

## THE ORIGIN OF THE CHURCH.

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AT no time in our national history, the Church has exercised greater political power than at present. The Eighteenth Amendment is a monument to the zeal and perseverance of our ecclesiastical organizations which, for many decades, made strenuous efforts to prohibit the manufacture, sale and use of alcoholic beverages. This victory is, of course, only the first step in a much more comprehensive movement the aim of which is to transform our temporal government into an agent of the Church. That is by no means a new and unheard-of ambition. The Church has claimed at all periods more or less insistently control over the State. She believes to be entitled thereto on account of her divine origin which confers upon her divine authority. Such an authority is conceded indeed also to the State, but only on condition that the latter consent to act as the obedient servant of the Church.

There are two ways to approach the problem presented to us by the attitude of the Church. One is to decide after careful examination in each case whether the demand made by the Church upon the State is consistent with the basic principles of the Christian religion. But this method is rather unsatisfactory. For as long as the Church enjoys divine authority, she will overrule all such investigations as infringing upon her sacred rights. Therefore, one must tackle first of all the fundamental principle and decide, if possible, whether the Church is endowed, by virtue of her origin, with divine authority or not. If she should prove to be, not a divine, but merely a human institution, even the most enthusiastic representatives of the Church would be forced to consider very critically each and all of her claims, demands and precepts. For all human institutions, even those of a religious character, are subject to human imperfections, shortcomings and abuses, and in constant need of reform.

For this reason, I desire to study as a truth-seeking historian, the data as to the origin of the Church contained in the New Testament.

The Greek word used in the New Testament for Church is *ecclesia*. Being regarded as a specifically Christian term, a kind of proper name, it was adopted by the Latins. *Ecclesia*, or its English equivalent, denotes the visible organized body of Christian believers in their entirety as well as any major or minor division or local unit.

The noun was in classical Greek a political, not a religious term. It meant an assembly of the citizens regularly summoned, or a legislative assembly. In this sense, it occurs thrice in the New Testament (Acts xix. 32, 39, 41) in the account of how Demetrius, the silversmith of Ephesus, and his guild-brethren tried to stop the work of St. Paul. The early Christians, however, derived the word not from classical but from Hellenistic Greek as current among the Jews of the Diaspora. In the Septuagint, *ecclesia* stands for a Hebrew noun of much wider application. It signifies any assembly, convocation or congregation, either specially convoked, for evil counsel, civil affairs, military operations, religious purposes, or an organized body, as the people of Israel, the restored community in Jerusalem, the angels, etc.

*Ecclesia* was not used from the beginning for the body of Christian believers. While the day of Pentecost is generally considered as the birthday of the Church, the first people who joined the Apostles were called "they that received his word" (Acts ii. 41), "all that believed" (Acts ii. 44), "the multitude of them that believed" (Acts iv. 32), and "the disciples" (Acts vi. 1). *Ecclesia* appears first in the story of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts v. 11). But the question is at what time that account received its present form. In any case, the Apostle Paul employs the term so frequently and constantly in his Epistles that he may be its father, especially as neither the First nor the Second Epistle of St. Peter contains the word. *Ecclesia* being a specific Christian term, it is a mistake to use Acts vii. 38 the expression "the church in the wilderness."

If the above-given definition and explanation come anywhere near being correct, one could hardly expect to find *ecclesia* in its Christian meaning in the Gospels. As a matter of fact, it does not occur at all in Mark, Luke and John. But it is found in Matt. xvi. 13-20 and xviii. 15-18. The former passage contains the famous statement ascribed to Jesus: "Thou art Peter, and upon

this rock I will build my Church," which claims our chief attention. But for just that reason it is advisable first to examine the second passage, which reads:

"If thy brother sin against thee, go, show him his fault between thee and him alone: if he hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he hear thee not, take with thee one or two more, that at the mouth of two witnesses or three every word may be established. And if he refuse to hear them, tell it unto the ecclesia: and if he refuse to hear the ecclesia also, let him be unto thee as the Gentile and the publican. Verily I say unto you, what things soever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and what things soever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

Our translations have in both instances the noun *church* instead of *ecclesia*. But it seems to me safer to retain the Greek term until its true meaning in this instance has been ascertained.

The just-quoted words are evidently a juridical rule, regulating the conduct and procedure of a party wronged by one of his neighbors in his efforts to obtain redress from the party who inflicted the wrong. It also provides punishment of the evil-doer in case he should refuse to make amends. There are three steps to be taken, one after the other if necessary. The first is a private interview. If that proves unavailing, the plaintiff is to call upon the defendant with one or two witnesses in whose presence he is to discuss his complaint. If his adversary still declines to satisfy him, he is to be summoned before the ecclesia. If he remains unrepentant even there, the ecclesia is to excommunicate him. For that is meant by: "Let him be unto thee as the Gentile and the publican." A pious Jew held intercourse with Gentiles and publicans a great sin. Excommunication was the severest punishment that could be inflicted upon a Jew. It rendered him an outcast for time and eternity. For as the final clause explains, the judgment of the ecclesia was sure of being ratified by God himself.

Nothing is said directly about forgiving the offender. But he evidently was to be forgiven as soon as, at any of the three stages of the proceeding against him, he would repent in word and deed. The Jews insisted upon forgiving in such cases, as we learn, e. g., from the *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs* where we have the commandment: "If he admit and repent, forgive him" (Test. Gad, VI). That is why the passage has been incorporated in a collection of sayings of Jesus which treat of forgiving.

We must not overlook, however, the spirit of the words under

discussion. It is certainly not that of Jesus but that of the Old Testament. There we are told: "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth!" and: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy!" The precept of Jesus: "Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, bless them that curse you, pray for them that despitefully use you!" is entirely out of harmony with such a detailed instruction as how to make an enemy come to terms or suffer the consequences as given in Matt. xviii. 15-18.

Matt. xviii. 21-22 relates: "Peter came and said to him, Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Until seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times; but, Until seventy times seven." Nothing suggests here the idea of a forgiving dependent upon repentance on the part of the offender. Jesus clearly prescribes unconditional forgiveness, which is confirmed by his well-known saying: "To him that smiteth thee on the one cheek, offer also the other." To forgive our debtors as we desire to be forgiven by God, is an essential, fundamental part of the ethical code of the religion of Jesus Christ. This can be proved also by St. Paul, if additional proof were needed. He writes Rom. xii. 19-21: "Avenge not yourselves, beloved. . . . But if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him to drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head. Be not overcome of evil; but overcome evil with good." We are, therefore, compelled to see in Matt. xviii. 15-18, not a saying of Jesus, but a strictly Jewish ordinance, originally drawn up by some rabbi, which the compiler of our section of the First Gospel mistook for a word of Jesus.

The passage presents other indications in support of that conclusion. There is first, although a minor item, the direct reference to Deut. xix. 15 in the clause "that at the mouth of two witnesses or three every word may be established." It was not exactly a habit of Jesus to render his precepts more acceptable to his fellow-countrymen by referring to the Old Testament. On the contrary, he did not hesitate to place his commandments directly in opposition to those of the old covenant. That is shown by the formula: "Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time. . . .but I say unto you." For, as he himself explained: "No man putteth new wine into old wine-skins."

Of much greater importance in determining the religious character of our passage is the punitive clause: "Let him be unto thee as the Gentile and the publican." As a law-abiding Jew Jesus refrained from entering into personal intercourse with Gentiles and

advised his disciples to do the same (Matt. x. 5). But it is a well-attested fact that he cherished and sought intimate relations with publicans. They were to him lost sheep of the house of Israel, whom he had come to seek and to save. The Pharisees, who ostracized their countrymen that had become officers of the Roman government, criticized Jesus most severely for his attitude toward those renegades. They sneered at him: "Behold a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!" In spite of that opposition, Jesus continued to the end of his life to accept and even to ask for the hospitality of publicans (Luke xix. 1-10). A man who did not hesitate to eat and drink with publicans cannot have commanded his disciples to treat their unrepentant enemies as if they were publicans. The single word "publican" puts the seal of Pharisaism upon our passage.

The last sentence: "Verily I say unto you, What things soever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and what things ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." emphasizes how far-reaching and serious an excommunication by the ecclesia is. It is binding for time and eternity, before men and God. W. C. Allen (*International Critical Commentary, St. Matthew*) states: "It means that the decision of the community regarding what is or is not justifiable in its members must be regarded as final." That is a perfectly correct comment. But, just for that reason the words cannot belong to Jesus but must have been spoken by the scribe who first drew up the juridical rule. Matt. xviii. 18 illustrates Matt. xxiii. 13, where Jesus says: "Woe, unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye shut the kingdom of God against men." We hear indeed a good deal about the power of the keys of the Church. But the man who denied that the scribes and Pharisees were entitled to shut the kingdom of God against men and who neither claimed nor exercised that power himself, cannot have conferred it upon his Apostles. Jesus had not come to condemn but to save sinners. He did not retain sins but forgave them. He instructed his disciples: "Judge not, and ye shall not be judged; condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned; release, and ye shall be released" (Luke vi. 37).

In accordance with that precept and the example of Jesus, we believe in religious liberty and expect everybody to obey his individual conscience and be faithful to his own convictions no matter what the community may think or how it may judge. No majority, however imposing, no authority, however powerful, has the right of judging and condemning dissenters. No punishment inflicted

upon them can ever demonstrate their guilt. Crucifixion did not brand Jesus a false prophet; the lions did not prove the Christian martyrs to be wicked atheists; being burned at the stake did not make John Huss an enemy of God and Christ.

As soon as we recognize the strictly Jewish character of our passage, the meaning of *ecclesia* in Matt. xviii. 17 becomes clear. The Palestinian Jews of the New Testament age enjoyed local self-government. On two days of the week the people of the town or village were called together for regulating the temporal affairs of the community, including dispensation of justice. These meetings were conducted by the presbyters, or elders. In case of trouble between neighbors, the elders would hear the witnesses and pass judgment according to certain rules and precedents, such as Matt. xviii. 15-18. These town meetings were called by the Hebrew noun which the Septuagint renders *ecclesia*. The latter word is, therefore, to be translated "assembly."

Having disposed of *ecclesia* in Matt. xviii, we can concentrate our attention upon Matt. xvi. 17-19, an infinitely more important passage. It is an apparently integral part of Matt. xvi. 13-20, which belongs to the Synoptic source and has its parallels in Mark viii. 27-30 and Luke ix. 18-21. The pericope is called St. Peter's Confession and is supposed to record when the twelve disciples realized for the first time the true character of their teacher. In reply to that welcome confession, Jesus promised to build his Church upon St. Peter the rock and give him the keys of the kingdom of heaven. In other words, the leader of the Twelve is appointed head and ruler of the Church.

The date of that confession can be fixed approximately. It was followed within a few days by the Transfiguration which Matthew and Mark place six days and Luke about eight days after the Confession (Matt. xvii. 1, Mark ix. 2, Luke ix. 28). The transfiguration confirmed the belief of the disciples in the Messiahship of Jesus and occurred shortly before the pilgrimage to Jerusalem (cf. 2 Pet. ii. 16ff). It has been said St. Peter's confession marks the end of the preparatory work of Jesus. Nevertheless, it is more than doubtful whether the Apostles became first aware of his Messianic mission at so late a date. According to the clear account in John, the disciples joined Jesus because they believed him to be the Messiah from the very beginning. John the Baptist had pointed out Jesus to two of his followers saying: "Behold the lamb of God!" (John i. 36). Andrew, one of the two, induced his brother Simon to become a disciple of Jesus by announcing to him:



"We have found the Messiah" (John i. 41). Philip, another disciple of Jesus, invited Nathanael to join their master, telling him: "We have found him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph" (John. i. 45). The new convert confessed when he met Jesus: "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art King of Israel" (John i. 49).

Although the Synoptic Gospels do not confirm the testimony of John directly and explicitly, it must be considered as historical on general principles. The Twelve cannot have accepted the call of Jesus without definite knowledge as to what it implied. They had to earn a living for themselves and their families. Such men do not as a rule quit their work and leave their homes in order to follow a stranger who has not where to lay his head. We may credit the contemporaries of Jesus in Palestine with the greatest possible thirst after religious knowledge and instruction; but we must not forget that thirst could be slacked by attending the synagogue and listening to the scribes without being compelled to become homeless wanderers.

What great inducement could lead the disciples to accept the invitation of Jesus to become his followers? The honor of forming the body-guard of the Messiah. While the first three Gospels do not state this in express terms, they connect the work of Jesus closely with that of the Baptist. The latter is the immediate forerunner of the Messiah (Matt. iii. 11; Mark i. 7f; Luke iii. 21f). They imply unmistakably in the account of the baptism of Jesus that the Baptist recognized Jesus as the promised Messiah (Matt. iii. 13-17; Mark i. 9-11; Luke iii. 21-22; cf. Matt. xi. 2ff). He must have told his most intimate followers what he had learned of Jesus. Hence, the statements of John i. may and must be used in explaining the corresponding narratives of the Synoptic Gospels. The words of St. Peter, Luke v. 2-11: "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord," are to be understood as the fisherman's confession that he knew who Jesus was but considered himself unworthy of his companionship. Belief in the Messiahship of Jesus alone accounts for the readiness of his followers to leave and give up everything in order to consort with him. The reward, awaiting them in the kingdom of heaven, outweighed every other consideration (cf. Matt. xix. 27f, xx. 20-28; Mark x. 35-45). The first disciples' belief in the Messianic mission of Jesus was not the fruit of their long-continued intercourse with him, but rather the reason why they attached themselves to him right at the beginning of his career. That important fact, combined with the other that the words

in question are not found in the parallel accounts of Mark and Luke, compel us to examine the three versions of our pericope very carefully.

Matthew and Mark locate the so-called Confession in the neighborhood of Cæsarea Philippi, while no place is mentioned in Luke ix. 18. But otherwise the text of the Second Gospel coincides more closely with that of the Third. Both employ the same compound verb (Mark viii. 27 and Luke ix. 18) to express the idea of "ask" where in Matt. xvi. 13 the simple verb is used. According to Matthew, Jesus is said to be: John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah or one of the prophets; in Mark and Luke only John the Baptist, Elijah or one of the prophets are mentioned. The First Gospel seems to contain an enlarged edition of the original text. That appears also in the first question of Jesus and the second answer of Peter. Mark viii. 27 reads: "Who do men say that I am?" Luke ix. 18: "Who do the multitudes say that I am?" but Matt. xvi. 14: "Who do men say that the Son of Man is?" In Mark viii. 27, the spokesman of the Twelve says: "Thou art the Christ," in Luke ix. 20: "The Christ of God," whereas in Matt. xvi. 16 we read: "Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God." In these cases, the text vouched for by the Second and Third Gospels is, of course, more authentic than that of the first.

If we apply that text-critical rule to our pericope, the whole passage—"And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon, Bar-Jonah! for flesh and blood has not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven. And I also say unto thee, 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,"—must be an interpolation. This conclusion is corroborated by the fact that the Confession of St. Peter shortly before the last Passover is out of the question. Moreover, St. Peter did learn that Jesus was the Christ from flesh and blood, namely, from his own brother Andrew, as related John i. 40ff. But before this problem can be settled, it has to be ascertained to which preceding section our pericope belongs.

The present introduction in the first two Gospels is apparently quite satisfactory. But the beginning in the Third Gospel presents a serious difficulty. A literal translation of Luke ix. 18 reads: "It happened while he was praying alone, there were with him his disciples." Modern translators and commentators have been puzzled



by the word "alone." The American Revised Version substitutes "apart" for "alone." But even "apart" does not permit the presence of the disciples, not to mention that "apart" and "alone" are two altogether different words not only in English but also in Greek. Besides, unless the commandment of Matt. vi. 6: "When thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber, and having shut the door pray to thy Father who is in secret," can be proved to be spurious, Jesus always prayed alone and never in the presence of his disciples. Thus the two statements in Luke, "Jesus was praying alone," and "the disciples were with him," exclude each other. The parallels in Matthew and Mark show that the original introduction of Luke ix. 18-21, if not lost, has to be looked for in the preceding passages. In its present condition Luke ix. 18 is only the bungling attempt of the editor to form some kind of connection between our pericope and the interpolations which interrupt the original context.

Luke ix. 7-10 we read: "Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was done: and he was perplexed because it was said by some, that John the Baptist was risen from the dead: and by some, that Elijah had appeared; and by others, that one of the old prophets had risen again. And Herod said, John I beheaded; but who is this, about whom I hear such things? And he sought to see him. And the apostles when they had returned, declared unto him what things they had done. And he took them and withdrew apart to a city called Bethsaida." The words "he was seeking to see him" imply a murderous threat. In Luke xiii. 31 we are told directly that Herod wanted to kill Jesus. The ominous desire of the tetrarch to meet Jesus induced the latter to look for a hiding-place in the neighborhood of Bethsaida. As Tiberias was Herod's capital, Bethsaida was situated in all probability east of the Sea of Galilee. Verses 18ff thus may be joined directly with verse 10. Or since the first half of verse 18 belongs to the compiler, verse 18 began originally "and he asked them saying." Therefore, according to the Third Gospel, the scene took place near Bethsaida. The word "multitudes," Luke ix. 18, is to be replaced by "men" in conformity with the Matthew and Mark texts. The change was made by the editor who inserted the story of the Feeding of the Multitudes (cf. Luke ix. 11 and 16) into the account of Jesus's flight before Herod. That Luke ix. 7-10 and 18b ff form an organic whole is proved by the identification of Jesus with John the Baptist, Elijah or one of the prophets in verses 7-8 as well as in verse 19. Moreover, if Jesus wanted to conceal himself before the ruler of Galilee and

Perea, he was not followed by any multitudes. Their very number would have frustrated his intention.

Turning to the Second Gospel, we learn Mark vi. 14-15: "And king Herod heard; for his name had become known: and he said, John the Baptist is risen from the dead, and therefore do these powers work in him. But others said, It is Elijah. And others said, It is a prophet, even as one of the prophets." These words point to Mark viii. 27-28 and form a close parallel to the just-discussed Luke text. Verse 16: "And Herod when he heard, said, John whom I beheaded, he is risen,"—superfluous in view of verse 14—indicates that the account of the execution of the Baptist has been derived from another source and has crowded out a statement between verses 15 and 16, to the effect that Herod wanted to get hold of Jesus.

Mark vi. 30-31: "And the apostles gather themselves together unto Jesus, and they told him all things whatsoever they had done, and whatsoever they had taught. And he saith unto them, Come ye yourselves apart in a desert place and rest awhile,"—is the counterpart of Luke ix. 10. Hence, Mark viii. 22a, "and they came unto Bethsaida," has to be considered as the original continuation of the just-quoted passage, which connects in turn directly with verse 27b. As soon as we become aware of these facts, we have to assign Mark viii. 27a, "and Jesus went forth and his disciples into the villages of Cæsarea Philippi," to the compiler who broke up the original text by inserting quite a number of episodes derived from other sources, as the Death of the Baptist, the Feeding of the Five Thousand, Jesus Walks on the Sea, Jesus Visits Gennesaret, Tyre and Sidon, the Decapolis, etc. He had not entirely lost sight of the original connection of Mark vi. 14-15, 30-31, viii. 22a and 27b ff, and supposed Jesus was moving all the time from one place to another in order to escape from Herod. When at a loss where viii. 27-30 had taken place, the name of Cæsarea Philippi occurred to him. For that city was the capital of Philip whose wife his brother Herod had abducted and who, for that reason, would not be inclined to aid Herod in capturing Jesus.

Matt. xvi. 13: "When Jesus came into the parts of Cæsarea Philippi," enables us to decide with confidence that the interpolations were made before the Gospels were translated into Greek. For the verbs "came" and "went forth" as well as the nouns "parts" and "villages" represent the same Hebrew words respectively, as may be learned from the *Concordance to the Septuagint* by Hatch and Redpath. They prove, at the same time, that the Greek trans-

lators of Matthew and Mark were independent of each other. They may have used even different revisions of the Aramaic text, for some variants in Matt. xvi. 13 and Mark viii. 27 existed possibly in Aramaic although we cannot be absolutely sure of that. For instance, the phrase "on the way," Mark viii. 27; is called for by the word "villages." According to Matt. xvi. 20 (cf. Mark viii. 30 and Luke ix. 21), Jesus was alone with his disciples when he asked them what the people said of him. The words "on the way" imply the same fact.

Bethsaida has disappeared altogether from Matt. xiv. 13-xvi.12. The first passage reads simply: "When Jesus heard it, he withdrew from thence in a boat to a desert place apart." That refers to Bethsaida on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. But as the words now stand, they point to the death and burial of the Baptist (Matt. xiv. 3-12). The execution of John is also related in Mark but is not mentioned in the Third Gospel. It must therefore be a later addition to the original text. The so-called Confession of Peter dates quite a while after the death of John the Baptist, as we learn from Matt. xiv. 1-2 (cf. Mark vi. 14f). Matt. xiv. 13a, as quoted above, must have followed directly upon Matt. xiv. 1-2, just as Luke ix. 7-10 is still an organic whole. But in Matthew the equivalent of the words "and he sought to see him" has been omitted by the scribe who added Matt. xiv. 3-12.

This apparently irrelevant digression into the problem of the composition of the Synoptic Gospels serves an important purpose. It proves our pericope to be one of the organic parts of one of the oldest, if not the very oldest, layers of our evangelical tradition; and it represents as such the report of an eye-witness. Its authority is absolute and, in spite of the fact that we possess three, to some extent differing revisions of the original narrative, it is comparatively easy to reconstruct the common, original source in all its essential features.

The three versions are so much alike that there is no room for doubt as to their relationship. Those of the Second and Third Gospels are almost identical. Such slight verbal differences as "He asked his disciples saying unto them" (Mark. viii. 27) and "he asked them saying" (Luke ix. 18); "they told him saying" (Mark viii. 28) and "they answering said" (Luke ix. 19); "and he asked them" (Mark viii. 29) and "but he said unto them" (Luke ix. 20) may be credited to the translators. There are other variations, some of which show that the Aramaic texts used by the Greek translators were not exactly identical. For instance, the closing

sentence reads: "He censured them that they should tell no man of him" (Mark, viii. 30), and "He censured them and commanded to tell that to no man" (Luke ix. 21). The American Revised Version has "charged" instead of "censured." Failing to understand our pericope, the scholars did not know what to do with the correct meaning of the Greek verb.

In any case, the virtual agreement of Mark and Luke enables us to deal summarily with the more important additions to the Matthew text. These are, besides verses 17-19, the first question of Jesus: "Who do men say that the Son of Man is?" and the answer of Simon Peter to the second question: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Both Mark and Luke have in the first instance simply the pronoun "I"; in the second case Mark reads: "Thou art the Christ." Luke: "The Christ of God." Two contemporary text-witnesses as over against one decide in favor of the natural expressions. Moreover, the First Gospel itself tells us why those changes were made. It was done in order to bring the plain language of the pericope into something like harmony with the stilted style of verses 17-19. There we have such sonorous expressions as Simon Bar-Jonah, flesh and blood, this rock, the gates of Hades, and the keys of the kingdom of heaven. That goes far to prove that the changes in the text of the original pericope were made either when or shortly after verses 17-19 were added.

So far the conclusion that Matt. xvi. 17-19 is an interpolation is based on three facts. First, the passage does not occur in the two other Gospels. Second, St. Peter could not confess his belief in the Messiahship of Jesus for the first time at so late a date because he had cherished that belief from the first moment of his discipleship. Third, as his brother Andrew had first told him that Jesus was the Christ, that knowledge was imparted to him by flesh and blood, not by God. We have now to discover what the pericope tells us about the confession.

The generally accepted explanation of the pericope rests entirely on the Matthew version in its present condition. The two other Gospels have a different story. According to them, Jesus did not ask his disciples: "But who say ye that I am?" because he wanted to find out what his disciples thought of him. He rather wished to hear what they said to the people who regarded Jesus only as a prophet. This follows from the closing statement: "He censured them and commanded to tell this to no man." While "censure" may not be the best translation of the corresponding Greek verb (I have adopted it on the authority of Liddell and Scott) it implies

the idea of finding fault with some one. Why did Jesus criticize his disciples? He could not have found fault with them if Peter had simply told him that he as well as the other disciples believed him to be the Christ. For he rebuked neither the Canaanitish woman, nor the blind man at Jericho, nor the multitudes at his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, nor the children in the Temple, who all hailed him as the Son of David. We are, therefore, compelled to conclude that Jesus censured his disciples because they had told the people that he was the Christ of God. To bring this out more clearly, we might translate Mark viii. 30: "He censured them because they should tell no man of him." We ought not to overlook the plural of the direct object of censure. While the praise of Matt. xvi. 17-19 is bestowed upon St. Peter alone, the blame of Matt. xvi. 20, Mark viii. 30, and Luke ix. 21 is meted out to all disciples without exception. Jesus had sent them forth to preach the kingdom of God (Matt. x. 7, Mark vi. 12, Luke ix. 2), not to enlighten the people willing to listen to them as to his true dignity and proper title. In his judgment, the moment had not arrived as yet when he was to proclaim his Messiahship in public. Hence, he had to rebuke his disciples for their thoughtless indiscretion.

For all these reasons Matt. xvi. 17-19 is entirely out of place in our pericope. Even Matt. xvi. 20 confirms that fact. The temporal adverb "then" at the head of this verse belongs, of course, to the interpolator. He was too faithful to his text to drop the closing sentence although the passage inserted by him excluded and contradicted it. He was evidently unconscious of committing a wrong when he put a current saying, ascribed to Jesus, where he imagined it to belong. But having separated verse 20 from verse 16, he had a subconscious feeling of the lack of connection between verses 19 and 20 and undertook to supply the missing link by the particle "then."

So far it has been demonstrated not only that Matt. xvi. 17-19 does not belong in its present context but also that verse 17 as well as verse 19 are spurious. Jesus cannot have blessed St. Peter for having received a direct divine revelation, nor given him the keys of the kingdom of heaven. It remains to be seen whether verse 18 may have been pronounced by Jesus at some other occasion. The question is not whether Jesus intended to build his Church upon St. Peter, but whether he ever intended to build any church.

It is only necessary to thus formulate the problem in order to solve it. If one thing is certain in the history of Jesus Christ it is the fact that he came to bring the kingdom of God. That



alone excludes the possibility of his ever having established or dreamt of establishing a church. For the two terms are incongruous.

The New Testament idea of the kingdom of God is of Jewish, Old Testament origin. It meant to the contemporaries of Jesus the realization of the reign of righteousness under the rule of the Christ. The moral perfection of all the members of that kingdom and the divine power of its king insured everlasting bliss and happiness; all suffering and even death would be abolished. Jesus came to fulfil the old hope of the pious in Israel. But he differed from the Pharisees in one, if not in two fundamental points. The Pharisees were convinced the kingdom would come as soon as the majority of their nation would obey the law of Moses as interpreted by their religious teachers. Jesus began his work by proclaiming in direct opposition to the scribes and Pharisees an entirely new law, "the Golden Rule." The other important difference is that Jesus, from the beginning, conceived his kingdom, not as one to materialize at some indefinite, future time, but as actually existing in this present world. Luke xvii. 20-21 is the principal locus for that conception. There Jesus is reported to have told the Pharisees who had asked him when the kingdom of God would come: "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation; neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for lo, the kingdom of God is within you." This saying is vouched for by the Third Gospel alone, but it is supported by such parables as that of the Mustard Seed and the Leaven.

Most modern theologians seem to accept this as the true Christian idea of the Messianic kingdom. We read for instance in Hastings, *Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. II, p. 850a: "The kingdom of God may truly be said to have existed on earth from the first moment of His manifestations," and p. 851b: "From the first, this kingdom in His view could not have been a merely *future* thing, but must have been conceived of as *already existing*."

Still, there are other passages according to which Jesus seems to have shared an eschatological and even grossly materialistic view of the kingdom of God. Luke xxii. 16, e. g., contains the statement: "I say unto you, I shall not drink henceforth of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come." The Matthew version is even stronger: "Verily I say unto you, I shall no more drink of the fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God" (cf. Mark xiv. 25). After the death of Jesus the eschatological conception seems to have prevailed ex-

clusively among the Christians, and this in an ever more materialistic sense until the intellectual leaders of the Gentile Christians grew tired of it.

The problem involved can only be solved by a most patient and painstaking examination of our records in order to determine their origin and authenticity. Possibly the Apostles and their immediate disciples misunderstood or failed to comprehend the remarks of Jesus concerning the kingdom of God. But such an investigation would exceed the limits of this paper. Besides, it is not necessary for our purpose.

If Jesus cherished the ideal conception of his kingdom as formulated in Luke xvii. 20-21, he cannot have thought of the Church. The invisible kingdom, existing in the hearts of his followers, was never intended to become a visible institution. It does not have princes and rulers. The greatest in that kingdom have no other chance of proving their greatness than that of being the humble servants of their fellow men and bearing the cross. The wisest have to practise their superior wisdom by living clean and holy lives. The intellectual leaders are bound to display their better knowledge by remaining steadfast in confessing the truth in the face of opposition and persecution. The rich are poor unless they hold their worldly possessions in trust for their brethren. In such a kingdom there is no room for a hierarchy.

If, on the other hand, Jesus should have regarded his kingdom as one to be realized later on, he was interested even less in the Church. For that kingdom is of a supernatural order and destined to descend from heaven when the time "which the Father hath set within his own authority" is fulfilled. Jesus himself could not hasten its arrival. All he could do was to increase the number of those who accepted from him the true law of that kingdom. That required no organization. Every new convert was expected to win over his friends and acquaintances. Every one could be an apostle. All he had to do was to go from place to place and deliver the message and law of the coming kingdom to the people he met in the course of his wanderings.

As Jesus had no cause nor reason why to establish a church, especially since the very idea of church is opposed to his religious convictions, the whole passage Matt. xvi. 17-19, including verse 18, must be spurious and belong to an age when the Church had discounted the idea of the kingdom of God. Our present knowledge of the origin and gradual development of the Church confirms that conclusion. Edwin Hatch in the *Bampton Lectures* of 1880 has

proved the Gentile Christian congregations to have borrowed their organization from the secular and religious societies of the Greek world to which they belonged. Hatch has also outlined the steps by which the primitive congregations, adopting again a Gentile model, the Roman Empire, have become the Church as we know her. The Church is, therefore, the heathen substitute, or caricature, of the kingdom of God.

Hatch's investigations would have been acclaimed as epoch-making if he had not discouraged any possible application of his deductions by insisting on calling the existing Church a divine institution. For no mortal man, of course, can think of criticizing or changing what God himself has established. *Sit ut est aut non sit!* Divine in this connection is a sorely abused term. In a way, of course, everything exists by the grace of God. That is to say, whatever qualities are found in an individual or institution are to be credited to either the active or passive grace of God. He inspires what is good and suffers what is bad. It is the duty of all who recognize this grace of God to improve what is good and eliminate what is bad as far as this is within their power. But apart from that, the Church is altogether a human institution and as such subject to all the shortcomings and abuses of all things human. If the Church has any special task to perform, it is that of establishing the truth about Jesus, to define ever more clearly and convincingly the true religion of Jesus Christ. This cannot be done by philosophizing about religion in general but only by studying the sources from which alone correct knowledge as to the historical Jesus can be derived. So far the Church has labored to obscure and hide that truth; and all attempts to supersede the authority of the Church by that of Jesus Christ have resulted only in the founding of sectarian bodies which immediately adopted the vicious and, in their case, ridiculous policy of the mother Church.

In closing, I wish to suggest that, according to the well-known *Cui bono*—"For whose benefit"—Matt. xvi. 17-19 must have had its origin in the city of Rome not later than 150 A. D. The only correct interpretation of the passage is that of the Roman Catholic Church. It sanctions all her claims of being the only, infallible and alone-saving Church. Rome presented, especially at the beginning of the Christian era, a very favorable soil for the spontaneous growth of such claims. The inhabitants of that capital of the world demanded quite naturally precedence and leadership on every field of human endeavor. Moreover, people living at Rome could not fail to gain practical and theoretical experience in the art of gov-

erning others and would employ that experience whenever an occasion of doing so presented itself. On the other hand, the people of the provinces were accustomed and willing to acknowledge the supremacy of the capital. These general conditions were supported by the missionary work and martyrdom of both St. Peter and St. Paul in the eternal city. Thus the local patriotism of the Roman Christians very soon must have looked upon the founding of the first congregation of disciples at Rome as an extraordinary event. It became in their estimation the founding of the Catholic Church. It was, of course, taken for granted that Jesus Christ himself had planned and prearranged that event. The Roman Church is the logical heir of all the rights, privileges and prerogatives conferred by Christian gratitude and reverence upon the leader of the Twelve, or rather, all the rights, privileges and prerogatives claimed for the Church at Rome were supposed to have been settled upon St. Peter by Jesus Christ himself.

As to the date when our interpolation was inserted into the First Gospel, we may expect to find it very early. It must have been formulated and gained currency shortly after the founding of the Christian congregation at Rome. Its vocabulary points to a Jewish Christian author. External evidence of the age and general acceptance of Matt. xvi. 17-19 is furnished by Origen, Dionysius, Irenæus and Justin Martyr.

Origen (A. D. 185-253) speaks of Peter upon whom the Church of Christ is built against which the gates of Hades shall not prevail (Eus., *E. H.*, VI, 25, 8). His convert Dionysius, who died A. D. 265 as bishop of Alexandria, quotes Matt. xvi. 17 (Eus., *E. H.*, VII, 25, 10). Thus our passage must have appeared in the received text of the Gospel before the year 200.

Irenæus, who died A. D. 202 as bishop of Lyons, is, as far as I know, the first provincial Christian who advocated the supremacy of the Roman Church. A native of Asia Minor, he had come to the capital about the year 155, whence he afterward moved to Lyons. He must have become convinced during his sojourn at Rome that the claims of the Roman Church were based on the authority of Jesus Christ. Therefore, our passage must have been considered at Rome as genuine about the year 150. It even seems to me as if the quotation from Irenæus in Eus., *E. H.*, V, 8, 2, which is usually translated "whilst Peter and Paul proclaimed the Gospel and founded the Church at Rome," is really a commentary on Matt. xvi. 18. For the original text reads: "Whilst Peter and Paul at Rome were preaching the Gospel and laying the foundation

of the Church." The prepositional phrase "at Rome" stands in the Greek text before the two verbs. If any emphasis should belong to that position, and it ought to, the clause would say that the Church built upon St. Peter the rock did not come into existence until the Prince of the Apostles, assisted by St. Paul, established the Church at Rome.

Our oldest text-witness is Justin Martyr. He writes in the *Dialogue with Tryphon* (100, B): "He surnamed one of his disciples, called Simon before, Peter because he had recognized him by the revelation of his Father as Son of God, Christ." As Justin Martyr died at Rome about the year 163, his testimony proves that the First Gospel with our passage was used by the Roman Christians about the beginning of the second century.