt to determine. No one inquired, and He did not volunteer information about the things which we now desire to know. His

church was not to be national; but was it to achieve an organisation like that of ancient Israel, only imperial instead of national? Was there to be a hierarchy like that of Aaron or the later priesthood? Was there to be a monarchical head, like a Roman Imperator, or Pontifex Maximus? Was *His* church, like the one which it should supersede, to be a body politic, a state, maintaining courts of justice and hosts armed for battle, as well as institutions of worship and religious instruction? All these questions are left in doubt, except so far as they are answered implicitly in the word "my," or explicitly in the words of this passage which follow.

There are two answers to these questions which historically stand in sharp opposition to one another; they may be called the Catholic and the Evangelical. It is most important to understand the two answers and the reasons for them, though the answer which may reconcile them in a single solution has not yet appeared in the world. Catholicism moving in a gradual progress which attained to distinctness and certainty when the fall of the Roman Empire left the Bishop of Rome virtually on the throne of the Cæsars, answered the question in this way: Jesus intended to found a great church-state, like Israel in the definiteness and tangibility of its material organisation, but unlike Israel in being universal instead of national; He intended to constitute a great hierarchy of priests, and to secure unity by appointing always a *sacerdos sacerdotum*, a high-priest supreme over all; He made Peter the first of these primates; Peter came

to Rome, and as primate exercised this monarchical authority; the successors of Peter received the keys of authority from Him, and the Pope to-day is the primate of Christ's appointment. As the magnificent idea developed in the course of centuries, it appropriated this text, *Matt.* xvi. 18, and made it the authority for the Roman system. When the visitor to St. Peter's at Rome lifts his eyes to that vast dome which seems almost like another sky, and reads all round its base in letters twelve feet long: *Tu es Petrus, et supra hanc petram ædificabo ecclesiam meam*, nothing seems wanting to establish the correctness of an interpretation, which is confirmed by so majestic a fact. At first it may seem almost incredible that any other view could assert itself against evidence and authority so overwhelming, and conversions to Catholicism seem the inevitable result of an argument vast as St. Peter's.

But the Evangelical answer to the questions which are raised by this passage in St. Matthew was cogent enough to produce the Reformation, and is so irresistible that the strongest and most progressive part of Christendom accepts it to-day. It is maintained that so far from intending to found a strong church-state like the Jewish Church, with a hierarchy and an infallible head, it was this incubus on life and growth which Jesus came to remove; the fall of Jerusalem and the dissolution of the old system was, in His view, a liberation, and He had no intention of re-establishing the bondage in a more durable form. So far from instituting a priesthood after the type of Aaron, He

was Himself a priest after the order of Melchizedek, and made his ministers, not priests, but apostles, prophets, pastors, and teachers. He contemplated not a monarch on a Roman throne, ruling the nations with the absoluteness of a Cæsar and the infallibility of God, but a free brotherhood of men, accepting His own rule under the Divine sovereignty.

According to the Evangelical view the obscurantism and tyranny of the Papal Church, the conflicts and schisms which it has engendered, the moral corruptions and relapses into heathenism which occur under its rule, do not discredit Christ, but only prove that Catholicism is a misunderstanding of His intention. The text which was, after some generations, selected as the foundation-stone of the Catholic system, does not, rightly interpreted, support it at all. Even the visitor to St. Peter's, if he began to think, would wonder by what evidence the bishops of Rome could be shown to inherit the charge given to Peter. And pondering the very words written in letters twelve feet long he might question whether they imply the commission to Peter himself, which Catholicism demands. If the words meant that Christ would build His church on Peter, why did He not say: "Thou art Peter, on thee as the rock will I build my church"?

It is clear in the *Acts of the Apostles*, and in the epistles both of Paul and Peter, that Peter himself was quite unconscious of any such word having been spoken to him. He never claims a papal authority over the other apostles or over the community of the faithful. Nay, strange to say, it is the *Epistle of Peter*

particularly that represents Peter as claiming only to be a fellow-elder amongst the elders of the church, and as warning his fellow-elders against the tendency to lord it over the charge allotted to them. Peter does not claim to be the chief pastor of the flock, but assigns that title to the invisible Lord (I. Pet. v. 1–4, ii. 25). "On this rock" therefore did not mean Peter himself; the play on the word in the Greek expressly repudiates such a view. Rather the change of gender shows that there is only a certain resemblance between Peter and the Rock; the Rock itself is the Messiahship and divine Sonship of Jesus, which Peter had just confessed. The play upon *petrus* and *petra* means: "You have given expression to a revealed truth (v. 17), your name Petrus suggests a metaphorical name for it; it shall be the *petra* or rock on which the church shall stand; it shall be the central doctrine of the church's teaching, the fact on which the life of the individual and of the community rests."

At the same time a position of authority is undoubtedly given to Peter in v. 19; he is entrusted with the power to bind and loose, *i.e.* to forbid and allow, or to declare what is forbidden and what allowed among the members of the Christian community.[1] But immediately in chap. xviii. 18 this authority is conferred on all those who believe and confess as he had done. It is thus impossible to find in the words spoken to Peter anything like the exclusive and particular claim to supremacy and infallibility made for the Popes. If

[1] Matthew, giving a list of the apostles, expressly designates Peter as "first" (x. 2).

it could be shown that the Pope inherited precisely the keys which were given to Peter, that is to say, if Peter, the Peter of the New Testament, were bishop of Rome, nothing of the distinctive authority and sanctity now attached to the Popes would be recognised. "The pilot of the Galilean Lake," even after he had received all the honours and prerogatives which his Lord confirmed on him, remained a fellow-elder, claiming no specific authority, refusing to lord it over others, subject to the sharp rebuke of Paul, "binding and loosing" just like the others of Christ's servants, by declaring the truth of Christ, and ministering the saving grace of the Gospel. If the Pope is Peter's successor he should be like Peter.

But the claim that the bishop of Rome is in a peculiar sense the successor of Peter, and the repository of the special promise made to him, is one of those ecclesiastical fictions which melt away before historical inquiry. It is not necessary to enter into an elaborate argument. If the chain is broken at the beginning, no strength in its subsequent links can cure its weakness. For two centuries and a half after Peter no one knew even in Rome itself that the bishop of Rome claimed to be in a peculiar sense his successor. The fiction was a gradual growth, an afterthought; a short text from Scripture was misapplied, to authenticate a supremacy which the bishop of Rome gradually attained owing to the supremacy of Rome itself. The point may be made clear by noting how Cyprian, in the middle of the third century, treats the text *Matt.* xvi. 18.

Generally speaking, Cyprian quotes it to show that the bishop, *i.e.* the minister of the local church, is the

authority to which Christ pointed. Thus in Epistle xxvi., "Our Lord, whose precepts and admonitions we ought to observe, describing the honour of a bishop and the order of his church, speaks in the Gospel, and says to Peter: 'I say unto thee, thou art Peter,' &c. Thence through the changes of time and successions the ordering of bishops and the plan of the church flows onwards; so that the church is founded upon the bishops, and every act of the church is controlled by these same rules." Again in Epistle xxxix. he says: "There is one God, and Christ is one, and there is one church, and one chair founded upon the rock by the Lord." What is that one chair? The Roman See? Not at all; it is only the episcopal authority in the local church. The tenor of the teaching makes it quite clear that in Treatise iii. § 4, on the Unity of the Church, the clauses, rightly bracketed in the Ante-Nicene Christian Library edition of Cyprian, which suggest the Roman See as the foundation of the church, are spurious. Cyprian, writing to Cornelius, bishop of Rome A.D. 251–253, addresses him only as "dearest brother," assumes even an air of patronage, and mentions the text without a hint that it has a peculiar reference to the Roman See, Epistle liv. § 7. A little later he writes about Stephen, bishop of Rome: "Since you have desired that what Stephen our brother replied to my letters should be brought to your knowledge, I have sent you a copy of this reply; on the reading of which, you will more and more observe his error in endeavouring to maintain the cause of heretics against Christians and against the church of God" (lxxiii.). In the middle of the third

century every bishop was a pope, and indeed the Roman clergy write to Cyprian under that name: "To pope Cyprian, the presbyters and deacons abiding at Rome, greeting" (Epistle xxx.). The Roman Church had a natural pre-eminence, because Rome was the capital of the civilised world; and the bishop of Rome inherited that metropolitan power in a higher degree than ever when the seat of the Empire was removed to Constantinople. But more than two centuries after Christ orthodox churchmen failed to recognise the transmission of Peter's authority in any peculiar sense to the line of Roman bishops. Cyprian, already rooted in the error that the text makes bishops, and not the truth of Christ's divine Sonship, the foundation of the church, has not yet arrived at the later error, that He made the bishops of Rome in perpetuity the foundation.[1]

We may therefore stand fast in the criticism of the Catholic view which was made in the Reformation. We may take the text in the meaning which it would suggest, if we approached it from the past, and did not look back upon it from the present. Nay, it must be repeatedly urged that it is a dangerous method to read into texts the results which have to all appearance sprung out of them; that is to consecrate all errors and to destroy our standard of correction. We are bound to recognise the grave mischief and corruption of the Roman Church; the one hope of correcting the

[1] Even St. Gregory at the end of the sixth century claims for the Roman See an authority, over against Constantinople, only in conjunction with the Patriarchates of Alexandria and Antioch.

evil is to read the Gospel with unbiassed judgment, and to find not what it means now to those who are warped with dogmatic prejudice, but what it originally meant.

The Reformation saw that this text had been misread and misused for at least a thousand years; it ventured to reconsider it and to search out its true meaning, which is this: Christ did not found His church on Peter, nor on any man, or order of men, but on the recognition of Himself as the divine Son, a recognition which it was Peter's distinction to be the first to make. The church He founded therefore was not a state, a hierarchy, a coercive authority, a kingdom of this world, but a spiritual society, consisting of those who, by a faith like Peter's in Jesus Christ Himself, are built into Him as lively stones. The church's power to bind and loose, to retain or remit sins, resulted from the living faith in Him. Whoever was united with Him would acquire, even in his individual capacity, some of this power of the keys; but the society of those who had this faith would exercise a surer and more effectual guidance and discipline. The old church of Israel, the prototype of Catholicism, was vanishing away. The new church, Christ's church, was not made after its similitude; it was a new creation altogether, not carnal or material or worldly, but ethical and spiritual, belonging to that Kingdom of Heaven which it was to realise on earth.

A society formed, not by race or locality, not by outward ceremonies or visible badges, but by a personal relation to Christ Himself, united only in Him, existing only to express Him, and to be His organ of activity

in the world, such a society spreading over the whole earth, localised in convenient assemblies in every place, would nourish and train its own members, would draw all mankind into its bosom, and would be impregnable against all the assaults of Hades.

But this general view of the church as originally conceived will prepare us for the more particular view which is presented in the only other passage of the Gospels where the word "church" occurs, *Matt.* xviii. 17.

§ 4. The passage *Matt.* xviii. 15–17 is peculiar to the first Gospel; it has no parallel in the other three. Dr. Wright, therefore, includes it in what he calls the anonymous fragments. It does not belong to the Marcan Cycle or to the Matthæan Logia. But there is no reason for questioning that it is a saying of Jesus. It does not come under the doubt which attaches to chap. xvi. 18, where three parallel narratives are side by side, and Matthew inserts something which is deliberately omitted by the earlier Mark and the later Luke.

In our passage we see the church in being. If Jesus intended to found a congregation of the faithful, including multitudes in all lands, and ultimately even all mankind, in the first instance the congregation would be a little company in a single place, perhaps not more than two or three. Whether the "church" here means this small original community in Jerusalem, or any local community anywhere, is not made plain. That is a point which was only determined by subsequent events. From *Acts* and the Pauline Epistles, as we shall see, we gather that the local assembly everywhere had the

marks of the church, and exercised the judicial and disciplinary functions which are here implied. But regarding the words as a distinct saying to the disciples in the days of his flesh, we are only entitled to read out of them this idea: they who agreed in the confession of Peter in chap. xvi. 18 were already His church. As he on confession received the power to bind and loose (xvi. 19), so they all on confession received the same power (xviii. 18); they constituted a compact society, a court of final appeal for each member of the community. Their authority depended on the fact that when they were gathered together in the name of Jesus, He Himself would always be in the midst of them. He made the fellowship, and He empowered it.

The particular case of the offending brother, who will not be reconciled, and must finally be brought to the whole society and expelled, serves to introduce the first picture of the church in being; not that the exercise of discipline is the chief work of the church; the prayer, the brotherhood, the sense of Christ's presence, are the essence of it all; but where the essential factors are present, the discipline is valid and salutary. The object is to gain the brother, but the object is achieved through wholesome severity.

If, then, chap. xvi. 18 gives us the vast shadowy outline of the Church of Christ as the whole congregation of those who believe in Him and confess Him, the world-wide society, spiritually united, constituting an impregnable building, against which the gates of Hades cannot prevail, this passage, chap. xviii. 17,

shows us the society actually coming into existence; it is small, simple, and unpretentious; but as the tree is potentially contained in the seed, we may see clearly in this first sketch of the nascent church the everlasting essentials, those traits and marks which will for ever distinguish the church. Here in the mind of her Lord is the church as He conceives it, and we can very confidently affirm that, unless it retains these essential characteristics, it will cease to be the church. Let us recapitulate them and group them in order, so that we may obtain from the mind of the Founder the definition of His church.

(1) It is a compact society, (2) composed of those who really believe in Him, (3) held together by love so deep and living that it cannot tolerate within itself even a quarrel, (4) assured in its assemblies of the actual living presence of Jesus Christ, (5) empowered to offer prayers which shall be answered, (6) authorised to declare the truth, in its corporate capacity, as well as in its individual members, to bind and loose, to remit and retain.

Ubi Christus, ibi ecclesia. Christ is in the midst of those who believe in Him, love one another, and pray together. This is the essence of the church. Whatever organisation or development supervenes, it cannot be of the essence, or alter the essence. Faith in Christ and love to one another make the church.

CHAPTER II

THE PRIMITIVE COMMUNITIES

§ 1. THE sketch of the church in being given by our Lord in *Matt.* xviii. 15–20 is filled up by the earliest intimations we have of the infant church in the New Testament. For it is the local congregation, rather than the *qahal*, which first emerges into view. In the primitive institutions we doubtless see the result of the Lord's own directions; we certainly feel the breath of His Spirit. And yet there is some evidence to show that the first communities took shape on the model of the synagogue, which was the most active and ubiquitous institution of Judaism. If the *qahal* was the pattern of the church in the larger sense, the synagogue was naturally the pattern of the church in the narrower and local sense. In the LXX ecclesia and synagogue are almost interchangeable terms, and, as we saw, they were sometimes combined in the form "the synagogue of the church." Evidently where the converts were all of Jewish origin the church was called the synagogue (Jas. ii. 2). And as late as the beginning of the fourth century we find a church of the anti-Judaistic Marcionites called a synagogue of the

Marcionites.[1] In the Gentile communities the term "ecclesia" was from the first preferred, and the far-reaching influence of Paul subordinated the Jewish to the Gentile analogy.

Throughout the Jewish world in the first century the synagogue was the centre of religious life. Every town and village had its synagogue; in large towns there were many. The idle talk of the Talmud says there were in Jerusalem four hundred and eighty. In some cases the synagogue was a noble building; the ruins of the supposed synagogue on the site of Capernaum at Tel Hum indicate a great structure of approved Græco-Roman design. But frequently the synagogue would be a small building, quite unpretentious, like a chapel in rural England.[2] The primary purpose of the synagogue was the teaching of the Law. The rolls were kept in a cabinet, and a pulpit in the centre gave the reader a vantage-ground that he might be heard. The synagogue was everywhere under the control of the Elders of the Jewish Community; there

[1] Schürer, "The Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ," Div. ii. vol. ii. p. 69.

[2] It is possible that the smaller synagogues were called by the Greek word *proseuche*, which is translated in *Acts* xvi. 13 "a place of prayer." Thus among the Egyptian papyri, in one dated A.D. 113, the water-rate is assessed on the "rulers of the *proseuche* of Theban Jews 128 drachmæ a month." The addition "item for the *eucheion*" raises the question whether the *eucheion*, or prayer-house, was the synagogue as a building, and the *proseuche* was the synagogue as a community, the distinction which we make between "church" or "chapel" as a building and Church as the society of believers. (*Expository Times*, xix. 41.)

was no congregational life or authority. But, strange to say, there were no stated ministers for the conduct of the services; the Archisynagogue—there might be more than one—was responsible for appointing the reader or speaker, and for keeping order in the assembly; the minister had the humbler task of keeping the sacred rolls; to which function were added less agreeable duties, such as the infliction of punishment.

In the morning service on the Sabbath, after the Shemah (Deut. vi. 4–9, xi. 13–21; Num. xv. 32–41) and prayer, to which the people said Amen, a portion of the Law was read. Then a portion of the prophets was read (Luke iv. 17; Acts xiii. 15). Then there was an exposition given by the preacher (*darshan*) for the day. There was a briefer service later on, towards sunset. There does not appear to have been any singing, though trombones and trumpets were indispensable instruments in the worship, the former for New Year's Day, the latter for the ordinary feasts.[1] There were two constant features of the synagogue life which obviously influenced the practice of the early church, the collection of alms for the poor, and the exercise of discipline. For alms there were special receivers and distributors appointed; for the collection there must be two men, for the distribution three. As for the discipline, such a narrative as *John* xii. 42 shows how formidable the excommunication from the synagogue was; there was a temporary excommunication, but in extreme cases there was a final

[1] Schürer, *l.c.*, p. 75.

and irreversible excommunication, which is represented by the Greek word "anathema" (Rom. xi. 3; 1 Cor. xii. xvi. 22).

The synagogue was always built, if possible, by running water, that worshippers might perform the necessary ablutions before entering.

Wherever the Gospel was preached, in New Testament times, the synagogue was already in existence. And when believers in Christ began to gather in simple communities, their ideas and practices were naturally determined by the synagogues from which many of them came, and which all of them knew.

§ 2. For our knowledge of the first Christian communities, we are dependent on the *Acts of the Apostles* and the epistles. Chronologically the epistles come first; some at any rate of the epistles of Paul must have been written considerably earlier than the *Acts*. And yet we have good reason to believe that *Acts* gives us the earliest picture of the church. Paul uses the word "church" as one already familiar. The churches which he established grew up on a well-recognised principle. And this fact presupposes a movement which we can only study in the earlier chapters of the *Acts*. The historical value and credibility of the later narrative of the Acts, where the presence of an eye-witness is indicated in many indubitable ways, would not necessarily go back to the early events, at which the writer, Luke, could not have been present; and there are certain elements in these chapters which suggest a legendary colour. But for the purpose of finding the nature of the primitive Christian community, the source is not only

the best we have, but is also sufficiently sure; the main features are confirmed by the epistles, while certain features which were only of temporary continuance suggest that we are touching veracious records.

Our first task, therefore, is to examine the characteristics of the church in Jerusalem, as it came into being after the departure of the Lord and the descent of the Holy Ghost. But before doing so we may note how *Acts* uses the word "ecclesia" still in the more general sense of "assembly," and probably, therefore, when the word is applied to the assembly of Christians it is still to be understood in its original meaning; it is only by degrees that it acquires the significance of "church," as we understand it. Thus in the address of Stephen before the Sanhedrin (vii. 38) the ancient *qahal* of Israel is called "the church in the wilderness." This writer, therefore, establishes the connection between the Old and New Testaments which we have already examined. When first he speaks of the church in Jerusalem (ii. 47; in certain MSS., v. 11, viii. 1) he must have in mind the church under the Old Covenant, of which Moses was the leader. In chap. xix. 32, "ecclesia" is used again, and repeated, v. 39–41, in the thoroughly Greek sense of the popular assembly of the Greek city. This assembly may be a mere tumult, an irregular gathering of the populace, but it may be the lawful (v. 39) ordered meeting of the citizens who exercised legislative and judicial functions. Thus Luke,—we may assume now that he is the writer of *Acts*,—as much a Greek as a Jew, uses the word "ecclesia" in its Jewish sense and in its Greek sense, and we may assume that as

he begins to use it in a specifically Christian sense, he brings with him many suggestions gathered from those sources.

And yet, as we shall presently see, directly the ecclesia is used for the Christian purpose, the meaning is transformed. It is as if we heard Christ say "My ecclesia," and "My" carries with it Himself, His Spirit, His rule. Notwithstanding the analogies of the Jewish *qahal* or the contemporary synagogue, notwithstanding the manifold suggestions to the Greek ear of the ecclesia or sovereign assembly of the city, the ecclesia of Christ is from the beginning a thing apart, with a quality and a possibility which are all its own. The things we have learnt from the synagogue or the Ephesian assembly carry us but a little way; the essence of the institution is new.

§ 3. The reading of the A.V. in *Acts* ii. 47, "added to the church," is rejected by the revisers in favour of a singularly awkward expression which is supported by what are considered the preponderant MSS. That awkward expression is not correctly rendered "to them"; it is only "to the same." But while we lose the word "ecclesia" by this pedantic adhesion to a fixed use of the MSS., it is the church which is described in verses 41–47; and as the description of a community coming into spontaneous existence as the result of the preaching of Christ and the outpouring of the Spirit, it is of inestimable value. It follows naturally on *Matt.* xviii. 15–20. The church which Jesus anticipated is now for the first time forming. Let us reverently examine this seed which was to grow to such proportions. First of all we

see now who are to constitute this new community. In place of the old Israel is a new Israel which consists of people who have a certain inward qualification, a certain outward sign, and may be described as in a certain state or condition. They were people who heard the word of the Gospel, received it, repented, and believed: that was the inward qualification. They were baptized: that was the outward sign. And they were in a state of salvation (Acts ii. 47). The new elements, as compared with *Matt.* viii. 15, 17, are the baptism and the remission of sins. These new elements came in from the cross, and the commission to baptize. Since Jesus spoke, He had been crucified; now it was possible to preach the Crucified One as the means of remission of sins, and to summon those who believed to baptism in accordance with His command. Peter is here carrying out his commission to bind and loose, to remit or retain sin, by declaring the good news: "Repent ye and be baptized every one of you unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."

It is greatly to be wished that we were told more definitely the function of baptism in this process of transformation which admits people of all languages and conditions into the church. Within two centuries the doctrine of baptismal regeneration was accepted: the act of baptism was believed to produce the spiritual re-birth. But of this doctrine we have no proof from these earliest days of the church, for the "laver of regeneration" was as yet rather the recognition of a transformation wrought by repentance and faith in Jesus, than the cause which produced the effect. When baptism

was separated from faith and repentance, and treated as in itself the effective cause of the new birth, these early days were left far behind.

But those hearers who repented and believed and were baptized were in a state of salvation, were "being saved." The new community was pure; it consisted not of the living and the dead, but of the living only. Born again of the water and of the Spirit, they were new creatures in Christ Jesus. The faith, which made Peter the first member of the church, had now gathered in a multitude numbered by thousands. We may assume that many of these were the strangers present in Jerusalem for the feast (ii. 9–11), and they would return to their homes, carrying the new faith. But those who continued in Jerusalem constituted the first Christian Church. While the strangers dispersed, carrying the seeds of the new Gospel, the residents in Jerusalem were engaged unconsciously in laying the stones of the church-structure of the future. The community has not as yet a synagogue for worship; they pray in the Temple (iii. 1), or possibly still in Jewish synagogues, to which they had formerly belonged. But they met daily in private houses, or in open places, for purposes which could not be completely realised in the Temple. First there was the teaching of the apostles; then there was the fellowship which formed around their persons; then there was the "breaking of bread"; finally there were the prayers.

The Apostles here come in as the indispensable teachers of the young community. They had been with the Lord, and they were commanded by Him

to baptize all nations, and to teach them what He had commanded. They had in their minds His acts, His words, the image of His person; they were the witnesses of His resurrection. They had therefore much to teach. The teaching which is now embodied in the New Testament could then be derived only from their lips. The first duty of the church was to learn all about Jesus. It required a stedfast attendance in the new school. The synagogue taught the Law and the Prophets; the church was to teach the Gospel.

The fellowship is essential. From the first the church is more than a list of members; it is a society of those who know and love and help one another. The fellowship is in things material as well as things spiritual. Only in communion with one another can they realise the idea of being the body of their absent Lord, an idea which was left to them by the institution of the Supper before He died. The breaking of bread, which is brought into emphasis here (Acts ii. 42, 46) must be the memorial of that last Supper. Every day as they broke bread in the house, they did it in remembrance of Him. It was not yet a set service; no ritual was attached to it. But living in daily remembrance of Him, whose body was broken for them, and in spirit eating of His flesh and drinking of His blood, they made their meal a joyful celebration and symbol of the truth. The prayers were not only those offered in the Temple, but also those offered in the home. And to the prayers were added songs of praise, at least so we may interpret ver. 47. Psalms

were sung in the Temple worship, if not in the synagogue; and the irrepressible love and gratitude of those who were being saved would break out into hymns of praise.

It is expressly stated that in this first spontaneous outbreak of life and love and worship, which made the infant church, the people who did not themselves believe yet regarded those who did with favour.

The communism which was adopted in the enthusiasm of the moment was natural enough, but unfortunately we have no further notice of it in the later stages of development. Perhaps the melancholy story recorded in chap. v. disheartened the church from carrying out as a universal practice this principle which sprang spontaneously into being in the first rush of spiritual joy.

In this earliest community there were as yet no officials, no stated ministers. The twelve Apostles were there, "continuing stedfastly in prayer and in the ministry of the word" (vi. 4), but the church was a brotherhood, not a hierarchy. The idea that the church rests on three orders of ministry, bishops, priests, and deacons, receives no countenance from the story of its beginning. It was long before there were bishops, and longer still before there were priests. Deacons, as we shall presently see, perhaps came earlier. The church rests rather, as we read in *Ephesians*, on the foundation of Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone. The Apostles are the original company of those whom the Lord chose and trained; and here we see them

laying, or forming, the foundation of the church. The Prophets, men directly inspired to utter the truth of God, were an order which had never wholly ceased, from Moses to John the Baptist; it began again with such a preacher as Stephen or Philip, and is continued wherever a preacher ceases to be a mere scribe or lecturer and becomes a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit.

The career of Stephen and Philip as given in our book (vi.–viii. *cf.* xxi. 8) would lead us to regard them as typical "prophets"; in the case of the latter, his daughters received the mantle of their father. But they come before us as two out of the seven men who were elected for a more mundane purpose. These seven are, strictly speaking, the first officers of the church. Their method of appointment or ordination is significant. They are chosen by the whole community (vi. 5), and when chosen they are appointed by the laying on of the hands of the Apostles, a very natural symbol. The Holy Spirit was not conferred by the ceremony, for Stephen was chosen because he was already "a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit." The occasion of appointing the seven is this: The church took over from the synagogue the duty of collecting and distributing alms. In the generous outburst which made the society communistic, widows were supported by daily gifts; but difficulties immediately appeared, the foretaste of those which would render communism impracticable; the widows who were not of pure Jewish extraction, but belonged to the Hellenistic population of Jerusalem, suffered in

the daily distribution. The seven were appointed to manage the almsgiving; one of their number was a Syrian proselyte to Judaism, Nicolas; Stephen and Philip were Jews; the names of the remaining four imply that they might have been of Greek origin. The first ministers of the church therefore were agents of the church's charity to its poor members. The fact that the five remain in obscurity, and the two first are known from a ministry quite different from that to which they were appointed, shows that the essential work of the church can be done in silence, and also that the Spirit determines the activity of Christians, without regard to the nominal office which they hold.

We must extend our vision soon beyond Jerusalem. But it is worth our while to follow out the history of this first community to the time (A.D. 70) when Jerusalem was destroyed, and the church in Jerusalem for a while ceased to be. This history is suggested rather than told in *Acts*. The Apostles apparently continued to be the ministers of the church. Possibly they were regarded as the "elders" (*vide* I. Pet. v. 1). Peter, James, and John were the leaders; when persecution arose, James was beheaded and Peter was imprisoned. When, following the example of the synagogue, elders were appointed, it would be by the same method as the seven, who for convenience' sake are sometimes called deacons (xv. 6, 22). Peter continued prominent, but not apparently pre-eminent. He undertook missionary work, and travelled, not only through Palestine, but as far as Babylon, where he settled

(I. Pet. v. 13). The presidency of the church came to James, the Lord's brother (xii. 17, xv. 13, xxi. 12; Gal. i. 19, ii. 9, 12), probably because of his relationship with Jesus. We know from Hegesippus that he was a man of Jewish piety; his knees were worn like those of a camel by constant prayer; he was stoned to death in an illegal way by the Sanhedrim. The letter attributed to James in the New Testament represents him as a very Jewish Christian, a true servant of Christ, and yet a faithful Jew. The place of James in the church at Jerusalem, presiding over it, when questions are referred to it, and giving voice to its decisions, is the first hint of the monarchical episcopate in the church. Indeed we may say that in a shadowy way the three orders already appear, a forecast of the future: in chap. xxi. 18, we have James (the bishop?) and the elders; and we may assume that the deacons appointed in chap. vi. 5, or their successors, were still there. But the church in Jerusalem had but a brief existence, and though we cannot say with Wernle ("The Beginnings of Christianity"), that it had made a false start, we have to look in another direction to find the beginnings and development of the early communities.

This fact is brought out clearly by the *Acts*. Persecution began, the Twelve apparently were scattered with the rest (viii. 4), and the church of Jerusalem began to reproduce itself sporadically elsewhere. Presently we begin to hear, not of the church, but of churches; *e.g.* in many MSS. ix. 31 reads, "the churches throughout all Judæa and Galilee and Samaria"; this is

the first instance of the plural. But it soon becomes common enough. A church has sprung up at Antioch (xiii. 1), others in Syria and Cilicia (xv. 41). And soon the great missionary Apostle, Paul, was planting churches all over the Roman Empire.

It is the emergence of this great name which gives to the *Acts of the Apostles* its main importance. The chief of the Apostles is not one of the Twelve at all. The hand which was to shape the church was that which made churches. He was a chosen vessel to carry the church beyond the borders of Judaism, and to secure the church from hierarchical domination by edifying the churches.

§ 4. Before tracing the characteristics of Paul's churches, a moment's attention must be given to the relation between the church and the churches, which emerges in the story without comment or explanation. When once the word is used in the plural, it gives the impression that each church is an independent society unrelated to the rest. But if we have correctly traced the origin of the idea, we shall be right in resisting this impression as erroneous. The church comes into being as one. "The whole church" (Acts v. 11), means the church at Jerusalem only, because at present there was but one congregation, but the term would still apply when, owing to wide extension, the congregations would be scattered throughout the world. When that enlargement has taken place, and we read of the church in Antioch or in Corinth or in Rome, we are not to suppose that these are separate and unrelated units. Rather the implication is, that the church, viz. the

society of the faithful united in Christ, the one great fellowship, manifests itself necessarily in various localities and companies; the companies are distinct, but the church is one. It is only by constantly bearing this in mind that we can understand the sudden transitions in the Pauline letters from the churches to the church.

It is fortunate that the first mention of the church in the New Testament (Matt. xvi. 17) forces us to grasp the idea of unity from the beginning, though the rest of the New Testament is occupied mainly with the foundation, the life, and the practices of the local societies, which, like the cells of the body, in their totality constitute the church. In the Pauline churches, as they are revealed in the earlier letters of Paul, there are some distinctive features, which our information does not enable us to trace in the original church at Jerusalem. From our sources, chiefly the letters of Paul himself, we form a clear idea of the ministry, the worship, including the sacraments, and the discipline. Some of the practices and rules of the early Pauline churches, *e.g.* the speaking with tongues, or the silence of women, were only of transient duration, and a difficult problem arises, the problem of determining what was permanent and essential, germinal for the future, and what was only tentative and unimportant. But there can be no hesitation in recognising the broad facts of the situation, the features which make the Pauline church a norm or standard for all ages. The presence of Christ, through the Spirit, and the freedom of the Spirit's action and utterance in the community,

make the church. These are the primary and essential conditions.

First, as to the ministry. Paul followed the example of the church at Jerusalem, itself taken from the synagogue, of putting the management of each newly formed community into the hands of elders. This presbyterian government is radical and essential. After the missionary tour in Southern Galatia we read that Paul and Barnabas "appointed elders in every church" (Acts xiv. 23). The word used here for "appointing," indicates stretching out the hand; it is the same verb as in II. *Cor.* viii. 19.[1] Originally it meant the stretching out of the hand to give a vote in the Athenian Assembly, or "ecclesia"; it suggests, therefore, a popular election. But the original meaning was no doubt forgotten in usage. The word came to mean "elect" or "appoint" in any way. And when Paul and Barnabas appointed the elders, we cannot think of an election by the assembly. The mode of appointment, therefore, remains uncertain, though it is clear that prayer and fasting, and dependence on the Spirit's guidance were the essential conditions of the appointment. The function of the elders in the Pauline Church is suggested in *Acts* xx. 28. "Take heed unto yourselves and to all the flock in the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God which He purchased with His own blood." It is implied that they are to do in their church what the Apostles did

[1] "The brother who was appointed by the churches to travel with us in the matter of this grace."

in the church at Jerusalem. Spiritual guidance and teaching, the careful protection of the people from false teachers (ver. 29), the pastoral office, this was the function of the elders. The number of elders or bishops (for it is to be observed that the word "overseer" here is that which became the ecclesiastical term for "bishop") in each local community is not determined. In I. *Pet.* v. 1–5, it is implied that all the elder men were appointed to the office, while all the younger men occupied the subordinate place of "deacons." A church which met in a house, as many of the Pauline churches did (Rom. xvi. 5; I. Cor. xvi. 12; Col. iv. 15; Phil. 2), would probably not have in it more than four or five older men; these were appointed elders officially.

Clearly in these first days every member of the church held office. For now we come to observe the variety of—"officers," shall we call them? But they are not officers, they are persons endowed with spiritual gifts corresponding to their individual faculties. They are severally members one of another.

Some prophesy—that is, utter the message of God under the influence of the Spirit; others minister, as the seven did at Jerusalem; others teach, others exhort, others give largely, others govern, others do works of mercy (Rom. xii. 5–8). Here are seven functions, represented by different functionaries. In a later Epistle only five are mentioned—apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers (Eph. iv. 11). In I. *Cor.* xii. 28 the list includes eight—apostles, prophets, teachers, miracles, healings, helps, governments, kinds of tongues. If we were to take each term as the

specific name of an office, we should from these three passages infer an extraordinary richness of ministry:

ROM.	I. COR.	EPH.
	Apostles	Apostles
Prophets	Prophets	Prophets
Deacons		
Teachers	Teachers	Teachers
Exhorters		
Givers		
Rulers	Governments	
Those who show mercy	Healings	
	Miracles	
	Helps	
	Kinds of tongues	
		Evangelists
		Pastors

Here are thirteen offices, not to mention that women could be deaconesses (Rom. xvi. 1). But, as the prophets and teachers are the only two which occur in all the lists, we may assume that there is no intention of describing in full the officials of a church. Rather the idea is that the Spirit at work in the society employs all in some way, and some in the specific ways of teaching and governing, which finally crystallised into the Christian ministry. At the same time we cannot help suspecting that the early Pauline Church imitated the synagogue in this respect, that while the elders were the authority for managing the assemblies and for maintaining order, the reading and

exhortation were not confined to stated ministers, but were left to any members, or even visitors, to whom the Spirit gave the command to speak. Thus the presence of "Apostles" in the churches of the New Testament is exceptional. Evidently in forming the conception of the ministry for all time, the question must be faced—Who were intended to take the place of the Apostles when the generation of those who had seen the Lord should have passed away? Paul the Apostle, like the original Twelve, and like some of his colleagues who seem to have borne the name,[1] formed during their lifetime the link between the churches, and secured the unity of the church in their person and in their assembly. But as there could be no second generation of those "who had seen the Lord," it must always be remembered, in studying the New Testament Church, that a gap remains for subsequent ages in some way to fill.

The variety of functions in a Pauline church, which did not all crystallise into specific offices, produced a richness of worship, an exuberance of instruction, which was not maintained in later times. Yet while it lasted, it suggested certain truths which the church should never consent to lose. A church is an organism of the Spirit; where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. A fixed and stereotyped form, restricting the perfect freedom of the Spirit of God to employ whom He will and to utter His thought through any suitable

[1] *e.g.* II. *Cor.* viii. 23. Titus and others are called ἀπόστολοι ἐκκλησιῶν. In I. *Thess.* ii. 6 Paul implies that his companions, Barnabas, Silas, Timothy, were also Apostles.

mouth, must always be a check on the church's life. Granted that certain phenomena in the Pauline churches were necessarily transient, does not the principle of the freedom of the Spirit always remain? Must not the object be to give full expression to the mind of the Spirit in every church community, come the message through whom He will?

The assembly in a Pauline church enjoyed a freedom which passed easily into licence. We cannot in the earlier letters detect any sign of a form or order of service. There is no liturgy, no stated hymnology. Whether the Old Testament Scriptures were read we do not know. Whether any evangelic narratives were in use—for instance, Peter's teaching, as it was later embodied in Mark's Gospel—we are not sure; Paul's own silence about the incidents of the Lord's life would indicate that such records were not employed in the church. Letters of the Apostle himself, as they came into being, were read in the church to which they were addressed, and in neighbouring communities (I. Thess. v. 27; Col. iv. 16). But we cannot tell whether they were read regularly, or as part of the worship. All we see with clearness is that the church assembly was a scene of unrestricted utterance of divine truth through the various members who were present. The prophets were the most important; these were men (or women, like the daughters of Philip—Acts xxi. 9) who, under the control of the Spirit, uttered the truth of God, sometimes, no doubt, forecasting events, like Agabus (ver. 11), but generally guiding the community by the direct word of God. At Corinth, a city of

extraordinary looseness and spiritual instability, this utterance of the prophets sometimes took a singular form, the so-called *glossolalia*; the speaker, in a kind of ecstasy or trance, used a language which was unintelligible to the hearers, unless another prophet was present who was able to interpret it. Perhaps it was a foreign language; perhaps it was the inarticulate murmur or chanting of one who spoke under strong excitement. Paul seems to have been distressed by this curious psychical phenomenon. He did what he could to repress it, though it was a "gift" which he himself possessed (I. Cor. xiv. 18). Impressive as it was at first, as the sign of an unknown spiritual power at work, it was not edifying in the long run. It did not appeal to the understanding. It was only emotional. No doubt, owing to Paul's discouragement of the phase, it proved to be only transitory; though it has appeared again from time to time in the history of the church; for example, in the early days of the Irvingite Church.

As a rule, the utterance of the prophets was not only intelligible, but overwhelmingly convincing. An unbeliever coming into the meeting would be constrained to bow down and recognise the presence of God in the manifestation (I. Cor. xiv. 24–25).

The Teachers, though speaking under the same spiritual influence, had less of the rhapsodical element in them. They taught the truths of the Old Testament and the fulfilments of the Old in the new order which was now instituted. The beginnings of dogma and creed would be shaped by the teachers, and handed

down in a tradition. The exhorters, speaking by the spirit, would present the practical side of the Gospel, the appeal to holy living or to religious service, the comfort to mourners, the encouragement to weak and erring brethren. Thus it would seem that various members contributed to the service as they were able (I. Cor. xiv. 26). Perhaps one, with the poetic or musical gift, would bring a psalm for the congregation to sing; another would mention a revelation of truth which had come to him. The service would go on, one speaking, the others saying Amen in assent, often, no doubt, for an indefinite time.

In the worship of the Pauline Church the memorial meal of the Lord's Last Supper had a constant place. From I. *Cor.* xi. 17–34 we can form a clear idea of this institution in the earliest days. We cannot, unfortunately, tell whether the practice in Jerusalem and the Jewish churches was the same, for *Acts* ii. 42–46 is our only gleam of light upon the subject. But in the Pauline Church the common meal was taken to symbolise the unity of the fellowship as the body of Christ (I. Cor. xii. 12). It would be of the greatest value to know whether this interpretation was peculiar to Paul, or derived in some sense from the twelve Apostles. But our only interpretation of the Supper is this in I. *Cor.* xi., and we have no means of comparing it with the view and the practice of those who were present at the Last Supper and heard the command of the Lord. The puzzling problem is, that when the eucharist appears in the early church writers it shows little or no connection with the language and

ideas of Paul; and its subsequent development as a sacrifice, rather than a meal, dependent on the presence and word of a priest, is so far removed from the passage before us, that it seems hardly credible that the later should have been evolved from this earlier Pauline practice.

To discuss the question how the Mass grew out of the Lord's Supper would take us too far away from our subject, which is the Early Church. All we can do here is faithfully to study the institution as it appears in the New Testament.

It is to be noted at once that Paul claims to have received the idea and the form of the Supper from the Lord himself. Here, as in *Galatians*, he delights to claim a complete independence from those who were Apostles before him. In accordance with his usual tone of thought and language, we interpret his claim to be this: that the Lord, who appeared to him at his conversion, by virtue of which appearance he became an apostle, directly communicated to him the facts and the significance of the Supper. All along Paul is directly taught; his teaching is by revelation. If the claim to be inspired and authoritative is established at all—and, apart from that, most of our Christian belief would be discredited—it covers this account of the Supper. In just the same sense as we accept Paul's interpretation of the death and sacrifice of Christ, the sacrifice offered once for all, we must accept his interpretation of the institution of the eucharist. It is not only the sole apostolic account that we possess of its origin and intention,

but it is an account which professes, through Paul, to come from the Lord Himself, necessarily after His resurrection and ascension. In contrast with the interpretation which gradually crept into the church, and culminated in the doctrine of Transubstantiation and the sacrifice of the Mass, this is the view of the Supper given to Paul by Jesus Himself. It was a genuine meal, observed at the meeting of the church; the several members brought the food, and, according to Paul's view, were bound to make a common stock and share each other's contributions. The abuse, which occasions this correction and the narrative of the Lord's institution, consisted in each retaining his own supply, so that the well-to-do people with their daintier food threw into painful contrast the poor with their crusts. This was the occasion of separation, jealousy, and heart-burning. It was to eat, "not discerning the Lord's body." For the object of the meal was not to satisfy hunger; that could be done at home (ver. 34); but to demonstrate by the symbolic eating and drinking the absolute unity of those who as believers in Christ were members of His body.

Paul therefore understood the words, "this is My body," to mean, not that the bread was transformed into the flesh of Jesus, but that the bread represented the community of the brotherhood; they ate and drank together as an indication of their corporate union through faith in their Lord. The covenant in the blood is that pledge of fellowship in Christ by which, spiritually, they are made of one blood. Thus

the eucharist is to Paul the symbol and bond of charity, that new law of love which, according to the Fourth Gospel, was the theme of our Lord's discourse at the table where He instituted the rite.

When the reader, dismissing the later developments which easily colour our story of an ancient document, takes the whole passage, I. *Cor.* xi. 17–xiv. 1, in its due connection, he can hardly miss the meaning. The chief revelation of Christ is the fellowship one with another, which results from being united with the Head Christ Jesus, that fellowship which in I. *John* i. 7 is presented as the condition of "the blood of Jesus His Son cleansing us from all sin." The deep agreement of Paul with John, Paul who records the institution of the Supper the most fully, and John who deliberately omits it, is a strong confirmation of the doctrine as the original intention of Jesus.

The church was to be a fellowship in which the divisions of rank and wealth were to be ignored. In the synagogue men were ranged on a principle of social distinction; the chief men occupied the chief seats. In the new synagogue, the church, this distinction was to be obliterated (Jas. ii. 1–5). There, all were equal before God; not only equal, but *one*, in the solidarity of the spiritual body. The Lord's Supper, the one formal institution of the church which rested on a definite act of His own, was taken as the evidence and confirmation of this new and startling idea. It was to secure the fusion of members in the mystic brotherhood. All were to eat and drink as representing their unity in the person of Jesus. To forget that, to eat

and drink with divisive, arrogant, self-seeking thought, was to eat and drink unworthily, to be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. This violation of the fundamental law of the church incurred judgment and penalty. At Corinth disease and death had entered into the community, and Paul does not hesitate to affirm that this is the judgment for the selfish violation of the Lord's Supper.

There is one other feature of the Pauline Church which deserves close attention, viz. the discipline. Here we come into closer contact with the community at Jerusalem; and the reminiscence of the synagogue is obvious. To be cast out of the synagogue was a dire punishment for a Jew, a punishment which was felt more by men of high position than by the humble. In the first episode recorded when the church was formed at Jerusalem, we are told of the fear that fell upon the people. The apostolic company was filled with the Holy Ghost, so that a searching discipline was exercised by the society. When two members of the community acted deceitfully in the assembly, the lie, as against the Holy Ghost, entailed immediate death (Acts v. 1–11). In the Pauline Church the discipline proceeded in a more human and methodical way, but it was on the same principle. The object of the discipline was not to secure obedience to a church authority, or orthodoxy of belief—such a thought lay at present in the far future—but to establish the higher standard of morals which Christ had introduced. To be truthful, to be pure, was not even the ideal of antiquity. The church had to create the ideal, and to enforce it. At

Jerusalem the discipline first enforced truth. At Corinth its first task was to secure purity.

The passage I. *Cor.* v. is the *locus classicus*. The community was to keep itself pure. A member who was a fornicator, covetous, an idolater, a reviler, a drunkard, or an extortioner, was to be cut off from the community. The essential idea of the church was a holy brotherhood; the Communion or common meal was the expression of a new society living, as compared with that old pagan world, on higher ground, guided by nobler principles. We have nothing to do in these early days with the infliction of temporal punishments, or with that appalling engine of mediæval despotism, the handing over of the delinquent to the secular arm; but the society, based on the person and teaching of Christ, is bound to eject from its borders those who refuse obedience to Him.

It is difficult to induce the church to act. Rather it seems to pride itself on its charity in passing over the violations of moral purity (I. Cor. v. 2). But the Pauline directions are explicit. The church must meet in the name of the Lord Jesus, and with His power must deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh. The delinquent must be expelled from the sacred society, which means that he falls back into the world of sin and Satan from which he had escaped. This severity is primarily for the salvation of the church, which would rapidly lose its meaning and power if it became mixed like the world around it; but it is also for the saving of the delinquent, "that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (ver. 5). Paul

is very anxious that, when the excommunication has brought the needed contrition, the penitent should be received back into the fold (II. Cor. ii. 5–8). This passage is of peculiar interest, because it shows how the first believers understood the solemn power to bind and loose, to remit and to retain sin, which had been committed to them (Matt. xvi. 19, xviii. 18; John xx. 23). When in later days the commission of our Lord is cited as an authority for a priest to grant absolution to a penitent, it is well to realise how the command was understood in the church, before a priest was thought of, and when confession was still only a confession one to another, followed by a prayer one for another (Jas. v. 16).

The act of discipline, though enjoined by Paul, and carried out, as he says, "with his spirit," was not the work of the officers of the church; we have no mention of elders or other functionaries; it is the work of the society itself, assembled according to the idea of Jesus, in His name, and therefore with His authority.

The primitive communities therefore, as we see them in the *Acts* and the earlier letters of the Apostles, are societies of believers in Christ, organised in the simplest way under the guidance of elders, ministered to by their own members, as each was directed by the Spirit, exercising a powerful moral influence and discipline upon all who joined them, preserving the fellowship in love, by the institution of the Supper and by all that it implied. Nothing has been said yet about baptism. It appears as the rite appointed by the Lord, to indicate admission into the society. In the *Acts*, as men and women believe in Christ they are baptized, with

their households. In Paul's letters the baptism is treated mystically; believers are buried with Christ in baptism. It is implied that they were submerged in the laver, and issued from it to newness of life. Thus Paul calls the font "the laver of regeneration." Baptism, not the washing of water, but the interrogation of the conscience, *i.e.* the intelligent response of the soul to Christ, saves (I. Pet. iii. 21). The saved are baptized; they are not saved by being baptized, but they are baptized because by faith in Christ they are saved.

The question whether the familes should be baptized too, in anticipation of the teaching and training which should be given, is not directly raised. But the principle on which baptism was afterwards given to infants is implied in Paul's contention that the children of a Christian are holy (I. Cor. vii. 14). The notices are meagre in the New Testament, because baptism does not there hold the prominent place which it has taken in church history and dogma. In the apostolic times the all-important question was that of "being born again of water and the spirit." The spiritual birth was vital and essential, but it was not for a moment supposed that the rite of baptism produced it.

Finally, the picture of the primitive communities must be deeply shaded. All our information about them is accompanied with, and even arises out of, the most painful facts of hypocrisy, selfishness, divisions, and other moral corruptions. In Jewish circles, where the discipline of Moses had prevailed for many centuries, the faults were rather exclusiveness, sectarianism, cen-

soriousness, than what are called now immoralities; but in the churches gathered out of the surrounding heathenism, composed evidently to a large extent of the servile and degraded classes, there was a long struggle for even the elementary moral principles. Christians had to learn not to steal, not to lie, not to indulge in the prevailing sensuality.

The letters to the seven churches in the *Revelation* afford a melancholy glimpse into the communities in the neighbourhood where Paul had worked and John had lived. The decay and disappearance of those churches suggest that some stronger principles of organisation, of spiritual life, and moral education would have to appear if the primitive communities were ever to cover the earth and gather into the church all mankind.

After all, the church of the New Testament is only the germ of the church which our Lord founded. But it may be confidently affirmed that the essential principles in the germ, the presence of the Spirit, the vitality, the brotherhood, the ethical standard, must be essential to the end.

CHAPTER III

DEVELOPMENT IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

§ 1. THE New Testament writings cover a period of half a century. It is difficult to arrange them in exact chronological order; but it is easy to trace a development of teaching and of practice between the earliest Pauline and the latest Johannine books.

We tried in the last chapter, as far as it was possible to pierce through the chronological confusion, to see the church at its very commencement. In the present chapter we must see its development within the New Testament limits. In the following chapter, in order to correct or confirm our idea of development, we shall examine the literature which is called sub-apostolic—that is, the earliest books which have come down to us after those which are included in the Canon. By such a study, carefully pursued, we ought to become aware that the church necessarily developed as its mission expanded; we ought to discover the lines of its development; but, above all, we ought to learn how far the development was a decline from the primitive ideas, and in what way the apostolic church at its commencement stands as the norm by

which later developments must be criticised and corrected.

Our task, then, for the present is, bearing in mind what the church was in the first flush of its new created life, to trace its development during the subsequent half-century or so, which is covered by the New Testament writings. This task is made comparatively simple by a book, a treasure bequeathed to us by one of the greatest, if not the greatest New Testament scholar whom England produced in the last century, F. J. A. Hort. Almost the last service which that remarkable man rendered to Cambridge, and to the Christian community, was to deliver a course of lectures on the Christian Ecclesia, in which he traced the primitive conceptions and early history of the church. It is a piece of work done once for all. Hort was able to see a subject in what Bacon called "dry light"; his prejudices or preconceptions could be laid aside, and with an almost complete detachment of mind he could examine and interpret the facts of the past. Dismissing the crowd of assumptions which are suggested by the growth of the church in these nineteen centuries, he endeavoured to see the church as it was in New Testament times, to depolarise words, and to apprehend the fundamental ideas of institutions.

How necessary it is to do this, the vagaries of ecclesiastical tradition show. The Roman Church raises perilous edifices on partial truths, and from them constructs foundations, which are in the air, for further building: little by little these fanciful structures lead the mind far away from the original truths, and some-

times the original truths are discredited and denied. For example, first she argues, because Jesus is divine, Mary is the mother of God. Then she argues that, as His mother, Jesus must yield her deference; accordingly the assumption and coronation of the mother as queen of heaven became a dogma. But then she argues that as Joseph was Mary's husband, she would yield him obedience as a dutiful wife; Joseph must therefore be manipulated, and a legend of his transit to heaven is invented, and represented in a transept of the great new church at New Pompeii. First the devout are taught to appeal to Mary, because of her influence over her Son; then they must appeal to Joseph because of his authority over her. And so the perilous structure is reared, storey overhanging storey, until it topples to the ground.

The growth of ecclesiastical authority is all of this kind. A slight extravagance is admitted in the tradition; swiftly that is exaggerated, and weighty inferences are drawn from it; the figments, working in thin air, uncorrected by fact or reason, are rapidly spun out. First, Christ's words to Peter are misunderstood; Peter is represented as the rock on which the church is built. Then the figment is invented that what was said to him was also said to his lineal descendants. Then the legend is created that his lineal descendants are the bishops of Rome. Then not only does each bishop of Rome claim the supposed commission and authority given to Peter, but the commission is fancifully enlarged. The binding and loosing is interpreted as infallibility, an infallibility which was not claimed

by Peter or for him; the two swords which Peter childishly produced to defend his Lord are treated as the spiritual and the temporal authority committed to the bishop of Rome. And thus the amazing claim appears in Innocent III. or Boniface VIII. that Christ intended the Pope to exercise an absolute authority over the church and over temporal states. When the structure of figments subsides and perishes under the contempt and irritation of mankind, Christianity suffers, because it has been identified with this fictitious ecclesiastical development.

One of the greatest gifts, therefore, is that which was possessed by Hort, and by that equally impartial Oxford scholar, Hatch—the gift of seeing through these logical, but illegitimate, assertions, and understanding the facts of the church at the beginning. It may be said, however, why cannot we read the New Testament for ourselves, and learn what the church was, by a careful study of the documents which are in everybody's hands? The answer is, that as it is rare to find a scholar who can claim a complete detachment of mind, so the ordinary reader seldom approaches the New Testament with freshness of view and independence of judgment. When he reads the word "church," he immediately supposes that it means exactly what it means to the modern mind. If he is quite ignorant, he thinks of a building like his parish church in England. But if he is far from ignorant, and even well instructed, he imagines that "church" in the New Testament means an institution like the Church of England or the Church of Rome: he

assumes that the church then was constituted like the church with which he is familiar; he accepts without question the inference that because there are bishops, priests, and deacons now, as the essential constitution of the church, so there were then. Or if he is a Romanist he is convinced that in New Testament times there was a Pope, and that the words of our Lord to Peter prove it.

Only by a study as close and exhaustive as Hort's is the English reader able to learn from the New Testament what the church of the apostles was. But when Hort has made the study, every reader of the book can easily verify the conclusions. The work is done once for all.

And let it be observed, this line of study is one of the most interesting in which we can engage. To get back into a distant past, to read ancient documents with purged eyes, and to allow words, the meaning of which has been worn down in usage, to recover the outline and gleam of the day when they issued from the mint of apostles and founders, is no less fascinating than to study works of the creative imagination. The practical and spiritual effect is equally important. To read the New Testament with a vivid understanding is to enter into that society which received the first impress of the Gospel, in which the recent life and death of our Lord were realised as a great, the greatest, event—an event revolutionary and regenerating. It is said that in order to recover the power and effect of a great truth it is only necessary to translate it again into action; in the same way,

to recover the meaning and the dynamic of Christianity, it is only necessary to go back into the circle of the first believers, and begin to live as they did. The New Testament, as the collection of writings that has come down to us from that circle, breathing the Spirit that animates those apostles, prophets, and evangelists, stamped with the image of the imminent Lord, is a book which stands for ever apart. When we turn to the sub-apostolic literature, valuable as it is for historical testimony, we are conscious of a lamentable change of spiritual tone and decline of intellectual power. The *epigoni* are seldom equal to the founders; but in this case they are a whole heaven apart. The New Testament writings, notwithstanding some obscurities and many unsolved problems connected with them, shine by their own light; God is manifestly in them; their authority is not extrinsic but intrinsic. The illusion, as old as St. Augustine, that we accept their authority only because the church guarantees it, is always dissipated by independent study of them. Rather we go, and must always go, to them to test the authority of the church. By their clear and startling evidence we learn how far the church has deviated from the practice, the fundamental principles, the ideals, of the founders. The renewed study of the New Testament is, therefore, always the beginning of another reformation; if Erasmus edits a Greek Testament there will be a Luther shaking the world.

Let us, therefore, try to see the New Testament church as it was.

§ 2. When the New Testament books are arranged in a

right chronological order, as, for instance, in Dr. Moffat's "Historical New Testament," the growth of the church can be traced in two ways. First, we can see how the local society entered on a course of development which was continued in after days. The trend of this development can be determined, and to some extent the later growths which are illegitimate can be criticised and rejected as excrescences. That is a difficult task, involving us in controversy, but if the genius, the essence, of the New Testament communities is firmly grasped, the student ought to acquire a discrimination in the matter which will not fail him in face of the formidable and imposing accretions of later times. Secondly, the conception of the church as a whole becomes clearer and stronger. It lies side by side with the local communities, and its relation to them never becomes explicit, so that a difficulty is left inherent in the New Testament itself, with which ecclesiastical theory has had to cope. It is not beyond question whether the idea of the church as a whole comes first or is developed out of the combination of the local societies. But when the general effect of the New Testament is appraised, when the canon is, so to speak, closed, the idea of the church which remains in the mind is not so much the local society, which has been the predominant conception in the course of the Acts and the Epistles, as the church of the first-born, the general assembly, typified by Mount Zion, the city descending out of heaven, the spiritualised *qâhal*.

First, then, the local community as it appears, for instance, in the Pastoral Epistles, is more definitely

organised. But before pointing out what may be derived from this source, it is necessary to say that the argument is not affected by the discussion about the Pauline authorship of I. and II. *Tim.* and *Titus*. In any case they represent a later development, the latest development within the borders of the New Testament. If they are genuine, they point to a second imprisonment of the Apostle and a fresh course of missionary activity, not otherwise known, and take us down some years later than the *Acts* or *Philippians*. If they are written by some one imitating the style of Paul, embodying perhaps passages of genuine letters to Timothy and Titus, they give us a picture of the Pauline churches after the death of the Apostle.[1] When these letters were written the organisation of the local community was already crystallised. In place of the varied organs of the Spirit and the diverse ministry which characterise the letters to the Corinthians, there are now two offices, named and defined, that of Elders and that of Deacons. This had evidently become the fixed rule in the Pauline churches. In *Philippians* i. 1 the elders are called Overseers; but we gather from *Acts* xx. that the two terms were interchangeable; for in ver. 17 we are told that the elders of the church of Ephesus came to meet Paul at Miletus, and in ver. 28 Paul addresses them as overseers, the word which afterwards stood for bishop. In each local community, therefore, at the end of the New Testament times, we

[1] See introduction to "The Pastoral Epistles" in the Century Bible, p. 46.

find a body of men (the number is never prescribed) indifferently designated Elders (presbyters) or Overseers (bishops). And they are supported by another body, the number also not prescribed, now definitely named Deacons. In I. *Tim.* iii. the qualifications of an elder or bishop are described; and a similar list of qualifications is given in *Tit.* i. 5–9, where the identity of the terms elder and bishop is shown, for elders are to be appointed in every city, and then the requirements for the office are stated in the following verse, proceeding "for the bishop must be blameless." We have not then reached the stage which we shall see clearly marked in the Epistles of Ignatius, the stage of monarchical episopacy—that is, the appointment of a supreme minister in each congregation with the title of overseer, or bishop, distinguished from the elders, or presbyters. The latest development reached in the New Testament shows us a board of elders or overseers directing the affairs of the community.[1] The function of the elders may be inferred from their qualifications. It must be noted at once that the primary qualification is goodness. Office divorced from character has not yet suggested itself as a possibility. The elder must be blameless, without reproach, even in the estimate of outsiders. He is a married man, but must not have more than one wife; his children must

[1] The position of James in the church at Jerusalem pointed in the direction of the monarchical episcopate; and if the angels of the seven churches in the Apocalypse are men, and not the guardian heavenly spirits, we may argue that in Asia Minor the example of Jerusalem was followed.

be believers also; he must rule his own household well, as an evidence that he can rule well the church of God. He must be an example to the flock; he must teach Christianity by being a Christian. But the task of teaching has now devolved on the elder. We do not know whether the liberty of prophesying which at first existed was totally suppressed, but the elders were now responsible for teaching the truth and for refuting error. They hold a deposit of sound doctrine, written or unwritten, from which they cannot depart themselves or allow others to depart: "holding to the faithful word which is according to the teaching . . . able both to exhort in the sound doctrine, and to convict the gainsayers" (Tit. i. 9). The elders took the place which, as we saw, was occupied by the elders in the synagogue. They were the guardians and depositaries of the new law, as the Jewish elders were of the old. We cannot yet discern any book or books, even a germinal New Testament, kept in the congregation as the Torah was kept in the synagogue. The Apostles' teaching was still living and fresh in every one's mind. Peter's preaching, if tradition is correct, must have been written down by Mark, and copies of that earliest Gospel may have been widely disseminated. Letters of Apostles, Paul's, Peter's, John's, were known in certain churches, and gradually copied and extended to all. But the deposit of teaching was possessed by every board of elders in some tangible form. Perhaps the interesting little book, the "Teaching of the Twelve Apostles," discovered by Bryennios in 1875, represents the text-book which existed in the churches before the New Testament

assumed a germinal canonical form in the first half of the second century. But however the apostolic teaching was recorded, the board of elders was responsible for keeping it and imparting it to the church.

The functions of the deacons cannot be inferred from the qualifications (I. Tim. iii. 8). The moral requirements are the same, substantially, as those of the elders. The phrase "holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience" might seem to imply that they also in their degree were called upon to teach; but this inference is denied by Hort, whose comment on the office of deacons should be carefully studied. "The mystery of the faith," he says, "undoubtedly a difficult phrase, is probably, as Weiss explains it, the secret constituted by their own inner faith, not known to men but inspiring all their work; and then the stress lies on 'in a pure conscience' (see the association of faith and a pure or good conscience in i. 5, 19). Thus in this clause a true inward religion and a true inward morality are laid down as required for the office of deacons; that is, the external nature of the services chiefly rendered by them was not to be taken as sanctioning any merely external efficiency. The lowest service to be rendered to the Ecclesia and to its members would be a delusive and dangerous service if rendered by men, however otherwise active, who were not themselves moved by the faith on which the Ecclesia rested, and governed by its principles. This, however, has nothing to do with teaching on the part of the deacons, to which there is no reference in the whole passage. On the other hand, we may safely say that it would have been contrary to the spirit of the

apostolic age to prohibit all teaching on the part of any deacons who had real capacity of that kind. But this would be no part of their official duty, and so it naturally finds no mention here.

"The last verse, iii. 13, has been often understood to say that excellent discharge of the duties of a deacon would rightly entitle him to promotion to a higher kind of work, doubtless that of an elder. 'Standing' undeniably means a step, and so might easily be used for a grade of dignity or function. But the rest of the verse renders this interpretation unnatural; and the true sense doubtless is that deacons by excellent discharge of their duties may win for themselves an excellent vantage ground, a standing a little as it were above the common level, enabling them to exercise an influence and moral authority to which their work as such could not entitle them."[1]

It will be observed from ver. 11 that there were deaconesses as well as deacons, not the wives of deacons, but women elected to the office on account of moral and spiritual qualifications. The place of widows in the church (I. Tim. v. 1–16) tempts one to suppose that deaconesses were widows, but that identification cannot be established.

The function of this second order, the deacons and deaconesses, in the church is never specifically determined. We cannot identify them with the seven in *Acts*, and the use of the word in the New Testament to cover very various forms of ministry—*e.g.* Paul describes

[1] Hort's "The Christian Ecclesia," pp. 201, 202.

himself once as a deacon—leaves us in much uncertainty about the specific function entrusted to these officials. But this seems clear, the deacons were the main instruments for giving practical effect to the mutual sympathy of the members of the body. They visited the sick and distributed alms, they sought the erring and arranged for their instruction. In the assemblies of the church they managed the details of the worship, attending to the comfort and order of the members. They may have been readers, and leaders of the praise. They were, in a word, the active connecting links between the members of the community; and the importance and dignity of the office cannot be ignored.

The opening of the Epistle to the Philippians shows that the elders and deacons together formed a council which represented the whole church. And so in the "Teaching of the Twelve Apostles," xv.: "Choose therefore for yourselves to be bishops and deacons, men worthy of the Lord, meek, not lovers of money, &c."

We can detect also some development in the worship of the church. The stress laid on Scripture in II. *Tim.* iii. 16 implies that the Old Testament was read in the church; and reading was evidently a specific part of the worship (I. Tim. iv. 13). And we can surmise the beginning of that musical element in the worship which afterwards gained ground, and has sometimes run into an excess, in which its original principle is forgotten. *Eph.* v. 19 shows that the assembly of the church was accustomed to engage in antiphonal hymns; the gratitude to God for Christ, and the joy in the fellowship found expression in

song. We do not as yet perceive any instrumental music, borrowed from the older cultus, but it is thought that there are traces of early Christian hymns in the New Testament. Especially I. *Tim.* iii. 16 looks in the Greek like a fragment of verse, an anticipation of such a chant as the *Te Deum*, for the clauses fall into a balanced measure which is well represented in Nestle's Greek Testament (British and Foreign Bible Society):—

"Who was manifest in flesh,
Was justified in Spirit,
Was seen of angels,
Was preached among the nations,
Was believed on in the world,
Was taken up in glory."

Curiously enough we do not discern any growth towards sacerdotalism or any development of the sacramental idea. Indeed if we are to regard John's writings as the latest glimpse the New Testament affords of the church, we have this very remarkable phenomenon; the two sacraments of baptism and the Supper are drawn back from the prominence which they at first received, spiritualised, and merged in the general life and growth of the Christian. Baptism is referred to in *John* iii., in order to show that the birth of the soul must be by the Spirit, and not by water alone. The institution of the Eucharist is deliberately omitted from the narrative of the Last Supper, and the spiritual truth of it is secured by the discourse on the bread of life in chap. vi., where Jesus insists

that His flesh must be eaten and His blood drunk if we are to have life, but guards against the scandal of literalism by saying: "The words that I have spoken unto you are spirit and are life" (John vi. 63).

But in the picture of the church, as the New Testament leaves it, there are two elements which demand some discussion. The Apostles are still there; and over and above the organisation just described there are the nuncios or agents of the Apostles, like Timothy and Titus, engaged in organising or regulating the churches. How are we to regard these two factors in the life of the church?

It is one of Hort's most striking contributions to our knowledge of the New Testament to show indisputably from the New Testament itself that there was no apostolic order.[1] If the Twelve stand for an order and not for all Christians, the Lord's Supper is only enjoined on the successors of the Apostles, and not on the Christian community. No functions of the Apostles as such can be discovered, except that they were witnesses of the Resurrection, and the first circle of believers that constituted the rudimentary church. They had no exceptional authority, and Paul, himself claiming to be an apostle, though not one of the Twelve, speaks of them almost contemptuously as "those who seemed to be pillars," flatly refusing obedience to them or connection with them, if they did not recognise Christ and Christ's com-

[1] Hort, "The Christian Ecclesia," pp. 30, 39, 55, 65, 84, 133, 158, 167.

mandment as he himself understood it (Gal. ii. 6). The authority of Apostles was moral, not formal, and where the moral weight declined, the authority disappeared. Paul himself, claiming in the most unequivocal way to be an apostle on an equality with the Twelve, never exercised any authority over the churches, beyond that which came from his character and his services. He argues and pleads, or if he commands it is solely on the ground of personal obligations. So far as the apostolate was an office of permanent continuance, it is represented by men or women who are endued with the Spirit for the missionary work of extending the Kingdom and founding new churches. This is evident from *Acts* xiv. 4–14, where Paul and Barnabas, engaged in the missionary task, are termed apostles.[1] In II. *Cor.* viii. 24 the emissaries of Paul who were engaged in similar work are termed apostles (R.V. margin). In *Phil.* ii. 25 the word "apostle" loses all special significance, and means, as it does etymologically, a messenger. (*Cf.* Heb. iii. 1; John xiii. 16.)

The most careful study of the word "apostle" in the New Testament is made by Harnack, "Expansion of Christianity," i. 398 *seq.*: "Paul holds fast to the wider conception of the apostolate, but the Twelve Disciples form in his view its original nucleus." Gradually in the sub-apostolic age the term was restricted to the original Twelve and Paul.

Harnack has shown that Judaism had its apostles,

[1] *Rom.* xvi. 7, Andronicus and Junias seem to be "apostles."

who were sent from Jerusalem to supervise the Diaspora, to collect money, and to hold the scattered Jews in the unity of Israel. Thus Paul was an apostle of Judaism at the time when he was called to be an apostle of Christ. The three ministerial names, apostles, prophets, and teachers, might all therefore have been borrowed from contemporary Judaism.

When therefore the church is said to be built upon the Apostles (Eph. ii. 20) it is impossible to think of a peculiar order, transmitting peculiar powers. The Apostles who form the foundation are the witnesses of the fact of Christ; so far as their testimony is written in the New Testament, those writings take the place of the Apostles in the subsequent periods of the church. So far as their office is continued, it is to be sought in the missionaries of the church, Augustine, Patrick, Columba, Raymund Lull, Xavier Schwartz, Carey, Martyn, and that long roll of saints and martyrs which carry on the mission of the Twelve, and of Paul and Barnabas.

Timothy and Titus stand in a unique position in the New Testament, and some have sought to find in them the earliest example of "bishops" in the later episcopal sense of the word. Because they appoint elders in new communities (Titus i. 5), it is supposed that we have here the beginning of episcopal ordination. But the contention cannot be sustained. The relation of Titus to Crete or of Timothy to Ephesus is only temporary. They are the agents of Paul entrusted with a special task. So far from being in a position of superiority over the churches, they

are young men, whose youth the elders are in danger of despising, and they exercise their authority in organising and teaching, solely by being themselves ensamples of the flock.

Ordination was not a specific, still less a supernatural, rite, conferring power or authority. It was only the laying on of hands, the act symbolical of blessing, the sign by which the congregation, through its leaders, appointed men to certain duties. "The only passages of the New Testament," says Hort,[1] "in which laying on of hands is connected with an act answering to ordination are four, viz. *Acts* vi. 6, the laying on of the hands of the Twelve on the Seven at Jerusalem at their first appointment; *Acts* xiii. 3, the laying on of the hands of the representatives of the Ecclesia of Antioch on Barnabas and Saul in consequence of a prophetic monition sending them forth; and the two passages about Timothy (I. Tim. iv. 14; II. Tim. i. 6), likewise due in all probability to another prophetic monition sending him forth on a unique mission intimately connected with that former mission. Jewish usage (the Semichah, Num. xxvii. 18, 23) in the case of Rabbis and their disciples renders it highly probable that, as a matter of fact, laying on of hands was largely practised in the ecclesiæ of the apostolic age as a rite introductory to ecclesiastical office. But as the New Testament tells us no more than what has been already mentioned, it can hardly be likely that any essential principle was held to be

[1] "The Christian Ecclesia," p. 215.

involved in it. It was enough that an Ecclesia should, in modern phrase, be organised, or in the really clearer apostolic phrase be treated as a body made up of members with a diversity of functions; and that all things should be done decently and in order."

The most astonishing thing in the churches of the New Testament is the absence of priests. Our English word "priest" is derived from "presbyter" (elder); and in that sense the priest has New Testament justification. But the presbyter of the New Testament has no sacerdotal functions. There is no sacrifice to offer, no mediation necessary, because Christ Himself, for ever present in the Spirit, is the one sacrifice, the sole mediator. The whole community is, in Peter's phrase, "a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (I. Pet. ii. 5); but neither does Peter claim to be a priest nor call his fellow-elders priests. When through Jewish and pagan influences sacerdotalism crept into the church it sought in vain for authorisation from the New Testament. The straits to which the defenders of sacerdotalism were put to justify their practice out of the apostolic writings may be judged by this, that the only passages which can be cited, against the unbroken testimony of the remainder of the book, are, "We have an altar" (Heb. xiii. 10), and "This do" (Luke xxii. 19). This is indeed a slender foundation for sacerdotal claims. For the altar is shown to be spiritual by the nature of the sacrifice offered on it, viz. "A sacrifice of praise, that is, the fruit of lips which make confession to His name" (Heb. xiii. 15). And "This do" is

drawn into the desperate defence of a sacrificial priesthood by the accidental circumstance that in Greek the word "to do" has a technical meaning in relation to religion, viz. "to sacrifice." By giving to the common word "do" this exceptional meaning in the institution of the Supper, sacerdotalism maintains that Jesus meant "this sacrifice."

But in the church of the New Testament there is no room for priest or altar or sacrifice. Christ is Himself too manifest; He is the Priest, He the Altar, and He the sacrifice. The Spirit manifests Him not in external rites or symbols but in the spirits of believing men and women, who speak and live, who love and serve, exhorting, teaching, praying, praising, ministering, giving, in such a way as to manifest Christ both to one another and to him who occupies the seat of the unbeliever. Sacerdotalism is a reversion to type, not a development of Christianity.

§ 3. The development in the New Testament of the idea of the church as a whole remains to be considered. The church in the concrete is always the local community of believers organised under the rule of elders and deacons. We never hear of "the church of Christ," only of "the churches of Christ" (Rom. xvi. 16). Once where the phrase, "the church of God," occurs, some authorities read "the church of the Lord" (Acts xx. 28). But the church *in esse* is only the sum total of the local communities, so that the current mode of speech is "the churches," not "the church" (Acts ix. 31, xv. 41, xvi. 5; Rom xvi. 4, xvi. 16; I. Cor. vii. 17, xi. 16, xiv. 33, 34, xvi. 1,

19; II. Cor. viii. 1, 18, 19, 23, 24, xi. 8, 28, xii. 13; Gal. i. 2, 22; Phil. iv. 15; I. Thess. ii. 14; II. Thess. i. 4; Rev. i. 4, 11, 20, xxii. 16). And yet the keynote struck in the earliest use of the word "church" in the New Testament (Matt. xvi. 18) never fails to vibrate throughout. As we follow the books of the New Testament chronologically we become increasingly conscious that Christ can and does speak of His church as a whole. Whatever may be the relation of the ideal whole to the empirical parts, His church is one edifice rising on the sure foundation of His Sonship and Messiahship, constituted in the first instance by the confession of His original disciples, reared by living stone upon living stone, as one after another receives the same faith and makes the same confession.

The Epistles to the *Ephesians* and *Colossians* seemed designed to make this clear, and more than one echo in *Hebrews* and the *Pastorals* and the *Apocalypse* indicate how the saying ascribed to Jesus, "On this rock I will build My church," was engrained in the thought of Christians. Thus when Paul speaks of the Body of Christ, he has not in view the local church, but rather the one church universal. It is of this august body that Christ is the head (Eph. i. 22). This church is described as a chaste bride, adorned, and plighted to Christ. In that fair body there are the indefinite varieties of individual character and function; but they are organically united. Each person like a limb or an artery or a nerve of the body is essential to the whole. There is no division or schism in the body; it can only be one and undivided. This

church, the Bride or Body of Christ, is the fulness of Him that filleth all; it is the final cause of creation; to achieve it men came to be, were tried and fell, were redeemed by Christ and gathered together in one. The final manifestation of this elect company, the new Jerusalem descending out of heaven, will be the palingenesia of the earth, the justification of its existence.

This is the church against which the gates of Hades cannot prevail. It is through Christ incorporate in the life of God, and shows His purity, His power, and His immortality. This great and transcendental idea of the church is so presented in the New Testament, that, despite all the errors and crudities of the churches in being, it remains as the dominating vision, the first and the final idea. Whenever it is mentioned, the writer glows with a holy enthusiasm; the passion throbs through the words and is not weakened by centuries. The church so conceived is "the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (I. Tim iii. 15). It is "the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven" (Heb. xii. 23). It is the loved Bride of Christ; "Even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for it; that He might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word, that He might present the church to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. v. 25–27).

The relation between this spotless, heavenly, unified church and the local societies, so strained and torn

with human sin and failure, is not in the New Testament determined. When we begin to follow the development of the church beyond the border of the Canon, we find that the hope sprang up of realising this transcendental unity by means of a powerful organisation. The student of ecclesiastical history must always raise the question, Was this very natural and human idea the correct one? Was it the fulfilment of the intention in the mind of Christ, implicit in the heart of the new religion?

The local church was unified in a bishop. The bishops were unified under metropolitans and patriarchs. Finally they were all unified in the autocracy of one infallible Pope. Thus the endeavour was made to realise the church which is the pillar and ground of the truth, the general assembly of the firstborn, the spotless Bride of Christ.

The result in the judgment of the world has discredited the method; if the method was the thought of Christ and the essence of Christianity, Christianity itself is discredited, and must perish in the disappointment and indignation of mankind. But a great hope remains. Perhaps the method was wrong. Perhaps it was a carnal and earthly interpretation of a spiritual idea. At any rate for the comfort of those who believe, the New Testament itself, the original witness to Christianity, the thought of our Lord and His apostles, stands wholly acquitted of the mistake, if mistake it is. In it there are the local churches coming into being, and there is the spiritual transcendental church united in Christ and Christ alone. But it knows nothing of bishops,

patriarchs, metropolitans, and popes; it never suggests authoritative councils, and the two swords of temporal and spiritual authority.

If the event shows that man in his blindness has erred, and taken a pitiably false way of realising the splendid ideal, there is nothing to prevent him from going back to the sources, and there reading with purged eyes the purpose of Christ and the Apostles. He may avert his eyes from the tragic stream of ecclesiastical history, the tale of strife and ambition, of superstition and tyranny, of hypocrisy and corruption, and may see that from the beginning the kingdom came without observation, and the Bride of Christ was gathered in the lowly and simple believers of all ages. There is cause for sorrow and contrition, but not for despair.

CHAPTER IV

THE SUB-APOSTOLIC DEVELOPMENT

§ 1. A SCANTY literature has come down to us from the time immediately succeeding the apostolic age. First and most important is the "Teaching of the Twelve Apostles," which, though constantly referred to, and in early times classed with the canonical books (*e.g.* Clement of Alexandria calls it "Scripture"), had disappeared, until Bryennios discovered it in the library at Constantinople in 1875. Then we have the "Epistle of Barnabas" and the "Shepherd of Hermas," which Eusebius ("Eccl. Hist.," iii., chap. xxv.) places along with the "Teaching of the Twelve Apostles," amongst the Apocryphal books of the New Testament. The two letters of Clement, the letters of Ignatius, the Martyrdoms of Ignatius and of Polycarp, the letters of Polycarp and the letter to Diognetus, complete the list.

This literature, slender in quantity, is still more meagre in quality. It seems to be divided by a great gulf from the writings of the New Testament, and serves as a foil to bring out the inspiration and authority of the Canon. It furnishes us with no new truths, no important developments of doctrine, no guide to conduct, which cannot be

found, more convincingly stated, in the New Testament. To study it is like coming to the picture-gallery at Hampton Court after spending a day in the National Gallery. The New Testament is a gallery of priceless originals, selected and tested; the sub-apostolic literature is a collection of feeble copies and imitations. Nevertheless this sub-apostolic literature serves a useful purpose. The quotations in it from the New Testament furnish the earliest external evidence for the canonical books. And the notices of church order, organisation, and worship, enable us to fill to some degree the gap between the church of the New Testament and the church of the second century, in some respects so different, which appears in the writings of Justin Martyr, Hippolytus, Irenæus, Tertullian, and Clement of Alexandria. Overlapping in all probability the canonical books, and taking us down into the middle of the second century, the Apostolic Fathers, as they are called, enable us better to understand the development, which in its inception has been traced in the New Testament itself.

It is not necessary for our purpose to examine these writings thoroughly. That has recently been done with some care by Mr. Durell following on the work done by Hort in "The Christian Ecclesia."[1] But we may endeavour to summarise the conclusions which may be drawn from these intrinsically inferior books.

§ 2. First of all we look at the "Teaching of the Twelve Apostles," or as it is conveniently called in the Greek, the

[1] "The Historic Church," by J. C. V. Durell, B.D. (Cambridge University Press).

Didaché. Impossible as it is to think that this jejune document represents the teaching of Paul or of John, or even of Peter, we are yet forced to believe that it presents a faithful picture of the churches, or at least of many churches, as they were, when the original Apostles had gone, and the church began to feel her way towards a permanent constitution. The picture is that of independent churches, knit together by the possession of a common doctrine, and by the visits of itinerating preachers, who are called apostles and prophets (chap. xi.). But the idea of the church in its unity is obviously present; for in the Eucharistic prayer, the language is like that of *Ephesians*: "Remember, O Lord, Thy church to deliver her from all evil, and make her perfect in Thy love, and gather her together from the four winds, sanctified for Thy kingdom which Thou hast prepared for her; for Thine is the power and the glory for ever" (chap. x.). The church ideally is one, but the churches, in comparative isolation from one another, are the only organisation. There is no central, or even provincial, government. The "Apostles," who form a connecting link between the churches, are like the original Apostles only in name. They are woefully fallen from their authority and dignity; for the chief thought of the *Didaché* is to test them; they are to be received and even fed for two days; but if they propose to stay for a third day, or if they ask for money, they are to be regarded as false prophets. This suggests that the immediate successors of the Apostles were a burden rather than a help to the churches; and if the *Didaché* can be regarded as the authentic Teaching of the Apostles, it

represents the Apostles, not as securing the authority of their successors, but as protecting the churches against them. Special stress is laid on the itinerant visitors, if they wish to remain in a church, working with their own hands at their craft; if they refuse to do this they are called, in a remarkable Greek word, "Christ-traffickers," people who make a merchandise of Christ (chap. xii.). Dante might have read the *Didaché* when he describes the Rome of the fourteenth century as the place where Christ is trafficked all day long—

"Dove tutto di si merca Christo."

At the same time, as in the New Testament, a true prophet or a true teacher, who stands the tests and settles down in a church, may be supported by the first-fruit offerings of the people (chap. xiii.). This is all that is said about the organisation of the church as a whole. The rest refers only to the individual church, the local congregation.

The community is autonomous. It elects its own officers. The word for election, signifying to hold out the hand, is that used in the New Testament (see p. 40; II. Cor. viii. 19; Acts xiv. 23; Titus i. 5). The officers, as in *Philippians*, are called "bishops and deacons." Their qualifications remind us of the Pastoral Epistles. "Elect therefore for yourselves bishops and deacons worthy of the Lord, men meek and free from covetousness and true and approved, for they too minister to you the ministry of the prophets and teachers. Do not therefore despise them, for they are the honoured among

you with the prophets and teachers" (chap. xv.). Clearly the bishops and deacons are rather the servants than the rulers of the congregation, chosen for their moral qualifications, and supported by the voluntary respect due to their character. Nothing is said of their powers; baptism and the Supper are not in any special way connected with them.

The worship and ordinances are still thoroughly congregational, such as we have seen them in the New Testament. But here for the first time baptism is described and regulated. Only adults are baptized, after due instruction and a fast of one or two days, observed by baptizer and baptized together. The baptismal formula is that of *Matt.* xxviii. 19. Baptism is immersion; the water may be hot or cold. If there is not enough water, aspersion may be substituted: "Pour the water on the head thrice in the name of the Father and Son and Holy Spirit" (chap. vii.).

Fasting is enjoined: oddly enough the only distinction from "the hypocrites," presumably the Pharisees (Luke xviii. 12), is that, while they fasted on the second and fifth, Christians are to fast on the fourth and the sixth days, of the week. The prayer is the Lord's Prayer, and it is to be repeated thrice a day.

The Lord's Supper is called the Eucharist; it is still as in I. *Cor.* a meal, an *agapé*, and there is no sacerdotal or sacrificial element in it. As the earliest description of this sacrament after St. Paul, this passage is of peculiar interest. First comes a thanksgiving for the cup: "We thank Thee, our Father, for the holy vine of Thy servant David which Thou hast made known to us through Thy

servant Jesus; to Thee be glory for ever." Then for the broken bread: "We thank Thee, our Father, for the life and knowledge which Thou hast made known to us through Thy servant Jesus; to Thee be glory for ever. As this broken bread was scattered upon the mountains, and being gathered together became one, so let Thy church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into Thy kingdom; for Thine is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ for ever."

Then follows a warning that only the baptized may eat and drink of the Eucharist, for the Lord said, "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs" (chap. ix.). When all had eaten and drunk to the full—for it was a regular meal—another thanksgiving followed for the food, and especially for the spiritual meat. "But to us Thou hast granted spiritual food and drink and eternal life through Thy servant." The thanksgiving ended with the Christian watchword: Maranatha ("Come, Lord"). (*Cf.* I. Cor. xvi. 22.)

This then was the Supper in the beginning, just after the days of the Apostles. The change which has taken place in Justin Martyr's day is extraordinary and rapid; it is a change of which the apostolic and the sub-apostolic writers give no indication.

The assembly on the Lord's Day is prescribed. The object of it is to break bread and to give thanks. This must be preceded by a confession of sins, in order that the sacrifice may be pure. Every one must be reconciled to his fellow: "That your sacrifice be not defiled; for this is that which was spoken by the Lord: In every place and time offer to Me a pure sacrifice; for I am a

great king, saith the Lord, and My name is wonderful among the Gentiles" (Mal. i. 11, 14). This Old Testament text is doubtless the pivot on which the change from a meal to a sacrifice turns. The change is not so startling when we remember that in the old Semitic religions the meal and the sacrifice are identical (Robertson Smith, "The Religion of the Semites").

§ 3. From the *Didaché* we may pass to the witness of Clement of Rome, Ignatius, and Polycarp.

The two letters of Clement—though the second is rather a homily than a letter—are found in the Codex Alexandrinus of the New Testament (fifth century), though, as they follow the *Apocalypse*, Funk infers that they were not regarded as in the Canon. Still they had a great vogue and authority in the early age of the church. They were read in public worship, and Clement of Alexandria refers to his namesake as "our apostle." The epistle belongs to the end of the first century, and may therefore be as early as the later New Testament books. The homily is usually placed in the second quarter of the second century. In the first letter the local church is an organic unity, and Clement writes to the church of Corinth as the mouthpiece of the church of Rome: "The Church of God which sojourneth in Rome sends greeting to the Church of God which sojourneth in Corinth." The local churches are united in the one church, not by an organised hierarchy, but simply by the fraternal relations, expressed now by such letters as the one before us.

The local church corresponds to the description in

I. *Pet.* of the "holy priesthood." There is but one priest, Jesus Christ; the congregation through Him offers up "offerings and ministrations." The part of the ministers in the sacrifice of the church is not specified, for it is not possible to see in the general phrase about the elders, "those who have blamelessly and holily offered the gifts of the episcopate (overseeing)" in chap. xliv., any reference to a special part taken in the cultus. Ministers and people are still regarded as one, forming the royal priesthood. The ministers are called indifferently elders and bishops, with the subordinate order of deacons; but they are not priests. On the contrary, each man in his own order is to offer the Eucharist to God (chap. xli.).

The transition, however, from the control of the Apostles to the normal management of the churches is described in a famous passage which may be given in full: "And our apostles knew through our Lord Jesus Christ that there will be strife over the name of episcopacy" (or overseering). "For that reason, having received perfect foresight, they constituted the aforesaid, and then gave an ordinance, that when they should have fallen asleep, other tried men should succeed to their ministry. Those therefore who were constituted by the apostles or afterwards by other men of repute, with the consent of the whole church, and who have blamelessly served the flock of Christ with humility, peaceably and not illiberally, having received the testimony of all many times, we cannot think it right to depose from the ministry" (chap. xliv. 1–3). This is most interesting. It suggests that

as Titus appointed elders in all the churches, so the Apostles of the first age left the churches supplied with a succession of men who would undertake the management of affairs. It also confirms the principles which are found in the New Testament, that the elders and deacons were approved by the church itself, and held their position on the ground of their character, supported by the goodwill of the people. Clement's object in writing to Corinth is to prevent the popular movement against men appointed in this way. In his effort to defend certain ejected ministers he gives the first hint of indefeasible rights and a transmitted apostolic authority in the ministry.

But in Clement of Rome there is no hint of a single bishop over the local church. The bishops are still only the board of elders. The elders are not priests; their functions are still the same as in the New Testament, and the consent of the church is considered vital to their position and authority.

The homily of Clement (II. Clement) belonging to a later date—say, A.D. 140—agrees with the Epistle of Clement in knowing only elders and no bishop in the monarchical sense. But the interesting little work contains a striking passage on the spiritual church, founded before the sun and moon. "A living church," he says, "is the body of Christ." Paul's idea of marriage is in his mind. "Christ is the male, the church the female." Then, with a mixture of metaphor, he says that the pre-existent church was manifested in the body of Christ; and the body is left behind in the world as the church.

He who violates the church the body, violates Christ the Spirit.

The letters of Ignatius are surprising, because suddenly and with extraordinary vehemence they show us the local church unified in a single minister, called now a bishop, and distinguished from the elders. As Ignatius was martyred in A.D. 107, the letters, if genuine, show us the church in Antioch, and the churches in Asia Minor, as they were after the death of the Apostle John. Possibly the fact in the New Testament which best prepares us for this advance in church government is the series of letters to the seven churches in the *Apocalypse*. The "angel of the church" is evidently the representative of the church. And what the angel of the church is there, the bishop is in Ignatius. The interest of this connection is deepened by the fact that Ignatius writes to two of the seven churches, Smyrna and Philadelphia. At Ephesus the bishop is Onesimus; at Magnesia, Damas; at Tralles, Polybius; at Smyrna, Polycarp. The bishop, or angel, of Philadelphia is not named. Curiously enough the letter to Rome does not refer to the bishop of that church, and indeed no mention of any kind is made of the ministry there.

In the letters of Ignatius the bishop, or head of the local church, is the centre of unity, the representative of Christ. To break away from the communion of the bishop is schism, though he has not gone the length of saying that there is no salvation for the schismatic. On the contrary he thinks that even the prophets of the Old Testament were "saved in the

unity of Jesus Christ . . . approved of Jesus Christ, and numbered together in the Gospel of our common hope" (Philad. v.).

Ignatius is quite sure that the Apostles themselves instituted this episcopal office. In view of the silence of the New Testament this confidence is very striking. We are inclined to infer, as we have already seen, that the "monarchical" episcopate of James at Jerusalem, and the "angels of the churches" in Asia Minor, represent the practice of the Twelve Apostles, with which Ignatius was familiar, and that the Pauline method of elders and deacons without a president was peculiar to his churches, and perhaps only transitional, attaching to the period when he was in active control of all his churches. At any rate, the eager and confident attitude of Ignatius, on the subject of a single minister presiding over the local church, shows that the practice which has prevailed all through Christendom is carried back, if not to the time of the Apostles, at any rate to that which immediately succeeded. There is an august simile; the local church is compared to the heavenly court; "The bishop presiding after the likeness of God, and the presbyters after the likeness of the council of the apostles, with the deacons also who are most dear to me, having been entrusted with the diaconate of Jesus Christ" (Magn. vi.).

The Ignatian bishop exactly corresponds to the pastor of a Congregational Church in England or in America. And that is the direction in which we may most hopefully seek to illustrate the state of the church in the time of Ignatius. In each place there is one church. He

would not, like modern Congregationalists, allow several churches in a single city. He, like St. Paul, and the New Testament generally, speaks of "the church which is in Ephesus" or "in Magnesia," but he would never have said "the churches of Ephesus." Each city had its one organised community, with the bishop at the head of it, and its due complement of elders and deacons. Ignatius is the earliest writer to use the phrase which acquired so amazing a power, "the Catholic Church"; but he means by it not what it afterwards came to mean, but the sum total of the local communities held together by mutual intercourse and acts of sympathy. The bishop does not preside over several churches, but only over one; we do not even hear yet of synods of bishops from neighbouring towns. The church is itself the sovereign authority, which appoints its own representatives. The authority, however, of bishop and presbyters, when once appointed, was indefeasible. Obedience to them must be rendered "as to the apostles of Jesus Christ our hope" (Trall. ii.), so that in the view of Ignatius the presbytery was virtually the successor of the Apostles, the presbytery, that is, of the local church.

But the bishop of the church has no sacerdotal functions, nor does he exercise his authority, otherwise than through his moral and spiritual qualities. As Mr. Durell puts it: "We may best sum up his position by saying that he is to be the elder brother in the brotherhood of the church."[1]

The testimony of Polycarp, the younger contemporary

[1] "The Historic Church," p. 55.

of Ignatius, to whom Ignatius wrote one of his extant letters, entirely accords with the picture of the churches given by the elder man, except that Polycarp never refers to the bishop. He directs his letters as "from Polycarp and the presbyters that are with him" (Phil. inscrip. i. 5, 6), implying that he regarded himself as a fellow-presbyter. It seemed to be Ignatius' peculiar mission to magnify the office of the president, or bishop, of the presbytery, but apparently his ardent and exalted view of the position was not shared by his contemporaries. Polycarp fits in with the Pastoral Epistles much more exactly than Ignatius does.

In his "Epistle to the Philippians" we see "the widows" as in I. *Tim.* v. 9, an order of deaconesses, who must be "soberminded as touching the faith of the Lord, making intercession without ceasing for all men, abstaining from all calumny, evil speaking, false witness, love of money, and every evil thing, knowing that they are God's altar, and that all sacrifices are carefully inspected, and that nothing escapeth Him either of their thoughts or intents, or any of the secret things of the heart" (Phil. iv.). Nothing could illustrate better the unsacerdotal character of the church in the middle of the second century than this analogy. The altar in the church is the heart of the people, here of the widows, and the offering is the holy life which is acceptable to God. Polycarp's qualifications for the presbyter are very similar to those for the presbyter or bishop in the Pastorals; and so with the qualifications for the deacons. The similarity is the more interesting because the words and phrases are not, with one exception, those of the New Testament.

Polycarp's presbyters must be "compassionate, merciful, attending to all the weak, converting the wanderers, abstaining from all wrath, from respect of persons, and false judgment, not readily believing anything against any one, not precipitate in judgment, far from all love of money." And so the deacons must be "blameless, not slanderers, not doubletongued (I. Tim. iii. 8), not lovers of money, self-controlled in everything, compassionate, careful, walking according to the truth."

The qualifications for office, as in the New Testament, are moral. The authority to be exercised rests on this ethical basis. But it is evident that between the time of Paul and that of Polycarp, the presbyters had become more judicial. Their teaching function had receded, their governing function had advanced.

In the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, a letter written from the church in Smyrna describing the death of their leader, about A.D. 155 or 156, Polycarp is called "bishop." The "Catholic Church" is mentioned three times in the same sense as in Ignatius; meaning the one universal church composed of all the local churches.

§ 4. We turn now to the remaining pieces of the slender sub-apostolic literature, the "Epistle of Barnabas," the "Epistle to Diognetus," and the "Shepherd of Hermas."

First, the "Epistle of Barnabas." This not very edifying production is dated in the third decade of the second century. Of the New Testament books it bears the nearest resemblance to *Hebrews;* for its central thought is that the church is the new Israel. The church is the Promised Land; the promises made to the Jews are transferred to the Christians. The church is the vessel

of the Spirit. But while the church is thus realised in its unity (*e.g.* vii. § 11) the only organisation is that of the local church. No early writer shows more clearly the connection between the "ecclesia," or synagogue, of the old order and the "ecclesia" or church of the new. He quotes the Psalms (xlii. 3, xxii. 23, LXX): "I will make confession unto thee in an ecclesia of my brethren and I will sing unto thee in the midst of an ecclesia of saints," as if the word church were still fluid, and meant only an assembly of persons. If he were asked what persons formed the assemblies which took the name of Christ, he would answer, they who have received Jesus as the scapegoat for their sins. And if we asked, what is the characteristic of the assemblies, he would say, brotherhood. That was the essence of the church in his eyes. He makes no reference to the ministers of the church at all, though he implies that there were "teachers," in his modest disclaimer of being one: "I, not as a teacher, but as one of yourselves will sketch a few truths through which you will rejoice in the present world" (chap. i. § 8).

The general resemblance to the teaching of *Hebrews* has given rise to the supposition that Barnabas was the author of *Hebrews*. But nothing can be clearer than this, that the author of this insipid and childish composition was not the writer of the most eloquent book in the New Testament. If Barnabas wrote *Hebrews*, the "Epistle of Barnabas" is an apocryphal imitation of that writer by a very inferior hand. But valueless as the book is doctrinally, and far removed as it is from the splendid vision which showed us "the general assembly

and church of the firstborn who are written in heaven," the document has its value in showing how completely free from sacerdotalism and even clericalism the church was in A.D. 130. It was a brotherhood still, as in the New Testament.

Second, the "Epistle to Diognetus." This really beautiful composition is usually dated a decade earlier than Barnabas. It is a noble statement of Christianity at its birth; it makes clear what was of the essence of the new religion. The church as it appears here, we may assume, possesses all the notes of the church as it came from Christ and the first Apostles. The author finds Diognetus interested in Christianity and endeavours to set forth, "What God the Christians trust and how by serving Him they scorn the world and despise death, escaping the polytheism of the Greeks and the superstition of the Jews; their tender love for one another; and why they have appeared now and not earlier."

Christians, he says, are not distinguished from the rest of men by locality or speech or customs. But living indifferently in all countries and states they present "the constitution of their own State, marvellous and confessedly paradoxical." The church is a spiritual state pervading all earthly countries. The citizens of that invisible country are in the earthly states as strangers; every foreign country is their home, every home is foreign. Their morals alone distinguish them from the rest of the world: "They marry and bear children as others do, but they do not expose their offspring. They have a common table, but not a common bed. In the flesh, they do not live after the flesh. Their life is on

earth but their conversation in heaven. They obey the laws, but by their lives rise above them. They love all, and all persecute them. They are ignored and condemned; they are put to death, and made alive. They are poor and make many rich; they are short of all things, but abound in everything. They are dishonoured, but glorified in their dishonour; they are blasphemed, and yet vindicated. They are reviled, and bless; outraged, and honour. Doing good they are punished as bad; punished, they rejoice as being made alive. . . . To put it in a word, what the soul is in the body, Christians are in the world." All this breathes the spirit of the New Testament. That the church is the soul of the world, is an idea which seems caught from Jesus Himself. As the soul dwells in the body but is not of the body, Christians are in the world but not of the world. Themselves seen in the world, their piety is unseen. Evidently at this time the church, simple, humble, holy and unostentatious, was growing rapidly (chap. vi. § 9). Christians are the depositories of the heavenly truth, the truth of the Incarnate Son, the Maker of earth and sea.

Who knew what God was before *He* came? Now we know the Father through the Son—the nourisher, father, teacher, counsellor, physician, mind, light, honour, glory, strength, and life, that sets us free from care about earthly things. The first thing is to know Him, the next to be like Him.

The author does not make it very clear why the revelation came only late in time, but he leaves us in no doubt what the revelation was, or what effect it produces. It

is the revelation of God our Saviour, and the result is a community of those who believe in Him and are therefore in the world to save it. He writes as a learner from the Apostles and therefore a teacher of the nations. "The tradition of the Apostles is kept, and the grace of the church exults." The tree of life and knowledge is in the church, a paradise restored. But it is the love rather than the knowledge which is to be desired, for (quoting from Paul) "knowledge puffeth up, but love edifieth." The closing words of the epistle are very obscure, but if the text is correct they may give a picture of the church in her ministry and worship: "Salvation is shown, and apostles are made wise, and the passover of the Lord advances, the choirs assemble and are harmonised in order. And teaching the saints the word rejoices, through which the Father is glorified, to whom be glory for ever. Amen."

Again we have the noteworthy fact that the truth of the Gospel is presented, an apology for the church is offered, without any reference to clergy, or sacraments, or what are now called ecclesiastical practices. Everything is moral and spiritual only, as in the New Testament.

Third, the "Shepherd of Hermas." This mystical writing which had an extraordinary vogue in early times, but seems now frigid and lifeless enough, was, according to the Muratorian Fragment written by Hermas, "While his brother Pius, the bishop, was sitting in the chair of the church of the city of Rome." With all its extravagances and insipidities, therefore, it may yet show us what the Roman church was in the middle of the second century. The ministry is still in the stage in which the first

century left it. The church is not built on Peter, but on another rock, viz. Christ Himself, "As it were of a single stone being fitted together in one. And the stone-work appeared as if hewn out of the rock, for it seemed to me to be all a single stone." Thus the "Shepherd" follows Peter's Epistle, and does not sanction the later Roman dogma.

Only through the incarnate Christ can entrance into the living spiritual church be obtained. The holiness of the church is not transcendental but moral. They can dwell in the church, and they only, who have faith, continence, simplicity, guilelessness, reverence, knowledge, and love. The catholicity of the church consists in it containing all nations. The unity is made by the oneness in Christ. But the unity is ideal only, a goal to be ultimately reached. There is no thought of forestalling that final result by constructing a papal autocracy. Meanwhile Hermas, like all the sub-apostolic writers, knows of no organisation except that of the local church. In the Roman church, to whom he addresses his words, there were schisms, which he tries to heal. "Pope Pius I." no more produced unity in the local church of Rome than Pope Pius X. produces unity in Christendom to-day. "Look ye, children, lest these divisions of yours deprive you of your life."

Hermas is ascetic. The rich cannot enter the church unless they part with their riches. He favours the primitive communism. Entrance into the church is by baptism, and there seems to be no remission for post-baptismal sin. He is more eager to cast the wicked out of the church, and so to secure its purity, than to

save the individual sinners. He has the quaint idea that the Apostles descended into the place of departed spirits to administer baptism to the righteous. He leaves room for repentance in the world beyond death. He recommends fasting, but is afraid lest the prescribed fasts should be unreal and formal.

The ministry, as has been said, is still that of the New Testament, viz. "the apostles and bishops and teachers and deacons, who walked after the holiness of God, and exercised their office of bishop and teacher and deacon in purity and sanctity for the elect of God, some of them already fallen on sleep and others still living" (Vis. iii. 5). He evidently thinks of the first Apostles as a permanent element in the management of the church, perhaps by their writings or by the tradition which had come down from them. The deacons in the Roman church had the charge of widows and orphans; they had apparently abused their office to enrich themselves. The bishops are still the elders, "hospitable persons who gladly received into their houses at all times the servants of God without hypocrisy" (see Tit. i. 7). Though Hermas refers to Clement (Vis. ii. 4), who was presumably the head of the Roman church, he does not call him bishop. The president of the elders or bishops had not yet received the distinctive name of bishop which separated him from his fellow-elders.

Whether the teachers are the elders we cannot determine. But it is most interesting to find the prophet, as in the *Didaché* and as in the New Testament, still a living power in the church of Rome, not an ordained

officer, but a man filled with the Spirit. "When the man who hath the Divine Spirit cometh into a synagogue (this name was still used for a church, as in *James*) of righteous men, who have faith in a Divine Spirit, and intercession is made to God by the synagogue of those men, then the angel of the prophetic spirit lying close to him fills the man, and the man filled with the Holy Spirit speaks to the congregation as the Lord wills" (Mand. xi. 9). This thoroughly New Testament picture is supplemented by the equally New Testament thought that "the man who has the Lord in his heart is able to master all things and all these commandments" (Mand. xii. 3).

Mr. Durell discredits the testimony of the Muratorian fragment, which places the "Shepherd" in the middle of the second century, because the ministry is so little developed. He refers it rather to the same period as *Clement*. Unable to determine the point, we can at any rate see that still, in the second century, the free spiritual worship, which appears in Paul's Epistles, was maintained, even in the church of Rome; the ministry was still incipient, making no claim to autocratic rule. The bishop in the monarchical sense of the word had hardly emerged, or at least had not gained a distinctive name.

§ 5. From our review of the sub-apostolic writings we get the following results: Broadly speaking, the church, as it appears in the New Testament, remains unmodified. There is no sacerdotal element, no sacramentarian tendency, no hierarchical principle. The church in an ideal and spiritual sense is one, a new Israel, a

leaven permeating the earth, like a soul in the body, without obliterating racial or political distinctions. But the organisation is only that of the local communities. Everywhere the local society is ordered for the purpose of worship and teaching and discipline, for the mutual help of members, and for the extension of the new religion in the world. Everywhere the constitution of the society is on the model of the synagogue, presbyterian. There are always elders and deacons chosen by the community to manage its affairs, to arrange its worship, to maintain the teaching and discipline. These leaders of the body are honoured, and in some cases supported, by the members of the church; but their authority invariably rests on their character and service, not upon supernatural powers entrusted to them.

The only point in which there seems to be an advance on the New Testament organisation is, that in some places the president of the elders is assuming the distinctive name of bishop. Like James at Jerusalem, or the "angels" of the seven churches of Asia, the bishop represents the congregation, and secures its unity. The vehemence with which Ignatius defends the arrangement gives us the impression that he was the inventor of it. But it was a development natural, and perhaps inevitable, in itself. A society cannot be held together, or exercise executive power, unless it can appoint a head, a president or monarch. The phrase "monarchical episcopate" is a high-sounding mode of describing this very natural development; and perhaps it has been chosen in order to justify the monarchical

position of bishops in later times, when a bishop ruled a diocese, or a province, or a country, or as *episcopus episcoporum* the whole Christian world; but the phrase may be kept as long as we remember that it only means the presidency of one elder in the board of elders of a local church, under the name of bishop. Such an officer is not recognised, or at least not named, in the New Testament. The one distinctive contribution of the sub-apostolic period was to recognise him, call him bishop, and make him the essential centre and unifying principle of each church.

One further point emerges, which could not very well appear in the New Testament itself; in these writings we see the influence of the New Testament as an authority. The quotations or references are very numerous. We can therefore see the early stages of the process by which in the second half of the second century the apostolic writings became the standard of doctrine. In the anti-Montanist movement the principle was already secure: "For one who has determined to order his life in accordance with the Gospel may neither add to nor subtract from this doctrine." By the end of the second century Irenæus can say: "Since, therefore, the tradition from the Apostles is thus held in the church and endures among us, let us turn to that scriptural proof provided by those Apostles who also wrote the Gospel." The scriptures were read in the assemblies of the church. In the canons of Hippolytus at the end of the century we find an order of readers mentioned; and Justin Martyr gives us a glimpse of the worship of the church in the words:

"The memoirs of the Apostles or the writings of the prophets are read as long as time permits, and when the reader has ceased the president verbally instructs and exhorts to the imitation of these good things" (Justin Martyr, *Apol.* i. 67).

The extraordinary superiority of the New Testament to the sub-apostolic fathers, and to the first group of great church writers, Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Tertullian, and Clement of Alexandria, contributed to this pre-eminence of Scripture. But in the first instance the New Testament won its authority, not from its intrinsic value, but from the belief that it contained the witness of the Apostles; it was the way by which the Apostles, and the apostolic office, continued to exist in the church for all time. The apostolic church was the church which rested on the testimony of the apostolic writings.

The sub-apostolic writers cover, roughly speaking, the first half of the second century. The Apologists, Aristides, Justin Martyr, begin the second half, and the more voluminous writers appear at the end of the century; and with them many great and important changes appear in the constitution and the theory of the church. But for a whole century after the death of St. Paul, the church continued to be very much what it is in the Pauline writings. When we study the New Testament, to understand what the church was at the beginning, we may be assured that we see there the church as it was, and as it wrought, and as it spread, for a whole century. The changes which came later begin to show themselves after that century, but during

the century there were only the slightest adumbrations of them. The church of the New Testament is not, therefore, as it might seem at the first careless glance, the nascent institution of the lifetime of the first Apostles, an infant which necessarily laid aside its childish things when it began to feel its feet. To regard the New Testament in that light is greatly to underestimate its value and authority for fixing the standard and the essential principles of the new society. The church of the New Testament is that organisation and mode of religious life which for a hundred years drove the roots of Christianity into the world, and extended the kingdom of Christ with amazing rapidity and effect. To find out, therefore, its essential principles, its driving power, and its method of extension, would be to discover how the church in all ages may extend and do her work. We are not yet called upon to note how the church of the New Testament developed into the historic church, how Christianity became Catholicism; we need not for the moment determine whether that development has been a legitimate growth, or a process of perversion and corruption. But we are concerned, confining ourselves to the New Testament as we see it in the light of the half century which follows, to discover the essential principles, the permanent forces of the church in this its earliest and purest state.

If we can succeed in distinctly conceiving this church which existed and worked for the first hundred years after the Apostles, we shall have a standard by which we can for all time test and correct subsequent developments. We may with confidence assert that nothing

can be of the essence of the church which is not clearly depicted in the New Testament; and on the other hand, what is essential to the church of the New Testament must be essential to the church of all time.

The investigation is by no means so easy as at first sight it seems. The New Testament does not set itself to depict and define the church, it only throws many sidelights upon it. It must always remain to some extent a matter of opinion which things are essential and which are not. Those who approach the New Testament only through the medium of the church-creeds and institutions, which are presumably derived from it, are prone to think that all the development is germinally present in the first age. But there are certain points indisputably clear, and on these we may dwell with confidence in the two succeeding chapters.

The emergence and trend of Catholicism must be considered afterwards.

CHAPTER V

THE FIRST NOTE OF THE CHURCH OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

§ 1. THE rock on which the Church was built was the faith in, and the confession of, Jesus Christ. But the faith was not formal or nominal, nor was the confession that of the lips. It was a faith which regenerated, and effected a complete conversion of life and character. Such a change was the work of God, and was initiated and carried out by His Spirit. The Spirit was the Holy Spirit, and they who were born again of the Spirit were holy. The working of the Spirit was to produce a likeness to Jesus Christ. It was as if Christ were born in the heart and grew, attaining the fulness of stature by a process of deepening faith. This was called living by faith in the Son of God, or walking in the Spirit, indifferently. Viewed in its intrinsic nature the life was a reproduction of the character and conduct of Christ; viewed in its causation it was due to the operation of the Holy Spirit.

Now Jesus Christ was above all things the Master, and the embodiment, of a new morality. It was a morality which assimilated man to God; it was different

from all morality previously known in its content and in its motive and in its sanction. As we study the life of Jesus in the Gospel narratives, the fact is borne in upon us from every episode. In Him goodness ceases to be negative, the mere abstinence from evil, and becomes positive, an active resolute course of communion with God and beneficence to men; in Him all personal and prudential motives disappear; He seeks not His own, but carries out the will of God for the love of it, lives for the kingship of God, and seeks to bless men as if that were the one object of existence. In Him the sanction of right conduct is not utilitarian; He is neither seeking pleasure, nor anxious to avoid pain; He is not driven to goodness by fear or the threat of punishment; the sole sanction lies in a perfect harmony with the will of God; He identifies his own will with God's, and desires only to be well pleasing to Him for its own sake. This was a new morality; not that the old precepts of goodness were necessarily altered, nor that new ideas of goodness took their place, but a new conception of what man should be was quietly introduced, a new motive was suggested, and above all the previous false or inadequate sanctions were removed, and an all-inclusive sanction, the will of the wise and holy God who is Love, was established.

This morality of Jesus was the first note of the church. The church was composed of those who had believed in Him, were regenerated by Him, and by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit were growing like Him.

In the earliest apologies addressed to Hadrian or

M. Aurelius, the Christian apologists unhesitatingly occupy this ground; they point confidently to the new lives, the pure characters, which are the result of faith.[1] Christians are epistles known and read of all men; they convey the doctrine of Christ through the regenerate and Christlike life. The testimony does not lie so much in the change from former vileness to a relative goodness, as in the positive type of nobility, purity, and trustworthiness, which shines like a star in the moral twilight of the world. Christians were a light shining in a dark place; they held out the truth, and attracted men to it by the love of it.

The constituents of the new goodness are clearly presented in the New Testament. But they do not strike the modern reader, because now, thanks to the New Testament, the Christian ideal is taken for granted, and its startling contrast to other standards is toned down. It is well, therefore, to emphasise the salient features of the character which was taking possession of the world, viz. truth, purity, and indifference to worldly possessions.

The new conception of truth is brought out in the story of Ananias and Sapphira. The event made an indelible impression on the early church. Here

[1] Harnack in "The Expansion of Christianity," i. p. 260, sums up this teaching of the Apologists, Aristides, Justin, Tertullian. One extract from Justin may suffice: "There is a distinction between death and death. For this reason the disciples of Christ die daily, torturing their desires and mortifying them according to the divine scriptures; for we have no part at all in shameless desires, or scenes impure, or glances lewd, or ears attentive to evil, lest our souls thereby be wounded."—*Apol.* xxvi.

was a lie which to antiquity would not have seemed a lie at all; in the holy enthusiasm of the new faith the members of the community were selling their goods and bringing the proceeds into a common stock. These two held back a part of the price; they wished to contribute to the support of the rest, but they hesitated to part with all their resources. They told the church, or at least they implied, that they were giving all. This "economy of truth," or "reservation," as the Jesuit moralists would call it, was immediately visited with condign punishment. The reserve was treated as a lie against the Holy Ghost, and the penalty was death. Into the new society of the church, as into the heavenly city, there could by no means enter anything which maketh a lie. Christ was the Truth, and it became at once the necessity for Christians to lie not one to another, but to speak the truth in love.

Considering the proneness of human nature to deceit and equivocation, and remembering how careless of truth men still are, we can only regard this demand of absolute transparency, and open candour of speech and action, as the dawn of a new era. Christians were people who would not lie; when persecution began they could save their lives by a few words of compliance, by placing a little incense on the emperor's brasier, by a trifling concealment of their inner faith. But without hesitation they refused compliance, and preferred torture and death.

Men are not naturally truthful; in many parts of the world deceit is counted cleverness; and purism in

language is hardly recognised as an ideal. But the church at the beginning, founded on the truth, made truth a foundation virtue. Difficult as it was even for a regenerate character to be absolutely truthful, the ideal was no more doubtful; the conscience was enlightened; and it was forthwith an obligation to tell the truth, without equivocation or reserve, in scorn of consequences, to count death itself preferable to the lie in the soul which draws a veil between a man and his God.

But more radical than the new doctrine of truth was the new doctrine of purity. In the world, into the midst of which the church was born, fornication was not condemned. Adultery was wrong because it robbed a man of his rights in his wife; but a man's infidelity was permitted. The indulgence of passion was regarded as natural; concupiscence was an appetite, not to be restrained more than the appetite for food; the common conscience did not reprove the results which followed from the laxity. When passion is unrestrained, it quickly falls a victim to satiety, and then, not able to draw off, it can only seek gratification in unnatural forms. The ancient world, like the Mohammedan world of to-day, and like the unchristian part of Christendom, was falling a prey to its own indulgence of vice.

Christ changed the whole idea and practice of those who believed in Him. The body was at once recognised as the temple of God; its appetites must be regulated with a view to the indwelling divinity. Not only were unnatural vices impossible, but the loose connections, concubinage, or fornication, were abhorrent.

The relation of man and wife was alone permitted, and that was sanctified by the exalted and mystical figure; it was regarded as a symbol of the union between Christ and the church. The Christian community began to practise a chastity which before had been not only unrealised, but inconceivable. The conjugal tie, not only inviolate but sanctified and brought into the light of eternity, made possible a new conception of home, gave a sanctity to children, and opened up a new future for the human race. Infanticide, the unquestioned practice of antiquity, was impossible; for the offspring of the Christian was regarded as from the first holy.[1]

Equally important was the view which the new goodness took of material goods. Jesus had by His example and precept discredited what He called Mammon. He directed men's minds away from earthly possessions, evanescent and unsatisfying, to the wealth of the spirit, the heavenly relation of love and service and help. Thus in the community based on Him, silver and gold were nothing accounted of. To have food and raiment was enough. Superfluous possessions were bestowed on those who needed them. Another of the significant

[1] Galen's judgment on the Christians, quoted by Harnack (*loc. cit.* p. 267), is most interesting as the view of an outsider: "The people who are called Christians . . . their contempt of death is patent to us all, also that under the influence of a certain modesty they shrink from an indulgence of sexual passion. For there are among them both men and women who all their lifetime have abstained from sexual intercourse; there are also those who in the control and discipline of their minds, and in the keenest pursuit of virtue, have gone so far that they do not yield to the truest philosophers."

stories of the *Acts of the Apostles* was treasured up as symbolic for the Church. Peter, the first Christian, the typical leader of all who should come after, says with perfect simplicity, "Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I unto thee. In the name of Jesus Christ, rise and walk." The name of Jesus, and all the beneficent powers connected with it, are better than silver and gold.

Not only was money regarded with indifference; it was denounced and renounced as a positive evil. The love of it was declared to be the root of all kinds of sin. It led men into snares which destroyed the soul. It grew into an idol, which took the place of God. As idolatry was gradually overcome, the Church recognised that it came back in another form as covetousness. And thus it became as much an object of Christian life to beware of covetousness as to keep oneself from idols.

This, then, was the "new man," the regenerate character, which came to the constitution of the Church. We are looking only on the main outlines, the love of truth, the physical purity, and the indifference to riches. This was the first, the most essential, the most inalienable, note of the church. Christians were people whose word was their bond; their yes and no were sufficient; they swore not at all. They were people who lived in purity, regarding marriage as honourable, though frequently foregoing even that permitted joy, that they might serve God better. They were people who seldom possessed, and never desired, worldly goods; money had no power over them; they did not

live for it, rejoice in its growth, or mourn over its departure. Engaged in their ordinary occupations, working to provide things honest in the sight of all, they did not seek to lay up treasure; what they gained in a legitimate way they shared with others.

This "new man" was the result of a living and transforming faith in Jesus, effected by the Holy Ghost within. The "old man," the natural self, the mind of the flesh, was crucified with Christ; out of the grave emerged the new man, to live the new life, reborn. It was a vital spiritual experience, a fact which no one could gainsay; a city set upon a hill. This regenerate moral nature, produced by a genuine faith in Christ, the first and by far the most important note of the Church, was symbolised by the initial rite of baptism. The Christian who believed in Christ, when the reality of his faith and conversion became apparent, was plunged into the laver, which represented the grave of Christ, and emerged to live the new life. Thus the baptistery was called "the laver of regeneration." And the moral and spiritual nature of the rite, marking it off for ever from a mere outward form or an *opus operatum*, was preserved by calling it "enlightening." The baptized were the "enlightened," for the stress was laid on the actual fact of the spiritual change. They were born of water and the Spirit, not of water only.[1]

[1] Harnack sums up the church of these early days thus: "For over a century and a half it ranked everything secondary to the task of maintaining its morality. It recognised no faith and no forgiveness that could serve as a pillow for the conscience. . . . Her

It is a painful study to follow the degeneration of baptism in the history of the church. Gradually the rite of baptism came to be regarded as a magical and supernatural mode of regenerating. By the beginning of the fourth century, Constantine deferred baptism till the approach of death, in the superstition that the water washed the sins away. But this reversal of the New Testament teaching makes it the more salutary and necessary to study the New Testament itself, and to realise that in the beginning it was the regenerate character of those who believed, the putting away of the old sins, and the newness of life in Christ Jesus, that marked the church, and was outwardly symbolised by baptism.

§ 2. It is evident, however, that the fulness of the measure of the stature of Christ was not easily or immediately achieved. Those who were quickened into new life, and washed from their old sins, did not reach perfection at a leap. Thus the church presents itself, not as the city in the heavens secured from all intrusion of evil, but as a school of goodness, in which by teaching, by discipline, by example, and by prayer, the members help each other to the result of holiness.

From this point of view it is instructive to study the letters to the seven churches in *Revelation*, and Paul's letters to the churches which he was directing. The letters to the seven churches are discouraging, for

power lay in the splendid and stringent code of her baptismal training; moreover, every brother was backed up and assisted in order that he might continue to be fit for the duties he had undertaken to fulfil."—*Expansion of Christianity*, i. 488.

the admonitions apparently failed, and the churches disappeared. For centuries the rule of the Crescent has rendered the churches, and the cities in which they existed, desolate. The letters of Paul, on the other hand, dealing so strenuously with the moral questions which emerged in the first churches, and laying down so clearly the new ideals and regulations, are to this day our greatest aid in the formation and application of a Christian morality. If at first they seem to present a gloomy picture of the early communities, they are the best security we have for those forces of regeneration and reform which had begun to work and are still working for the salvation of the world.

Once in the first preaching of the Gospel to the Gentiles Paul and his associates referred a question to the church at Jerusalem. Under the presidency of James, the apostles and elders with the whole church gave a decision of a most curious kind. The Gentiles might be admitted into the church without becoming Jews; but certain necessary things must be exacted of them, one moral, the others outward and ceremonial (Acts xv. 29). They also urged the new churches to remember the poor, viz. the impoverished Christians in Jerusalem itself. Paul was very ready to comply with this last request, and he was as eager as they were to insist on moral purity, the abstinence from fornication. He was even ready to dissuade his converts from eating the meats of the heathen sacrifices, if there was the least danger of giving offence to weak consciences; but to enforce indifferent points of Jewish ceremonial, like "abstaining from blood and from

things strangled," would have been to mix the weighty matters of the law with the trivial, and to endanger the whole structure of Christian ethics. This exhibition of the moral development of the church at Jerusalem discouraged Paul from further appeals to it; "they who were reputed to be pillars," James, Peter, and John, "imparted nothing to him." He felt it better to take his own course, and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit given to him, to lead the church out of the shadows and bondage of Judaism into the liberty of Christ.

His regulations, therefore, to his churches are made either according to a strict command of Jesus, or by the light of his own judgment as a believer in Christ. The questions he had to deal with were of very varied importance, and his judgments were partly temporary, partly lasting. On great moral questions he was immovable. He was specially resolved to root sexual irregularities out of the nascent communities. His method of dealing with a special case at Corinth brings into clear relief how the first Christians interpreted the commission to forgive or to retain sins, which Christ had given to them. The most remarkable feature, in the light of later developments, is that the discipline is not exercised by the elders and deacons, or any functionaries, but by the whole community gathered together (I. Cor. v. 4). If there was "confession" it was mutual, as *James* shows (v. 16). The verdict was passed and executed by the whole church. It was a solemn separation of the offender from the company, that he might repent and be restored.

Paul was as eager to receive him back as he was to expel him. But the one object to be sought was to keep the community pure, free from fornicators, covetous, idolaters, revilers, drunkards, and extortioners (I. Cor. v. 11).

In this way a church became an active force for the purging of society, and for maintaining a standard of goodness. The danger which has come from putting such disciplinary power into the hands of priests or ecclesiastical courts, supported by the temporal arm, did not exist, because in the first place the judgment was that of the whole society, and in the second place the only force at the disposal of the society was moral and spiritual. There was no thought of temporal disabilities.

Paul wished his church to be a genuine substitute for the law-courts. A society filled with the Holy Spirit could settle disputes much more satisfactorily than the tribunals, in which pagan standards prevailed. His thought was that the church should be a state within a state, setting a purer example, maintaining a higher justice, securing for its members the possibility of living a quiet and peaceable life in godliness and honesty.

Living himself a laborious and ascetic life, he was yet careful to vindicate the rights of men, to marry, to earn their living, and to carry on the ordinary business of citizens. He recognised the value of celibacy for those who were actively engaged in the work of spreading the Gospel; perhaps he had a rather gloomy view of the troubles which darken a married life; but an enforced

celibacy would have seemed to him perilous in the extreme. In his dread of the demoralisation which follows on such restrictions he advocated the marriage of all. The bishops and deacons especially were to show by the ordering of their own families and the training of their children that they were qualified to regulate the church.

Some of Paul's personal opinions and practices were not perhaps of permanent importance. A regulation like that which requires women to have their heads covered in public worship was suitable only for that age and the countries with which Paul was acquainted. He would have been angry and scandalised if he could have known that on his authority women have made this head-covering the excuse for extravagance and display. Paul meant the head to be covered that the faces of women should not be seen; women have covered their heads in a way to display their charms and make themselves more prominent. When Paul declares that he personally did not allow women to speak in the church assemblies, he is conscious that he is indulging a private view, and his provision for women speaking with their heads covered shows that he did not expect his predilection for their silence to be observed.

To complete the picture of the early churches as schools of goodness we must note the continual stress laid on the moral rectitude of the leaders and teachers of the communities. There is no change which has stolen into the church in the lapse of time more glaring than that which is implied in the doctrine that the efficacy of church acts is not affected by the character of ministers. It is a concession to human infirmity which

destroys the first note of the church. The pastoral letters of the New Testament offer no foothold for this perversion. The teacher must practise what he teaches, and be the example in his own person of what he enjoins. Indeed the ministry in the early church was determined so exclusively by moral considerations, that, we infer, ministers were only in office so long, and in so far, as they carried moral authority. Appointed by the church, and dependent on the church, wielding no temporal powers, exercising no mysterious functions, which could strike terror into the people, without any priestly authority, not indispensable for baptizing or observing the Supper, or exercising the discipline, they retained their position only by the consent of the community, which esteemed them highly for their work's sake.

§ 3. Perhaps the essentially ethical character of the early churches is obscured by the polemic against salvation by works which plays so large a part in the letters of Paul. Though the letter of James offers something of a counterblast to the doctrine of justification by faith alone, Luther is right in recognising that justification by faith is the distinctive teaching of the New Testament, the new element in the Gospel, which makes it a gospel, as distinguished from the ancient law.

Paul's vehement plea against works as the ground of salvation, and his fearless assertion of grace as the sole means of justification, may easily give to a hasty reader the impression that the church was constituted not of the good, but of those who accepted a certain doctrine or received an external rite. But such an impression is

superficial. The real reason why Paul discredits salvation by merit is that such method produces only a low type of goodness. The works which are done in order to secure salvation cannot be in the best sense good; they are too self-conscious, too self-regarding; prompted by a personal aim, they lose their ethical quality.

The righteousness which is of faith, the distinctive product of the Christian revelation, is the only goodness which can be called absolute. That righteousness is the Gospel. Paul's letters interpreted it, and made it the *articulus stantis aut cadentis ecclesiæ*. The polemic against works, therefore, cannot be cited to show that the first note of the church is not goodness; it is only the evidence that the goodness of the church was a new goodness, capable of better fruit because the root is better.

The doctrine of law, whether we think of the Jewish law, or of Buddhism, or of the common religious conception that we are saved by living a good life, has a radical defect. If the law is merely formal, such as a man with diligence can keep, it produces pharisaism, a spiritual disease, the sense of superiority to people who know not the law, which turns worship into the cry: "I thank Thee that I am not as other men." If the law is high and spiritual, such as no human being can fully keep, it produces the apathy of despair. The dilemma presented by law, therefore, as the foundation of religion, has two horns, on which the soul is impaled, and good becomes impossible: if the devotee believes that he merits and has earned salvation, he cannot avoid that worst moral disease, self-righteousness; if he

believes he has not earned it and cannot, he must sink into the misery of self-imposed torments, a despair which involves a moral paralysis.

The Gospel, as Paul saw, opened up a new way, a fairer prospect for mankind. When he says a man is saved by faith, and not by works of the law, he does not regard faith as another work, so meritorious as to take the place of the rest; but he means that by faith in Christ a new principle comes into play. Christ, in the language of John, is "the propitiation"—*i.e.* to believe in Him is to be freely forgiven. But to be freely forgiven binds the heart in gratitude and love to Christ. This relation to Christ, not resting on anything that we have done, but simply on His goodness and love, has a transforming effect. It is essentially what the poet says:—

> "Love took up the harp of life and smote on all its chords with might,
> Smote the chord of self which trembling passed in music out of sight."

The love to Christ, as the means of forgiveness, produces a goodness of quite another quality than the goodness of self-conscious merit. The righteousness which is of God by faith springs from a heart which is touched and changed. Self has disappeared. One who is saved by faith in Christ makes no claims, is conscious of no merit, is perfectly humble, absorbed in Him who has called him out of darkness into His marvellous light. Such an one has no disposition to sit in judgment on others; not esteeming himself worthy, he is disposed to

think all others worthier than himself. The master-principle being love to Christ, he is constrained to serve, to bless, to save, all. He does not seek to save men because it is meritorious, but because the love of God is shed abroad in his heart. He loves all men for Christ's sake. He cannot injure them; love forbids; the Law denounces killing, adultery, stealing, envy, &c., but more potent than the Law is Love. He cannot kill, for man is the image of God; he cannot commit adultery, for that would violate the temple of God; to steal is to rob God, to envy is to reproach Him. The righteousness which is of faith, therefore, keeps the law, as the legal righteousness cannot, under the constraining influence of love.

Paul is not alone in the place which he gives to love. Peter and John agree with him. But it is Paul's distinction to bring out that the love which is the motive of the new goodness is connected with the salvation of faith, as distinct from the salvation of merit.

It will be seen, then, that the note of the church, goodness, a goodness deeper in meaning, richer in content, impelled by a stronger motive, enforced by a higher sanction, is struck by the very nature of salvation, a salvation which results from faith in Christ as the ground of a free and full pardon of sin.

And as Paul is successful in establishing this essential connection between redemption and goodness by an argument which never loses its force or freshness, so he is consistent in all his writings in using every doctrinal statement as a fresh ground of ethical appeal. Perhaps the doctrinal statements are sometimes obscure, and

difficult to follow; not infrequently they rest on certain presuppositions of Hebrew religion which are alien to us, and are coloured by rabbinical modes of argument which do not carry conviction; but there is never any hesitation in placing Christ crucified in the forefront as the ground of saving forgiveness: "The grace of God has appeared bringing salvation to all men"; and just as little is there any flinching from the ethical lessons deduced from it. Examine, for instance, the *Epistle to the Romans* from the twelfth chapter onwards. That "therefore" is the hinge on which the whole argument turns. Because of the grace of God, the pardon, the saving power of Christ, this life of moral renewal becomes incumbent, absolute humility and mutual service in the church—love, patience, generosity, sympathy, readiness to forgive. Good is triumphant. The dutiful conduct of a citizen in the state results from the same evangel; the social duty of paying debts is equally compulsory. The appeal rises to an extraordinary eloquence: "Let us cast off the works of darkness and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly as in the day, not in revelling and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and jealousy. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof." We cannot wonder that the passage converted the young Augustine in the garden at Milan. The only wonder is that its trumpet-call leaves any soul in Christendom sleeping, and merged in sin and uncleanness.

The canticle of love in I. *Cor.* xiii. is the climax of a passage on the functions of the members of the church,

the interpretation of the doctrine of the Eucharist. The *Second Epistle to Corinthians* is a heart-moving plea, in which Paul brings all his personal influence to bear, and presses the claims of his apostolate, simply and solely to purge the church from its sins, its quarrels and divisions. Its climax is, "Be perfected, be comforted, be of the same mind; live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you. Salute one another with a holy kiss." The ethical note is so dominant, that if we did not use these letters to establish doctrine we should yet use them as the freshest and most inclusive exhortations to goodness in the whole range of literature.

In *Galatians* we find the fruit of the Spirit presented as a character, evidently the character of Jesus Himself. To be filled with the Spirit is to have His love, His joy, His peace, to be like Him long-suffering, good in feeling and in act; to be meek as He was meek, to live by faith, and to control the appetites and passions as He did. But it is the same in all the epistles: whatever may be the theme, they are passionate appeals for goodness. And in the latest of them, the *Pastorals*, the Pauline insistence on good works is pushed to such a point that it seems sometimes almost to traverse Paul's own doctrine of justification. "Seems," for it does not really. The good works which gleam out from every page of the *Pastoral Epistles* are the outcome of the faith, the result of being saved by grace. In this respect the closing paragraph is the key to all: "When the kindness of God our Saviour and His love toward man appeared, not by works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves, but according to His mercy He saved us,

through the laver of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, that being justified by His grace we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Titus iii. 4, 7).

Goodness, therefore, a new goodness, is the note of the church, a goodness to be maintained by teaching, by discipline, by faith and prayer, by "provoking one another to good works," because the saving power of the church depends on it.

§ 4. Let us try to focus this intrinsic meaning of the church by turning back to the First Gospel, the only one in which the word "ecclesia" occurs. Go up and watch the new-born rill where it issues from the mountain of revelation. Mark the relation between the ethics and the organisation of the new society, between the sanctity and the hierarchy. The organisation, the hierarchy, is merely a means to an end. The end is goodness, real goodness, the new goodness. If goodness does not result the church is naught—nay, less than naught—"salt which has lost its savour, to be trodden under foot of man." The stamp or mark of the ministry is the moral result: "By their fruits ye shall know them."

This is how Mr. Allen, in the "Critical Commentary of St. Matthew," sums up the teaching of Christ Himself on the subject of the church. The perspective may not be quite accurate, but the substance is all here: "The Messiah had come. He had preached the coming of the kingdom. He had been put to death. He would come at the end of the age on the clouds of heaven. In the meantime His disciples were to preach the

doctrine of the kingdom and make disciples by baptism into the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost. The disciples constituted an Ecclesia. They were to cultivate such qualities as humility, mercy, forgiveness, and love; to practise almsgiving, prayer, and obedience to Christ's commands. They were to be prepared to give up all things for Christ's sake—*e.g.* marriage, property, earthly relationships, even life itself. They were to rely upon God's providence, and to avoid the accumulation of riches; wealth was a hindrance to admission into the kingdom. Marriage was an ordinance of God, but divorce, except for fornication, was an accommodation to human weakness.

"The righteousness to be aimed at by them was to be based on right motive rather than observance of rules, upon the spirit rather than the letter of the law.

"All the disciples were brethren, having one Father, God, and one Master and Teacher, Christ. As such they constituted the Ecclesia, and possessed common authority to legislate for the church's needs. Wherever two or three met for prayer Christ would be with them.

"As in the Jewish Ecclesia, so in the Christian there would be prophets, wise men, and scribes" (no priests, it will be observed). "But from among the disciples twelve in particular were commissioned to preach and to baptize. Among these Peter was pre-eminent (or rather, 'the first,' x. 2). To him was first revealed the true nature of the Christ which was to be the foundation rock of the church. He was to have administrative and legislative power within the kingdom, a power, however, which he at once shared with the others who

believed (*cf.* xvi. 19, xviii. 18). In the kingdom all twelve would sit on thrones, 'judging the twelve tribes of Israel.'"[1]

Such was the society — vitally related to Christ, spiritually in the midst, washed by Him in initiation, and kept by Him in the daily cleansing of the feet from the dust of the way—which was, as a new creation, founded in the world. By its very nature it must act powerfully on mankind. This is expressed by the Founder, who gave it the name of Light and Salt. Light is diffusive. Unless it is unwisely hidden under a bushel-measure, the lamp gives light to all that are in the house. Unless the church were concealed in a way not designed by Christ, it would shed light over the world. He, while He was in it, was the Light of the world; and as He was in the world, so was His church to be, the light of the world. As salt preserves food from putrefaction, and gives it savour, the church was to preserve the world from corruption, and to give meaning and point to the world's existence.

But while the church would be a missionary agent as the depository of a new goodness, which would radiate and work through the world, that new goodness itself involved a missionary activity. It had within it the impulse which it derived from its Lord. He came into the world to seek and to save that which was lost; so did the church. He was a Fisher of men, and He made His disciples fishers of men. He likened himself to a Good Shepherd who went to seek the lost sheep, who would lay down His life for the sheep; they, too, were

[1] "St. Matthew," W. C. Allen, pp. lxxv–vi.

to be shepherds of the sheep and of the lambs, and to exercise the pastoral care in the same self-sacrificing way.

Other religions seek to proselytise, often making their proselytes worse than they were before. The church did not seek to proselytise; she had no interest to bring men within her borders and to magnify herself; she sought to save men for their own sake. She was embodied love, seeking and saving the lost.

The command, "Go ye and make disciples of all nations, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you," was as a formal injunction unnecessary. The impulse was in the Gospel itself, and therefore in all who received it. The missionary work is not successful when it is done in obedience to a legal enactment, an external command of the new religion; it is successful when it is the outcome of the new goodness, the goodness which is love in the heart.

The church, therefore, immediately manifests its missionary activity; its spread is rapid and inevitable. It is the Gospel itself which drives Philip to Samaria, or into personal conversation with the Ethiopian vizier. The Gospel itself sends Peter to Cæsarea and to Joppa, and to Babylon in the distant East (I. Pet. v. 13), and, according to extra-biblical tradition, to Rome in the far West.[1] The impulse does not rest on the command given to the Twelve; for Paul, who ostentatiously

[1] Some think that Babylon means Rome, because in the *Revelation* Rome is denounced under the name of Babylon (xvii. 5). But the only evidence of this proposition is the strong conviction which prevailed at the end of the second century that Peter was martyred at Rome.

separates himself from them, so soon as he is converted, manifests the missionary spirit more strikingly than they all. His missionary energy fills the New Testament. In the *Acts* and the Epistles of Paul we learn to recognise this intrinsic quality of the church. It must advance until it reaches the limits of the world.

But in noting the missionary impulse of the church, we must be careful to remember that it is essentially bound up with the ethical evangel. Nothing is more alien from Christ than to proselytise with the effect of making men worse, or leaving them as they were. Islam proselytises in the interest of Allah and his prophet. Christ seeks men, only to save them, and His church works in the same way. Christ does not seek His own glory; nor does the church. But in her burns that love, which is God, the passion to save.

The church then loses its intrinsic character if it ceases to be missionary; but still more does it lose its intrinsic character if it becomes proselytising. The effort to swell her numbers, to increase her dominion, to strengthen her authority, is a departure from her Lord. And if she adopts the tricks and wiles of the world in the enterprise, sacrificing humility, truth, justice, mercy, compassing sea and land to make one proselyte, scheming, intriguing, fighting, in councils, or on backstairs, endeavouring to conquer the world by the world's ways, to gain men as her subjects, rather than to save them, she loses the first note, the intrinsic quality, which identifies her with the original society of Jesus. She may even become, like Rome itself, "the mother of the harlots and of the abominations of the earth" (Rev. xvii. 5).

CHAPTER VI

THE SECOND NOTE OF THE CHURCH, BROTHERHOOD

§ 1. LET us go back a page or two. The teaching of the first Gospel, the church-gospel, was that "All the disciples were brethren, having one Father, God, and one Master and Teacher, Christ" (Matt. xxiii. 8–10). As such they constituted the "ecclesia" (xviii. 17), and possessed common authority to legislate for the church's needs (xviii. 18). Wherever two or three met for prayer, Christ would be with them (xviii. 19; *cf.* xxviii. 20). This noble and simple equality before God was not inconsistent with variety and pre-eminence of gifts. The analogy of the family is always at hand, because God is the father and all disciples are brothers. In a family one is brilliant and able and influential, while others are undistinguished, without force or influence. But brother does not take a throne or exercise an authority over brother; the influence is due not to office but to character. In the church the earthly grades and distinctions were forgotten, but spiritual eminence, or personal gifts, made themselves felt, and exercised their legitimate power.

In this respect the church differed from the synagogue,

though from the first it had a tendency to degeneration and reversion to type. In the synagogue all sat in ranks. The first places were reserved for the first people, and the humble folk took humble places. This very natural human arrangement, against which none, even the most contemned, thought of protesting, was in the church heresy; it was denounced as "holding the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons." To make discrimination according to worldly status was to become "a judge with evil thoughts." It was sin, bringing the transgressor within the judgment of the law, viz. the new law of the Gospel (Jas. ii. 1–13).

The brotherliness was expressed by the specific application of an old word. In Greek, "brotherly love" (*philadelphia*) meant the love which a man had for members of his own family, that family pride and family exclusiveness which is the natural antithesis of love in the broad human sense. In this way the epithet Philadelphus was bestowed on kings, *e.g.* Ptolemy, signifying the devotion of the sovereign to his own family and dynasty. The church adopted the word to express the relation between members. They were brothers and sisters. *Philadelphia* became a Christian virtue, with a meaning almost the opposite of its meaning in ordinary Greek. The conversion of the word symbolised the conversion of human relations which was taking place. In the New Testament "brotherly love" no longer means the love of your family and kindred, but the love of others, who, by their faith in Christ, have become as brothers and sisters. Christ claimed as

His relatives, not His mother and brothers according to the flesh, but all who did the will of God. This great spiritual idea was introduced as the note of the church. A great, and to the old world incredible, revolution underlies such familiar passages as: "In love of the brethren be tenderly affectioned one to another, in honour preferring one another" (Rom. xii. 10); "But concerning love of the brethren ye have no need that one write unto you, for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another" (I. Thess. iv. 9); "Let love of the brethren continue; forget not to show love unto strangers" (Heb. xiii. 1). The origin of this miraculous brotherliness is found in the new birth into the family of God: "Seeing ye have purified your souls in your obedience to the truth unto unfeigned love of the brethren, love one another from the heart fervently: having been begotten again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the word of God, which liveth and abideth" (I. Pet. i. 22, 23). The place which it takes in the catena of Christian graces is noticeable: after faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, and godliness, the choral company is completed with "love of the brethren and love," showing that the love of the brethren in the church is the preparation for loving all (II. Pet. i. 5–7). The quality which had thus adopted an old name, giving to it a new meaning, was, so far as we can read the ancient world, new; and, indeed, in the world of to-day it still retains its specific character as a mark of genuinely Christian societies. It differs in kind from "love" as it was formerly understood; it differs also in its extension and application.

The world knew love in the sense of the sexual passion; it knew love in the sense of friendship, the devotion of elect and kindred spirits; how difficult it was to keep these two from blending, and from so degenerating, is shown in Plato's *Symposium*, and in the tales which betray the characteristic vice of Greece. But when the early preachers of the Gospel and founders of the church wished to express in Greek the new emotion which existed in the church and bound its members together, they could not use the word *eros*, the word for the sexual passion, nor was the word for friendship warm or precise enough. They took a word unknown to the profane writers, which was found occasionally in the LXX (*e.g.* 2 Sam. xiii. 15; Song of Solomon ii. 4, 5, 7, iii. 5, 10, v. 8, vii. 6, viii. 4, 6, 7; Jer. ii. 2; Eccl. ix. 1, 6; Wisd. iii. 9, vi. 19). This was *agapé*. But in the LXX it has only a slightly better meaning than the other Greek words; it means "the love which chooses its object with decision of will, so that it becomes self-denying or compassionate devotion to and for the same" (Cremer, *s.v.*). The use in *Jer.* ii. 2 approaches the idea which the word would convey in the new covenant. But the word enters the New Testament with a new meaning. It is now love in its fullest conceivable sense, love as the distinguishing attribute, not of humanity, but of God. It was first exhibited by Christ in His redemption, and must be derived from Him (I. John iii. 16). Indeed, the new quality, which is God's nature instilled into the church, becomes the distinctive peculiarity of the Christian life.

But it is in its extent and application, no less than in

its quality, that *agapé* is new. Outside the church men are asked to love their relations or their chosen friends. But the church rests on a love which ignores these personal ties, and depending on faith and the love of God, embraces all members, of whatever rank or kind. Nor is the love confined to those who share the faith, and form the brotherhood. As it burns towards God, so it burns towards men, even all men (Rom. xiii. 10). This fruit of the Spirit is distinguished from love in the ordinary and natural sense. God loves all, and this is the love of God shed abroad in men's hearts, embracing all too.

In antiquity it seemed miraculous. By it the world recognised the disciples of Christ. It was an amazing and distinctive quality. In the literature of the first age, especially in the early apologies, it is this Divine love of man for man which is pressed as the evidence of Christianity. Christians cared and sacrificed for one another, would die for one another. Christians loved men, even their enemies. The new spirit in the world was at first incredible to men who had been brought up only in the traditions, or corruptions, of the past. But when they realised the fact they were ravished by it. The enthusiasm which is depicted in *Acts* ii. repeated itself everywhere. With great joy the rich surrendered their possessions, and found in the fellowship something better. They received a hundred-fold in relatives and property, for the spiritual family was real, and the help and succour were practical. There is no room for doubt in the New Testament that *agapé* was at once the supreme and inclusive virtue, and the link by which the com-

munity was bound together. The brothers walked in it, a circumambient atmosphere. It covered a multitude of sins; the sins disappeared. The warm and lambent flame played about their heads, spoke in their tongues, assured their hearts. They knew by it that they had passed from death unto life. It was in them not as an argument for the new life, but as the new life itself.

It is a scornful reproach often urged against Christians, "See how these Christians love one another!" or as the sad humorist said, "We are all brothers—Cains and Abels!" Christendom is apparently torn asunder, and mutual hatred between church and church, or sect and sect, or man and man, is what first attracts the attention of the satirist. But the force of the satire lies entirely in the acknowledged greatness of the Christian ideal. And, miserable as is the shortcoming, the actual love in the church is great. This note is by no means wholly lost. There are Christian communities which possess the *agapé* in its original purity, and there are millions of Christians who love in a way and in a degree only made possible by the faith, the love of God shed abroad in their hearts. As compared with the non-Christian world, Christendom is even to-day marked out by the characteristic which the Lord mentioned, "By this all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have *agapé* among yourselves" (John xiii. 35). What is needed is that the test should be more prominently advanced, and that the Church should specially recognise the "note" which the Lord Himself indicated.

Unfortunately the royal road was left. Through the decay of the first eight centuries, the church held that the

creed was the first bond of union. So far from admitting that love was the note of the Church, Christians endeavoured to enforce an orthodox creed on one another with the bludgeon and the sword. From the ninth century, at least in the West, the bond of union was a hierarchy, a powerful political organisation, in which love had little or no place.

Hardly yet does any church venture to say, "The first note of the church is holiness, the second love; by this we claim to be recognised as Christ's disciples." But when this return is made to the idea of the Founder the church will rapidly conquer the world. *Omnia vincit amor.* It is a singular thing that *amor*, which is love, read backwards, is Roma. Rome as a church reversed the love which is Christ's test.

§ 2. The unhappy mistake of endeavouring to define the church by the nature of her ministry has been attended with disastrous results. The earthly distinctions in the church were not rased, in order to set up new distinctions fraught with spiritual terrors and tyranny. The brotherhood of the church has been lost by a false distinction between clergy and laity, between priests and people.

In the New Testament the "clerus" is the whole community of the church. This is established from the *Epistle of Peter*, who is presumably the head of clerical assumption. Peter, addressing the elders of the church as a fellow-elder, forbids them to lord it over the "clergy," by which he means the whole flock of God. They are shepherds, not lords; their duty is to feed the sheep, anticipating the reward of the

Arch-shepherd (I. Pet. v. 3, 4). When the clergy are separated from the people, and still more when they claim to be "the church," a radical change is made in the conception of Christian brotherhood. By ghostly terrors, by a powerful organisation, seeking and often gaining the support of the secular arm, the hierarchy, for centuries, lorded it over the heritage of God. That clericalism, as alien to the Gospel as it became odious to mankind, is, as the famous French statesman said, "the enemy." It destroys the genius of the Gospel, it reduces the New Testament to a cipher, and withholds from the people the book which annihilates its claims. Following the example of Judaism and of the Hellenic religions, clericalism transformed itself into sacerdotalism. It took the imagery of the New Testament, which called the whole church a royal priesthood, and by a perverted literalism used it to sanction a priesthood within the church, drawing a sharp distinction between priest and people. It is Peter again, in whose name the sacerdotal system is defended, that most emphatically repudiates it. Knowing not, nor dreaming, of any priestly order in the church, he addresses the whole community in the words: "Ye as living stones are built up, a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (I. Pet. ii. 5). And, as if to exclude the idea that he is speaking to a selected number, to the elders and deacons the ministers of the community, he adds: "Ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of Him who

called you out of darkness into His marvellous light" (I. Pet. ii. 9).

Thus the New Testament presents this remarkable testimony: priests and priesthood are seldom mentioned at all, except in reference to the Old Testament religion. But when they are used in connection with Christ and Christianity, their occurrence absolutely precludes the idea of a priestly order. The *Epistle to the Hebrews*, which contrasts the old covenant with the new, names as the representative of the priest in the old covenant, not the presbyter or deacon of the new, but Jesus Christ Himself (v. 6, vii. 17, 21, viii. 4, x. 21). And Peter, the first of believers and apostles, expressly shows that the whole community of Christians, and not an order of ministers, constitutes the "priesthood" of the church. Only in one other book of the New Testament is the word "priest" used in connection with the Christian church. In the *Apocalypse* Christians are called priests and kings unto God; the ransomed, who are loosed from their sins, and not the ministers as such, are thus designated (i. 6, v. 10). All who have part in the first resurrection will be exempt from the power of the second death; "they shall be priests of God and Christ" (Rev. xx. 6). By showing clearly who are meant by the priests of Christ, John definitely excludes the possibility of priests in a narrower and official sense.

The early church had a ministry, as we have seen, but its function was not to lord it over the people. The Lord of the Church was among them at the beginning not to be ministered unto but to minister; He washed

the feet of the disciples, and told them they were to do the same for one another. It was this ministry which He transmitted to His representatives. On the other hand, His kingship, His priesthood, He exercised Himself by His promised presence in the midst when they assembled in His name. The ministers, therefore, were teachers, and above all examples to the flock. Some of them gave themselves to the word and to prayer, others undertook the financial arrangements of the church. With such sacred duties entrusted to them by the Holy Ghost they deserved the esteem, and were entitled to the support, of the community, by whom they were recognised and appointed. It was a constant aim of Paul to get these ministers duly honoured, but it was still more his aim to see that they were deserving of honour, because he recognised that the obedience and devotion of the people must be voluntary, and the ministers could only be esteemed highly "for their work's sake."

Obviously the position of eminence, of spiritual leadership, and of financial administration, had its dangers. Following the analogy of human institutions, it was inevitable, unless some power intervened, that the leaders would grasp at power, would turn the crozier into a sceptre, and the mitre into a crown. Humanly speaking, the ministers of the church were sure to become a hierarchy, a priesthood, a government after a political type. But if the indications of the New Testament may be followed, this result, so far from being contemplated by the Founder and the first Apostles, was deliberately precluded. The New Testament might be supposed to

have survived and to retain its authority, on purpose to rebuke the usurping power, and to show that "in the beginning it was not so."

The relation of the brotherhood, and of the ministry to the rest, was not formal, official, authoritative, but moral and spiritual. This is brought out in I. *Cor.* xi.–xiv. This passage must be studied in its entirety. It gives the theory, and what ought to be the practice, of the Christian ministry. The whole church is the body of Christ. Paul is thinking for the moment of the local community, but that is always merely the microcosm of the whole church. In the body all the members have their function. The minister, as he is called later, is only a member of the body which, like the tongue, is more heard than other parts. But every part is equally important, if not equally prominent. The body is one, and therefore the essential factor in it is the principle of unity, and that is love. Reviewing, therefore, all the particular manifestations of spiritual activity in the church, he passes to what is, in comparison with them all, "a more excellent way." Of course he has no thought of priestly functions. No doubt, if a priesthood were a Christian ordinance and a means of salvation, its functions would be more important than love; but looking at the ministry as he understood it, the ministry of prophets, teachers, helps, and governments, he shows that these all without love are useless. The spiritual utterance, the eloquence, which in Corinth was admired, became sounding brass or a clanging cymbal, without love. The revelation of spiritual truth was equally depreciated in comparison of

love. Faith, that powerful weapon by which even miracles could be wrought, is nothing unless love is there. All the ministry of almsgiving and of voluntary martyrdom, apart from love, profits nothing. Thus the ministry of the church is subordinate to the spirit of the church. That spirit is love. Everything else is secondary and instrumental, but love is the essence of it all. The mutual love is the condition of mutual service, just as love to the outer world is the condition of serving and saving the world.

Paul had in mind chiefly men or women who were apt to preach and to exercise the lustrous spiritual gifts: he sternly imposed on them this test of love, declaring, as well he might, that it was the commandment of the Lord (xiv. 37). The burden of the discourse in the upper room, on the last night before He was betrayed, was the new commandment of mutual love, of loving one another as He had loved His disciples. All forms of ministry in the church were and would always be futile, if that new commandment were neglected. It is evident that the same test must be applied to all later developments of the ministry, and nothing can stand which does not abide that test. If organisation crushes love it ceases to be Christian. If ministerial offices and functions cease to minister to love, they cease to be Christian. It is greatly to be deplored that in the growth of the church as an institution this principle was forgotten. Orthodoxy was the test, but underlying orthodoxy must be love, or it ceases to be orthodox. Power was the object, but unless power is wielded in pure love it is not divine. It is the power of love,

not the love of power, which was to organise and direct the community of Christ.

We should do well, in view of the great consummation at which we are all aiming—viz. that Christ should gather together in one the great human family—not to spend our strength in assailing different views of church government and organisation, but to test everything by the one principle of love, and to aim first at that. If the Papacy made all who love the name of Christ love one another also, it would be thereby accredited. Nothing else would give it the divine *imprimatur*. If Episcopacy knits the church together in a holy brotherhood, it justifies itself. If Presbyterianism produces love to them who are within and to them who are without, it carries its commission with it. If Congregationalism makes churches which are holy families of Divine love it is right. If Methodism maintains a genuine love feast, it needs no further commendation. But if these or any other church organisations lack the true note, fail to produce the first fruit of the Spirit, love, no logical defence of their hierarchies, or repudiation of hierarchies, should produce conviction.

The church is a brotherhood: "One is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren." It is only by virtue of that Divine fire of love within it, that it is a holy priesthood, able to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

§ 3. The ecclesia is autonomous. The brotherhood is the government. As the ecclesia of Athens was the sovereign assembly, and Pericles or Demosthenes only reasoned with it, convinced it, and so led it, the Christian

ecclesia, with Christ in the midst, is her own authority. Even the greatest of her members, Augustine, Luther, or Wesley, is only able to lead by the suasion of truth and the gift of the Spirit.

The autonomy of the congregation in the New Testament is surprising, both on account of the poor materials of which the church was composed, and also because the Apostles, fresh from the experience of Christ, and endued with the Holy Spirit, were yet present, and might have seemed entitled to override this independence. But, in the case of Paul, at any rate (in the case of the Twelve our information is defective), the apostolic authority was only used to elicit and establish the congregational independence. In no case are officers or ministers appointed without the consent of the congregation. If there is doubt whether the church elected, it is certain that it showed its approbation. A decree made by the Twelve at Jerusalem was valid only because it was issued "with the whole church" (Acts xv. 22). The discipline was exercised by the whole church assembled in the name of Jesus; the apostolic authority was present only as a spirit of counsel and support. The men who were called upon to exercise this sovereign function of government, legislative and administrative, were morally ill-developed; tainted with heathenism, they with difficulty escaped from their past. But it does not occur to the Apostles to delay their franchise until they are full grown, until they can be fed on meat and not merely on milk. Rather, as in political training generally, the power to exercise the functions of government, the responsibility

of decision and of action, can be acquired only by practice. These mere "babes in Christ," admitted into the brotherhood, are treated as men, and are trained to do the work of the church by doing it.

Nothing, therefore, is more deplorable than when the rights of the church are taken away from the body itself, "the fulness of Him that filleth all in all" (Eph. i. 23), and usurped by a clergy or priesthood. The brotherhood is lost; the fundamental conception of the church as a society of those who by love serve one another is sacrificed to the conception of a worldly empire or government. Against this, Jesus from the very first protested. When the first disciples were seeking places of pre-eminence in the church, He said: "Ye know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Not so shall it be among you, but whosoever would become great among you shall be your minister; and whosoever would be first among you shall be your servant: even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matt. xx. 25–28).

When the church is governed by those who "lord it over" the flock, and "exercise authority over them," the note of the church is gone. This is so essential a quality of the primitive society, the moral and spiritual training depends so absolutely on the inner relations of brotherhood and mutual love, that it must always be the chief aim of church reformers to recover the lost note.

Harnack in the "Essays on the Social Gospel,"[1] shows

[1] Williams & Norgate.

how Luther contemplated a reform of this kind. "In spite of the high esteem in which Luther had always held civic authority and the State, his original intention was to reconstruct the church on the simple basis of government by the congregation. He had visions of a congregational life founded upon fellowship and on principles of Christian liberty, fraternity, and equality. It was further his idea that the national element should find free expression, only the nation then meant the Roman empire of German nationality, and he had in view an improvement in the general economic condition of the country, an increase in its culture, and the uprasing of downtrodden classes. Not that these were in his eyes separate and independent ideals; rather he was convinced that a return to the Gospel would inevitably bring about their realisation. Therefore there was no immediate need to press them; he could afford to wait if necessary; only the Gospel must have free course" (p. 51).

Because Luther failed to realise this idea in his reformation, a task remains for the church in Germany to attempt. "Next to the preaching of the Gospel, the reconstruction of congregational life is the chief evangelical-social task now before the Church" (p. 77). For, as Harnack says in his forceful way, "Our historical retrospect has shown us that it is an essential part of Christianity to weld the individual members of a congregation into a brotherhood full of active life, and then to knit such congregations together into a great association of willing helpers, and that when in course of time congregational life collapsed, this meant a serious loss

to the church. In the early days of Christianity active philanthropy was one of the most persuasive methods of propaganda, and Jesus Christ Himself preached the Gospel while He went about doing good. If sin is at the root of misery, misery and error in turn produce fresh sin and shame. Therefore war must be waged upon misery, but to win the day two things are essential, personal influence from man to man, and the growth of genuine congregational life" (p. 75).

It is remarkable, therefore, that the watchwords of the French Revolution, which were shrieked to the sound of the tocsin, when a corrupt church and social order fell together, are the watchwords of the early church. "Liberty, equality, fraternity" were to be secured by the societies of those who believed in Christ. As they believed in Him, and were born into newness of life, they took their places in a new order. The liberty with which Christ made them free saved them from the yoke of an external law. Each one as a child of God was at home in his Father's house. It was a duty not to be entangled, nor to let others be entangled, again in the yoke of bondage. One was their Master, even Christ. His authority was recognised as final, but it annihilated all subordinate authority. At the time political liberty was not yet born; even the highest enfranchisement, that of a Roman citizen, was serfdom to an autocrat, who might be a Trajan or M. Aurelius, but might also be a Nero or Caracalla. But to enter the church was to escape from the bondage of the empire, and to enter into the liberty of Christ. There were no tyrannical potentates, bishops, or priests, claiming authority and

enforcing their will. The man was free, Christ's freedman. He served the rest, not by compulsion but by love. He did not wish to lord it over them. The severest thing which could be said by an apostle of a member of that community was: "he loveth to have the pre-eminence among them" (III. John 9). In the early church liberty was born. Whenever the church is renewed liberty revives.

The equality was not achieved by destroying but by ignoring the distinctions of rank. In Christ there was neither Jew nor Gentile, Greek nor Scythian, male nor female, bond nor free. The distinctions were imperfectly obliterated, and before a genuine equality was reached the old social hierarchy intruded. But the idea was never lost—an idea of startling novelty, which must ultimately prevail, and sweep away the divisions which keep men asunder. In Christ the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile—the most intractable line of exclusiveness in the world—was broken down. When Christ entered the Greek world He brought the barbarian with Him. The distinction between male and female lingered, as we see in the Epistles of Paul, but it was bound to go. When the woman prophesied or prayed under the influence of the Spirit, no artificial regulation could silence her. The long survival of slavery is very perplexing; but in the early church the slave was as welcome as the freeman. His spiritual power often made him the teacher of his master. And though the leaven of love worked slowly, the principle was laid down, incredible to Aristotle, who regarded slaves as intrinsically different

from men, that manhood was more important than wealth or status.

In many ways the early church was a prophecy; it sowed a seed for distant centuries; and in the matter of equality it proceeded by securing the spiritual reality, without denouncing that institution of slavery which seems to us now so glaringly inconsistent with the Gospel.

The fraternity which the French sought to attain by revolution in

"The red fool-fury of the Seine,"

which Socialism hopes to attain by an economic reconstruction, was the dream, the suggestion, of the early church. For a time it seemed capable of realisation; as the societies were formed on the basis of faith in Christ, breathing the prayer "Our Father," they were and felt themselves to be brotherhoods. And though the societies were small, "a little flock," and the whole world seemed to "lie in the wicked one," the missionary impulse seemed irresistible; the Father of all the families of the earth would surely, through His well-beloved Son, make all men brethren. The universal church would be a single family, embracing all races and all countries of mankind.

The disappointment in the achievement of the ideal is part of that mystery, which must be considered in the last chapter of this book. What hindered? or what hinders? Was the ideal too high? Was the force of love insufficient? Was human egotism too strong?

Or is the evolution of truth and life necessarily slow? Is there necessarily a reversion to type, a recession from heights of thought and goodness temporarily won? The point to remember is that the church, in her inception, was for the first time in the history of the world the promise of a universal brotherhood of man, in which all distinctions were subordinated to the burning consciousness of the Divine Fatherhood.

§ 4. Of this liberty, equality and fraternity, which were the essence of the church, an outward and visible sign was secured in the Supper. The earliest notice we have of this sacrament is in I. *Cor.* xi.; in studying the early church, therefore, we are bound to accept the clue which is offered by this passage. An extraordinary change occurred in the observance and significance of this rite before the end of the second century. Its original meaning disappeared, and a new meaning was given to it, of which the first century knows nothing.

We are, however, now only concerned with the way in which Paul regarded the Supper, when he wrote to the Corinthians. At that time, in the first generation of Christians, the Supper was a genuine meal. The brethren assembled, we suppose on the evening of the first day of the week, and ate and drank together. The meal was a reproduction of the Lord's Supper; it was taken in remembrance of Him. The abuse which had already crept into the community at Corinth, the abuse which gives occasion for this earliest and most authentic account of the Supper and its meaning, shows us with startling clearness what the institution was.

Throughout the Greek world it was the custom to give feasts in which every one contributed his share of provisions (ἔρανος, Lat. *cœna collaticia*). The meal was made by treating the contributions as the common stock. The Supper was a *cœna collaticia;* each member of the church brought a portion; all ate it together. In Corinth the distinctions of wealth and status were preserved, and even emphasised, by the rich eating their better fare, and leaving the poor to eat theirs. Some at the Supper, therefore, were surfeited, and some were left hungry. In this way the feast lost its character as an *agapé*, a religious symbol of the brotherhood of love.

In order to correct the abuse, and restore the Supper to its right spiritual value, Paul recites the origin of it, and offers a clear interpretation. The bread which the Lord broke and divided among the disciples, calling it His body, symbolised the brotherhood. "For as the body is one and hath many members, and all the members of the body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ" (I. Cor. xii. 12). "Now ye are the body of Christ and severally members thereof" (I. Cor. xii. 27). When the selfish members of the church at Corinth turned the Lord's Supper into their own supper (xi. 20, 21), they lost all sense of "the body." The spiritual blindness, which did not discern the body (ver. 29) was so gross a violation of the Lord's intention, that it brought on the delinquents weakness, sickness, and death. This unworthy eating and drinking of the Supper involved judgment, and made them guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.

But the Supper, properly understood, was to be the pledge of the inviolate brotherhood, in which the several members were welded together in Christ, like the limbs of a body. The argument moves on unbroken from chaps. xi. 17 to xiv. 1. In chap. xii. the diversities of spiritual gifts in the one body are depicted; the humbler members have a comeliness of their own in the body: indeed, a special honour is given to the more obscure limbs of this body of Christ. But over and above all the specialised gifts, far more important, as harmonising them and giving them their place and their value, is love. The love which is chanted in chap. xiii. is *agapé;* the supernatural quality symbolised by the Supper, more important than any gifts of utterance or wisdom, gives value to what is thought and what is said. If it be wanting, speech is an empty cymbal, and wisdom ceases to be wise.

"To halls of heavenly truth admission wouldst thou win?
Knowledge oft stands without where love can enter in."

In this way Paul understood the Lord's Supper. It was the embodiment of the new commandment of love which Christ had given to His disciples. It is one of the puzzles of the New Testament, that the Fourth Gospel, which bestows so large a section on the description of the Supper, the washing of the feet, and the discourses and prayer of the Lord at the table, says nothing at all of the words of institution. On the other hand, John tells us that these discourses emanated from His unfailing love to His own (John xiii. 1), that He gave them the example of the service which they were to

render to one another, and that His main burden was that they should love one another as He had loved them. Thus, in place of the Sacrament which Paul interprets as brotherly love, John gives only the interpretation. No doubt can be entertained that the whole object of this institution, on that last night before He was betrayed, was to leave a lasting symbol to represent, and an effectual organ to reproduce, that brotherly love among His disciples, which was the revelation of God in Christ.

As, then, the first note of the church, the new goodness, was represented by the water of baptism, the laver of regeneration, the second note of the church, the new love, was represented by the Supper. These two notes of the church, the outward and visible sign of the inward and spiritual grace, were called in Greek *mysteries*, and in Latin *sacraments*. In the New Testament, and probably to the end of the first century, the sacraments were subordinate to the spiritual realities which they represent. To be "buried with Christ in baptism" did not signify the reception of the rite, but the enlightenment, the inward change, the new birth, symbolised by it. To "eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of man" did not mean to be partakers of the meal which was held weekly in the church, but to be by faith related to Christ, and to exhibit in the community that unselfish love which the Supper symbolised. The primitive conception is, not that the sacrament produces the spiritual result, but that the spiritual result being there, the work of the Spirit by faith and love, the sacrament is the seal and the sign. The reversal of this relation is Catholicism.

CHAPTER VII

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

"Remember that Catholicism is the Christianity of the natural man."—FORSYTH.

§ 1. THE transition from primitive Christianity to Catholicism is gradual, but when it is complete, the primitive church has lost its characteristics. The Catholic church is different in tone and method. The notes of the early community, "goodness and love," are surrendered; the strange notes of creed or organisation have been substituted. There is, as we have seen all along, a Catholicism which is Christian; there is a Catholic church which must be achieved. But the historical Catholicism is a divergence from Christianity, the gradual and steady infiltration of alien ideas, the degeneracy into forbidden practices, the sure reversal of the primitive conceptions. This Catholicism has had its day and failed. For three centuries it has been losing power, while Christianity has advanced outside its borders and beyond its control. The idea that it, with its corruptions and its obscurantism, can draw the church back into its fold, and lead the world to a unity in Christ, is no doubt cherished in Rome, and

is preached by ardent converts in England. But the idea, if feasible, is not attractive. A world governed by a new Hildebrand, a church of to-day like that of Innocent III. or Boniface VIII. — and it must be remembered that the Catholicism of Rome was, between the eleventh and fifteenth centuries, completely realised—presents a prospect which would terrify not only all the scientists and humanists, but also all the spiritual Christianity, of our time. But prophetic souls, both within and without historic Catholicism, have a vision of a new Catholicism, which may, and indeed must, come into being. The study of the early church is the best preparation for the realisation of that vision.

It is necessary to remember that the development towards historic Catholicism began immediately after the period with which we have been concerned. In the second half of the second century Justin Martyr shows the Supper turning into a sacrifice, and Irenæus brings out the necessity of apostolic succession (iv. 26, 5), while he already attributes to the Roman church a pre-eminence as the church of Peter and Paul. During the third century the authority of the episcopate was established by Cyprian, though the supremacy of Rome was still in abeyance. In the fourth century, Basil, the Gregories, Chrysostom and Jerome, developed the idea of the ascetic and monastic life. At the beginning of the fifth century Augustine saw the church as a new empire, emerging from Alaric's sack of Rome.

In the Muratorian Fragment, at the end of the second century, the phrase "Catholic church" means not only, as in Ignatius or Polycarp, the sum total of the

churches, but the orthodox church, in contrast with the heretics. That idea gradually strengthened, until the Catholic church was a powerful organisation, with a monarch at its head, which stood over against the Roman empire, as a successful rival. This new empire of Rome ruled the middle ages, and was only broken by the great schism and the Babylonian captivity at Avignon. When the Reformation came, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, the church-empire was as worldly, as corrupt, as oppressive, as the empire of the Cæsars.

But in the ninth century the Catholic church divided into East and West.[1] The two have remained in sharp antagonism ever since. The Eastern church, while retaining the test of the organisation as the note of the Church, laid the chief stress on orthodoxy of creed. The Western church, while insisting on orthodoxy, laid the chief stress on the unity of organisation.

It would not be true to say of either of these aspirants to the claim of Catholicism, that it has altogether surrendered the Christian ideal of purity and brotherly love. But both have long ago surrendered these two characteristics as the notes of the Church. In Catholi-

[1] Adrian I. anathematised Photius, the Patriarch of Constantinople, and Photius anathematised Nicholas I. The final separation of the churches came in 1054, when the Western church introduced the word *filioque* into the Creed, declaring that the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father *and the Son*. On this abstract and metaphysical point of theology the Catholic church divided into two Catholicisms. So fierce was the mutual hatred, that when the Turks were before Constantinople in 1453 the Greeks preferred Turkish subjugation to reconciliation with Rome.

cism, whether Greek or Roman, immorality is venial in comparison with heterodoxy. All kinds of sin are tolerated and forgiven freely, so long as the sinner remains within the pale of the church. The ministry is, as it were, expressly secured against the necessity of purity by the dogma that the ministrations are not vitiated by the unworthiness of the man.

It seems an incredible distance from the New Testament and the Pauline requirement that the pastor should be the ensample of his flock, to find that in the Orthodox church the clergy are allowed to continue their ministrations with undiminished authority, though they be drunkards and unclean, and that in the Roman church for many centuries the vices of the priesthood, and even of the Papacy itself, and the recurrent corruptions of the monastic orders, though they have exercised the minds of all devout Catholics, have never seemed to cast the faintest suspicion on the validity and authority of "the Catholic church."

And so with the brotherhood; in Catholicism the laity have no rights of government. The clergy govern the church; "obey the church" means that the layman must obey his priest. Brotherhood in Catholicism no longer means the community of Christians, but a special community of those who have left the world to live in a monastery, and are therefore designated the "religious." The beautiful ideal of men and women, families, united as one family in the fellowship of the church, sanctifying the relation of marriage, and making the Christian home, is superseded by "brotherhoods" of men and "sisterhoods" of women, in which virginity is raised to the

rank of a higher virtue, and parenthood, though named after God the Father, is depreciated.

In Catholicism hostility and contempt towards those who are without are not compensated by love between those who are within. Not only are the laity sharply divided from the clergy, but the secular clergy, or parish priests, are in antagonism to the religious orders. The orders themselves are hardly less hostile to each other. The Jesuits are regarded with suspicion and dislike by the rest, though they have been the saviours of the modern Papacy. The Franciscans and Dominicans have always been in opposition, notwithstanding the fraternal meeting of Francis and Dominic. Rival monasteries of the same order are frequently in a state of jealousy and mutual recrimination.[1]

This is very human; and considering our infirmities, no wise man will bring a railing accusation against Catholicism on account of it. But the point to be observed is, that the very idea of the brotherhood as the note, the mark, of the church, has disappeared from Catholicism, just as the Supper, the sacrament of the brotherly love, has been transformed into a sacrifice which is offered by the priest. So completely has the Pauline conception been lost that only a few eat the bread at a celebration, and only the priests may drink the wine.

Thus we have the remarkable fact that, if we understand by Christianity the religion of the New Testament, the

[1] Even at Assisi the Franciscan monastery on the hill was at one time in constant feud with the Franciscan community at the Portiuncula.

teaching of Christ and of His Apostles about Christ, Catholicism is a departure from, and even a direct contrast to, Christianity. When Catholics avow their faith in the Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, they are not speaking of the church as it is understood in the New Testament, but of a vast hierarchical, sacramental organisation to which the three epithets can be applied, not in a natural, nor in a scriptural, but only in a technical and artificial, sense.

When the Catholic church claims to be holy, it does not mean that it will accept holiness as the test of its claims; holiness in this connection is not the New Testament but the Old Testament idea, a separation from the world, an organ of supernatural power. In the New Testament all the members of the church are "saints," *i.e.* holy; they are required to be holy as God is holy, and their transformation into His image has made them partakers of the Divine nature, and so members of His church. But in Catholicism, the saints are a select few, who for ascetic practices and devotion to the church have been canonised. So far from the ordinary Catholic being holy, the clergy themselves are not, nor are they even required to be, holy. When Alexander VI. is on the Papal throne, celebrating in the Vatican the marriage of his natural daughter, Lucrezia Borgia, the church is as "holy" as if the Pope were a saint. The deplorable laxity of the priesthood in South America, for example, does not, from the Catholic point of view, derogate in the least from the holiness of the church. The church is not, as in the New Testament, holy because the members of it are good; there is no

ethical test at all; it is only holy as a machine, an instrument, an organisation.

Again, it is "apostolic," not in the sense that it imitates the Apostles, teaches their doctrine, or adopts their method, but only in an artificial sense, viz. that the hierarchy claims a dynastic descent from one of the Apostles, Peter. The Catholic church would never dream of correcting her practice or doctrine by referring to the New Testament.[1] She is not affected by Paul's argument, that we are justified by faith, but anathematises any one who teaches it. She pays no attention to Peter himself when he forbids the elders to lord it over God's heritage. Thus "apostolic" means the direct denial of the main ideas and doctrines of the Apostles, as we find them in the New Testament.

But Catholicism is not even Catholic. There are several "Catholicisms"; the Eastern and the Western denounce each other: each is equally sure that it is the one Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. Thus neither is Catholic in the proper sense of the word, "universal" and "all inclusive." Catholicism completely repudiates that Catholic idea which was quite natural to Paul when he wrote "unto the church of God which is at Corinth, even them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints, with all that call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, their Lord and ours" (I. Cor. i. 2). The millions who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in Protestant countries, and accept the New Testament as the teaching of Christ and the Apostles, Catholicism excludes and anathematises.

[1] Lord Acton's "History of Freedom, and other Essays," p. 514.

§ 2. Now the change which gradually transformed Christianity into Catholicism is not difficult to explain on historic lines. The alien elements intruded from the vanquished Paganism; the organisation grew and strengthened in the fight against heresy; corruptions multiplied when, Christianity being adopted as the religion of the empire, emperors as Christian claimed to control and to direct it. In the "Church History" of Backhouse and Tyler this process is traced with admirable candour. Milman's "History of Latin Christianity" carries the story on to the eve of the Reformation. Every change is explicable, and in a certain sense reasonable.

The Catholic doctrine of tradition, according to which the changes were all in the apostolic deposit, provided for and handed down from the Apostles to their successors, is an afterthought. But the continuity of development is most striking and imposing. As if by some inner and irresistible impulse baptism becomes the means, instead of the symbol, of salvation; by an equally inevitable logic the Supper becomes the Mass. Though it requires twelve centuries to elaborate and formulate the doctrine of Transubstantiation, from the first the elements were regarded as the body and blood of Christ offered up as a sacrifice, and to offer a sacrifice priests were necessary. The position of the ministry developed along the lines of priesthood. The "bishop," unknown to the New Testament, became the keystone of the arch; the symmetry of organisation led to the logical conclusion of an *episcopus episcoporum*. When at last the bishop of Rome claimed that title and position,

the fiction of Peter and the Rock was cited as a scriptural authority, and with the utmost naïveté the "two swords" were shown to be the spiritual and temporal power entrusted to his successor. As the ministry, in its threefold order, bishop, priest, and deacon, consolidated and culminated in the Papacy, all the powers entrusted by Christ to His church, as a brotherhood of disciples, were appropriated by the "clergy." By the fourth century it was taken for granted that the "priest" as such had the power to remit and to retain sins, in the next world as in this. As he claimed to offer up Christ on the altar, and to "make Him," to be the creator of his Creator, and as he also claimed to remit and retain sins according to his will, the ghostly power of the priesthood grew insensibly, until emperors trembled before it. The Host, made and carried about by the priests, was God. Thus the terrific engine of sacerdotal government was developed not by any deliberate usurpation, but by an apparently intrinsic impulse from the original presuppositions of the religion.

In the same way the ascetic and monastic tendencies, coming in from Eastern sources, possibly from Buddhism, fastened on sayings of our Lord, which required men to surrender their wealth and to leave the world. With asceticism the idea of merit inevitably returns. In the New Testament men are saved by grace, not by works lest any man should boast. But from the time of Anthony, and the Egyptian eremites, the idea rapidly took possession of the Church, not only that the self-denial, mortification, and austerity, were meritorious for the salvation of the soul, but that they constituted a treasury of merit which

the "church" could administer for the less meritorious of her children.

Thus the disease of monasticism entered the church, and with rapid strides devastated it. Almost every Catholic country has had to suppress its "religious orders." England destroyed them at the Reformation; Catholic Italy, Spain, and France have had to do the same without a Reformation. These monastic orders, vowed to poverty and unworldliness, absorb the land and the wealth of the nation and become a peril to governments. And yet the whole system arises naturally from the early misunderstanding of the Gospel.

This development cuts off the church from the standard and authority of Scripture. Tradition becomes first an equal, and then a superior, authority. When once the development is left to take its own course, and the restraint of scriptural standards is lost, the church proceeds to invent new cults, to stimulate devotion. By slow and sure steps the mother of Jesus was raised to the rank of Queen of Heaven; she became, as "mother of God," the intercessor to whom men must pray for interest with her Son. It took eighteen centuries to establish the point that she was born sinless, in order to secure the sinlessness of her son. But that point reached, Catholicism is engaged in raising Joseph to the position of intercessor. For if Christ obeys His mother in heaven from a sense of filial devotion, Mary must obey Joseph from a sense of wifely loyalty.

Thus new saints are always being canonised, and appealed to, and images of them attract worshippers to

rival shrines, until under this Christian guise the old paganism and polytheism are restored.

Given a spiritual doctrine like Christianity, entering into conflict with the world, assimilating ideas Jewish and Pagan, religious and political, from its environment, and gradually losing the pure and transcendent elements which belonged to it at the beginning, there is little difficulty in explaining the transformation of Christianity, with its spiritual idealism and its ethical purity, into Catholicism with its political ambition and its ethical numbness.

But there is a difficulty which is both perplexing and harrowing to faith. How is this perversion, distortion, degradation, to be reconciled with the promise of Christ in the Gospel that He would be with His own to the end of the world? How can we conceive the presence and working of the Holy Spirit in the church which sacrifices holiness to power, elects men without holiness as governors and directors of her affairs, and constantly lags behind the truth and the morality of the age in which she lives?

The reconciliation needed will not be found except in that great principle of Jesus, that we must judge not according to appearances, but judge righteous judgment; that the kingdom of heaven is not of this world, and comes not with observation; that God estimates things in an inward and spiritual way.

When the New Testament is closely considered there is much to show that such mistakes as have been made would be made. Christ Himself foretold defections; the Apostles drew the most vivid pictures of the egotism

and ambition which would invade the church; Paul declared that the mystery of iniquity was already at work in his day.

Thus the progress of Christianity is to be sought, not in the organisation of the church, which may easily be an error, a usurpation, a worldly power endeavouring to exploit Christ and His truth, but in the spiritual movements which go on through, and in spite of, these exterior things.

Christ may be present with the faithful few gathered in His name everywhere and in every age, and may deliberately withdraw from a corrupt Curia, and a throne where a weak and guilty man poses as His vicegerent. The Holy Spirit may be at work in society, in movements of thought, in poetry, painting, and the nobler aspirations of humanity, at the very time when the self-styled church has resisted, grieved, or even quenched the Spirit.

In other words, it may be, and indeed is, the very genius of the New Testament to seek the expansion of the kingdom of God, not in the pretentious and hypocritical schemes of man, but in the human heart, in love, and faith, and hope.

Thus the holy, Catholic, and apostolic church in which we believe will not be, cannot be, that corrupt and ambitious government which sits on the seven hills, nor any other system, Greek, Coptic, Æthiopic, Anglican, but that vast fellowship of souls who, being really holy, form the one desirable society, and are therefore Catholic, and are apostolic because they "continue stedfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the

breaking of bread and the prayers" (Acts ii. 42) as at the beginning.

If only, with the New Testament in our hands, we can reach and occupy this standpoint, hope is renewed, and a great possibility opens before the mind. If the corruptions and mistakes have not obliterated the original principles of the church; if the Head of the church is in the Spirit still present, and has always been; though centuries may seem to have been lost, the impulse which was at the beginning is always here, and may move again to more fruitful results. Averting our eyes from the church as a visible institution, and looking exclusively at Christ and His activity in the world, prolonged through centuries, and never more manifest than to-day, we may perhaps maintain that His true church has never been divided; always it has been one body, viz. His. Though the living stream has flowed through the desert, and has often seemed to be lost in the sand and in the ruins, the source is unexhausted, and pours out its waters still. Only let us go back to the original ideas, seek the primal power, accept the intrinsic tests; only let this idea be presented to the men of this or any age, and a regeneration of the church may begin.

> "Can time undo what once was true?
> Yet we would follow Thee."

§ 3. And while we thus lay hold of the principle of reconstruction or regeneration, we may be able to recognise that the centuries have not really been lost. Catholicism, if in its working out an error, a corruption, a decline, has in its magnificent purpose

produced ideals which must not be allowed to perish. The idea of unity itself is Christ's own: His purpose was that His followers should be one, as He and the Father are one. The idea of continuity, a succession from age to age, a widening out of doctrine, a building up from precedent to precedent, the identity preserved through change, is so harmonious with the principle of all human development, that it must appeal with force to thinkers, especially to thinkers brought up in the doctrine of evolution. The idea—it was St. Augustine's—of the church as a city of God, replacing the Roman empire which had fallen by the irruption of the Goths,[1] was the most magnificent which has ever come to the mind of man. A spiritual government, presiding over the nations, an arbiter in their disputes, a teacher of heavenly truth, uniting and harmonising the races, the politics, the philosophies, of mankind, is a dream so noble that we cannot but look with wonder and reverence on the great men, St. Leo, St. Gregory, Hildebrand, who conceived it and wrought for centuries to give it an actual embodiment.

And while the ideas of unity, continuity, and authority are a priceless heritage, Catholicism has preserved other treasures which we can ill afford to spare. From the days of St. Anthony and the Egyptian eremites, through the austerities of Basil and Chrysostom and Jerome, and then in the ideals of the great monastic founders, Benedict, Francis, she held aloft the Cross, the idea of unworldliness, renunciation, self-sacrifice,

[1] Alaric entered Rome in A.D. 410.

Sanctity was a superiority to the indulgence of the flesh, to the sway of appetite, or to the seductions of ambition. The church was extended, heathenism was vanquished, Christ's purpose was fulfilled by a series of missionaries, who were martyrs; Patrick in Ireland, Columba in Scotland; Columbanus, Ulfilas, and Adalbert in Germany; a host, whose names cannot be numbered, won Europe to Christ by dying or by sacrificing every comfort and pleasure. That the Cross can only be truly preached by our being crucified with Christ, was the idea of Catholicism which gave it its power and extension in all its fruitful ages.

Then Catholicism created and preserved the idea of theology as a body of revealed truth which must be kept untainted, and defended at all costs against the perversion and corruption of heresy. There is a truth of God; that truth is declared by God; it is committed to faithful men, and is to be communicated to the world, which needs it for its salvation; that is the noble side of Catholic theology, which must be remembered when we are studying the dismal history of the councils and the heresies and the Inquisitions.

And the Catholic cultus or worship is, or at any rate once was, the most powerful attraction ever devised by man for drawing whole populations to worship, to recognise God, to obey spiritual laws. Into this service from early times all the arts were impressed. Architecture built shrines like St. Sophia at Constantinople, or St. Mark's at Venice, which awed the beholder with mystery, and ravished him with beauty. Music was brought into the worship of God; it was converted and

became spiritual; great composers were elicited by the yearning of the church to express her praise. At first Gregory confined the expression to the simplest tunes and harmonies; but the rapture could not brook confinement; and seeking all modes of expression, it wrought out that greatest of all distinctively Christian arts, modern music.

The image worship was and is an abuse. One council condemned, and another restored it. To-day Catholics defend, while Protestants condemn it. But about one point there is complete agreement. The Catholic demand for pictures in worship created the modern art of painting. First it produced those marvellous mosaics which still move the soul to ecstasy in St. Mark's, or in St. Apollinaris at Ravenna. Then it elicited Duzzio and Cimabue, Giotto, and the glorious succession of Italian painters. From the glimpses of country-sides through the windows of chambers in which the Madonna held her Babe the art of landscape-painting grew. Turner is in this way a remote and unexpected result of Catholicism.

Thus, confining our attention for the moment to the noble and beautiful side of Catholicism, we gather a harvest of great ideas which are of the essence of the Gospel, which we cannot be wrong in attributing, if not to the Jesus of history, at least to the Christ of God. Catholicism holds before our eyes the conception of a Christianity which is one for all mankind and can hold all mankind in one; a body of Divine truth, which, living, develops with the ages, absorbs all new discoveries, and teaches men the way of God ever more perfectly; a worship which, celebrated at a million

shrines, may yet be one in its idea and method and end; a worship which unites all classes and all sorts of men by touching at once the intellect and the heart, the æsthetic sense, and the will. It ever holds in its heart as the ideal of sanctity, a noble renunciation, a sacrifice of self in the service of humanity, a complete surrender of the individual will to God.

§ 4. But if the great Catholic idea is to be realised, two things are absolutely essential: first, to recognise where the mistake was made in the historical attempt to realise it, which has manifestly failed; second, to grasp afresh the truth which always contains within itself both the ideal and the promise of its realisation.

(1) The mistake was of early origin and of consistent growth. It is not an error which crept in later owing to the slow corruption of time. But, as Paul said, the mystery of iniquity was already at work in the apostolic age itself (II. Thess. ii. 1–12). In the second half of the second century, as we have seen, we find in Justin Martyr the Lord's Supper shaping towards the Mass; in Irenæus we hear the first suggestions of the authority of Rome; in the third century Cyprian has elaborated the extreme view of episcopal authority, and the relics of saints and martyrs are objects of superstitious veneration; in the fourth century the Gregories and Basil and Chrysostom and Jerome exhibit the fanatical asceticism, the scorn of marriage, the hatred of heretics, which gradually eliminated mercy and humanity from the ecclesiastical heart. In the fifth century Leo practically founds the Papacy; and though at the end of the sixth century St. Gregory still concedes to the Patriarchs of

Alexandria and Antioch a certain equality with the bishopric of Rome, we may say that the papal claims are established, defended by forged documents, and accepted by half Christendom, before the schism between the East and the West.

What was the mystery of iniquity? What was the error which transformed the church of the first century into that mass of corruption and pollution which in the ninth century seemed to be a perfect travesty of the Christian church? So far as we can interpret the mysterious allusions of St. Paul in II. *Thess.* ii., we gather that it was the spirit of worldly domination, the priestly hankering to lord it over the Lord's heritage, the substitution of an ecclesiastical tyranny for the decaying Roman empire. A seer like Dante attributed the fall of the church to the patronage of the Emperor Constantine. The emperor became the head of the church, summoning and controlling councils, dictating the terms of orthodoxy. But the more serious fall came when the Pope took the place of emperor, and endeavoured to govern and coerce the church by the imperial methods. When Innocent III., at the beginning of the thirteenth century, organised a military crusade to exterminate all the Protestants who had come into being during the middle ages, the mystery of lawlessness was complete. What was begun in the Spirit was made perfect in the flesh. The kingdom of God, which Jesus preached, *i.e.* the reign of God in the hearts of men, had become a kingdom of this world, a tyranny, with a despot at its head, who no longer attempted to reign by Christ's methods, or in Christ's

spirit, but employed the ordinary means of earthly governments to convert and to coerce souls.

Sacerdotalism is the instrument which this usurping power instinctively uses to retain its hold of men. The celibate priest is cut off from the joys and interests of family life, and seeks his satisfaction in the power of the church, which employs him as an instrument. Every corruption of Catholicism springs from the attempt to weld the fetters of priestly influence and power. In Christianity, as we saw it issuing from the mind of Christ through the Apostles, there was and could be no priesthood. But so soon as the idea of the priesthood was adopted from Judaism or Paganism, the effort of the church was directed to subject the "laity" to the "clergy." The Lord's Supper was made a sacrifice, that the priest might be necessary to offer it. Purgatory was invented, that the priest might hold the keys and administer the terrors or relief of that visionary realm. The priest created his Creator on the altar; the priest locked or unlocked the door of heaven. The confessional was devised, to place the secrets of all hearts into the hands of the priest. And the casuistry which destroys morality was devised to meet the necessities of the confessional.

To maintain the power of the priest over the laity, it was necessary to keep the Bible out of the hands of the people; for the most humble reader of the New Testament could not but see that there was no Mass, no priest, no confessional, and no purgatory there.

But, as the Bible was taken from the Christian, it

became necessary to entertain the mind with other devotions, worships, and intercessions. To take the place of the Bible, and of Christ, the Virgin Mary was elevated to a divine position in heaven, and treated as the mediator between men and her Son. Though St. Bernard, the last of the Fathers, regarded the idea of her immaculate conception as a heresy, because Christ and Christ alone was born without sin, the worship of Mary rapidly and inevitably filled the mind of the church. As Mary was an ecclesiastical creation, fancy and dogmatic necessity might paint her portrait and exploit her authority at will. The saints, and even their relics, pilgrimages, sacred hearts, scapularies, and the endless novelties of Catholicism, down to the fictions of Loreto and the extravagances of New Pompeii, are devices to fill the mind and heart of people who are cut off from the Scriptures. The habitual use of the Bible would shatter the whole system.

But if we are right in diagnosing the error, ancient and deep-rooted as it is, we may hope to see the day when it will be recognised and renounced. The amazing success of the Reformation, which established Protestantism in all the progressive nations of Christendom, showed clearly that God did not mean to leave the church for ever in her corruption. That great movement was but a harbinger of the Reformation which is yet to be.

Luther and his fellow-workers moved in the dark, or at least in the shadow; they resisted the more obvious abuses of Catholicism, but they did not strike at the root. The effort of the Reformers, Luther,

Calvin, Zwingli, Knox, was to set up a purified Catholic church over against the corrupt church of Rome. But the time had not come, the materials were not at hand, for going back to the sources, for finding the genuine religion of Jesus, and for bringing it to bear, as a reforming and regenerating spirit, on the whole church, and indeed on the whole world.

The only effect of the Reformation of the sixteenth century was to set Protestantism over against Catholicism and to represent Catholicism as the enemy. But Catholicism is not the enemy; it is the misguided way in which Catholicism has been worked out, that is the enemy; in a word, as Gambetta said, little realising the far-reaching truth of his aphorism, *Cléricalisme c'est l'ennemi.*

Catholicism is a noble idea, the greatest that ever visited the heart of man. It animated and inspired Paul and Augustine, no less than Leo and Gregory. But Leo and Gregory adopted the mode of realising it which was ultimately subversive of it. It is the mistaken method of realising Catholicism which has to be combated. It is the Catholicism in which Protestantism and Catholicism can be merged, which has to be realised.

(2) *Il faut reculer pour sauter.* We must go back to the original, and recover the fundamental ideas, the ideas which, being those of Christ and His apostles, made Christianity. We must bring everything to the criterion of those fundamental ideas, and correct everything by them. We must lay the whole stress upon the essentials, and courageously clear away the accretions, which

are not only unessential, but obscuring to what is essential.

Our study may guide us to the right conclusion. When the idea of God in the New Testament is made plain and paramount, as the infinite love and wisdom of Fatherhood; and when the work of Jesus is interpreted by that idea, and harmonised with it; we cannot but reach the conclusion, that the church is the society of those who believe in Him, and that the notes of that society are two, viz. goodness and love. The "Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church" acquires a new, and yet its original, meaning. It is the society of the good; its holiness is goodness, likeness to Jesus Himself. It is Catholic in the sense of covering all races, all lands, all ecclesiastical organisations; in the sense, too, of holding the one creed, the creed of goodness and of brotherhood. It is apostolic, because it returns to the ideas of the Apostles, and finds in their writings the norm of religion.

Speaking broadly, the Eastern Church made orthodoxy of creed the test of the church. It produced a blind fury against heretics. It drove Chrysostom and Nestorius alike into exile. Eutyches, the opponent of Nestorius in one council, was himself marked as a heretic in the next. The church fell into violent factions on the question whether in Jesus there were two natures or one. Duophysite and Monophysite fought each other more bitterly than faith fought infidelity. And the "orthodox" church fell an easy victim to the victorious onslaught of Mahomet. In that dark age of contention for what was supposed to be the faith once for all delivered to the saints, the eye rests

with relief only on an individual here and there who retained the spirit of goodness and of love. The hope for the future was not in Athanasius or Cyril or even Augustine, but in such a character as Timotheus Salophaciolus. He was Patriarch of Alexandria in 460 and in 477. His gentleness and moderation secured tranquillity in distracted times. A Duophysite himself, he protected the Monophysites, and refused even the Emperor Basilicus commanding him to coerce the heretics. The Monophysites would call to him in the streets of Alexandria: "Although we have no church fellowship with thee, yet we love thee."

The Western church, on the other hand, made the unity of the organisation the test of orthodoxy. Rome has been tolerant of everything so long as implicit obedience is yielded to her authority, easily tolerant of moral turpitude, and inclined to exalt as a virtue the fierce fanaticism which hounds to death those who refuse obedience. The motto of ancient Rome was adopted as that of the Roman church—

"Parcere subjectis, et debellare superbos."

This Western Catholicism has for many centuries absolutely dismissed goodness and brotherhood as the marks of the church. The sole mark of the church is the unity of the see of Peter. To her no goodness is of any value, no love is recognised as Christian, apart from absolute submission to the Pope.

But the Catholicism of the Orthodox church, and the Catholicism of the Roman church, implacable enemies to one another, are decaying before the eyes

of the modern world. And in the bosom of the Western church, at any rate, a new thought is at work; the light of truth and love is breaking in.

Protestantism obtained the first glimpse of the dawn. It at least saw that mediæval Catholicism did not realise the idea of Christianity. It re-established the ethical test, and set its sails towards brotherhood. But it must be owned that Protestantism for the most part fell into the fundamental error of Catholicism. Lutheranism and Calvinism alike established orthodoxy in a creed. Anglicanism has established orthodoxy in submission to the unity of Canterbury. Thus the actual churches of Protestantism have become paler and milder reflections of the Eastern or the Western Catholicisms. But Protestantism has this great advantage, which will be the salvation of the future: it has the Bible. It can turn, and is always turning, to the springs of the faith in the life of our Lord and in the writings of His Apostles. And yet Protestantism will never vanquish Catholicism, nor will Catholicism ever recover Protestantism into its stereotyped and artificial unity.

But if we have studied the early church to any purpose, and have caught the meaning of the historic development of these Christian centuries, we may cherish the firm conviction, and work towards its realisation, that Christianity, like a swelling tide, will yet rise and overflow Catholicism and Protestantism alike, merging them in a far better and purer Catholicism than has yet been conceived. Goodness and love are stronger forces than the orthodoxy of the East,

or the authority of the West; for they are of God. God is goodness, God is love. Christianity was the breaking in of this sublime truth into humanity. It was first the declaration and then the demonstration that God is goodness and God is love. It was therefore the means by which men could become good and learn to love one another with a pure heart fervently.

If we recover that truth, if the world as a whole discovers it; if the church, or the churches, consent to be tested by it, and to conform to it; if faith in Christ is identified with the conduct and character of Christ, and if orthodoxy is estimated by the principle of I. *Cor.* xiii.; if the modes of organisation are recognised as secondary, and surrendered or modified directly they do not conduce to goodness and love; if the breath of the Spirit passes over Christendom and turns the thought of all towards the one desirable result, the church which is the bond of humanity and the sacred expression of man's union with God; we shall see the true Catholic church emerge, or, shall we not say, descending out of heaven; the tabernacle of God will be among men; the church of the future will fulfil the promise of the church at the beginning, when, by Peter's confession it issued out of the Unseen into the Seen, and the Lord declared that the gates of the Unseen should not prevail against it.

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