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THE CONCEPT OF THE CHURCH IN THE GOSPEL AND EPISTLES OF ST. JOHN*

by

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FOR a long time now the difference between the concept of the Church in Jerusalem, and that of Paul, has been realized.¹ But the fact that John had still another view of the Church is usually overlooked.² This essay is therefore an attempt to say something about the special nature of John's view of the Church.

I. THE EARLY CHURCH³

It is no longer possible to reconstruct the history of the Early Church with certainty, because we have no really reliable sources.

Opinions differ concerning the extent to which preoccupation with the future really formed the heart of the Christology of the Early Church.⁴ But even if the Early Church emphasized the importance of past events more than our sources lead us to believe, it is quite clear that the main emphasis was not on the incarnation of the pre-existent Son, nor on the Cross (which rather represented a perplexity which had to be explained); no, the main emphasis was on the exaltation of Christ, which was interpreted as the establishment of his lordship over the Israel of the Last Days. Jesus is understood as the Messiah through whose words and acts God's grace is offered to man and the way is opened for him to become a member of God's New Israel of the Last Days. Throughout, the Early Church is thinking in the temporal scheme of the *Heilsgeschichte*. This is especially the case where the actual event of salvation is seen in the Parousia, without reflection on the short interim period before it comes. This also applies to the later stage when Jesus' life on earth is regarded as the centre of time, against

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which the whole period of Christian missions up to the Parousia stands out in bold relief. But even where the whole stress lies on what has already happened, it is nevertheless understood as the fulfilment of the promise, the end and goal of the *Heilsgeschichte*.

Thus all the time the Church is understood as Israel; it is only the emphasis which varies, whereby the stress is laid on the contrast between this New Israel and the pre-Christian Israel.⁵ This emphasis was expressed in the question of church order. Our texts do not invite us to separate in a simple way a hierarchical Church in Jerusalem from a Hellenistic Church under the direct guidance of the Holy Spirit, like the churches founded by Paul. The early history of the Church in Jerusalem was probably strongly marked by an 'ecstatic' spirit-life and by prophetic utterances. But the old order of Israel was taken over more or less unchanged, even when it was re-interpreted. However, the first disciples already knew that there were to be no more titles of honour or differences of rank among them. Thus from the very beginning the Church was free from officialdom and priesthood.⁶ But that did not prevent it from continuing at first to live within the framework of Israel and its orders; it was only very gradually that it separated itself, probably under the pressure of persecution; nor did it prevent it from taking over arrangements like the appointment of elders.⁷ The action of the Spirit was not regarded as creating tensions with the legal order and tradition, but rather as the new basis for that order.⁸

II. PAUL

Paul also understood the Church as the New Israel.⁹ The idea of *Heilsgeschichte* is clearly expressed in his writings, e.g. in Rom. 9-11. Here the time between the crucifixion and the Parousia (which Paul thinks will be very short) is interpreted as a time for missionary enterprise. But in addition there is a new idea.¹⁰ Paul gives a new dimension to Christology—although he only takes up old elements in a new way. Before he became a Christian the Cross had been 'a scandal' to him; he now gave it the central position. Already before Paul's time it had been recognized that Christ died for our sins (1 Cor. 15:3); but it was Paul who really interpreted this fact systematically. In the Hellenistic church there was already probably a tendency to regard salvation as directly connected with the heavenly Redeemer. This tendency regarded the

spirit which had been bestowed upon the church very much as a 'substance'—as a mysterious force which guaranteed this connection with the heavenly world. Paul could accept this view, but at the same time he corrected it, to correspond with his view of the Cross. Incorporation in the Body of Christ, effected through baptism, meant entering the 'place' in which the blessing and the lordship of the Crucified and Risen Lord extended their validity farther and farther. That is why one became a member of the Church, by dying with Christ. This conception is clearly in terms of space rather than in terms of time. As the Body of Christ the Church already to a certain extent stands apart from time and history. The fact that on the cross Jesus died for believers is here taken so seriously that the Church is understood as the congregation of those who—because they live by what happened at the cross—are already removed from the world, are already living in the sphere of salvation. The Church is no longer so much the pilgrim-people which has heard God's call, is fulfilling His commission to the world, and is marching towards His Kingdom. The Church is no longer thought of as a people which is determined by a call from outside, or by a historical event in the past. It is only a Church at all by force of its present link with the Risen Redeemer and its indwelling in him. Christ is therefore a sort of corporate personality¹¹ who embodies all his 'members' (in the spatial sense).

Thus here the Spirit receives an entirely new role. It is no longer merely an additional gift of God which enables the Church to fulfil its missionary task (as in Luke).¹² It is what effects the link between the Church and the Risen Christ. Only Paul no longer thinks of that substantially; rather he sees it fulfilled in the fact that the Spirit enables us to perceive the events of salvation. Thus he is able to retain the statement that the life of the Church is determined by the historical event of the Cross. But it is typical that from this angle the gifts of the Spirit are primarily those which constantly reveal afresh the 'Body of Christ' in worship, and which thus 'build' the Church. Of course, Paul also knows that building the Church is ultimately inseparable from missions. And of course from the very beginning the Early Church realized that it was the 'favoured flock' which was set apart from the world and from history. But the emphases are different. Where the Church is seen to be the 'Body of Christ', the believer does not exactly

enter a Chosen People which God is leading through the ages; he rather enters a 'place' in which he participates in the blessing and the lordship of his heavenly Redeemer.¹³ This means that the Spirit and the gifts which it imparts become very essential for church order. There are no longer any official positions based simply on tradition. But the living Spirit requires a clear order. There is no distinction, it is true, between priests and laity. The Spirit is bestowed on every member of the Church. But it is bestowed in very different ways on every individual. An order which is only arranged 'afterwards', in accordance with the gifts of the Spirit, must therefore ensure that every member of the Church fulfils his service as well as he possibly can, and for the good of all the members.¹⁴

III. JOHN: CHRIST, THE TRUE VINE

The Christology of the fourth Gospel is characterized by the fact that its author stresses much more strongly than Paul that everything decisive has already happened. It is true that John recognizes a consummation which lies in the future,¹⁵ but it is only the confirmation of what has already happened. The Last Judgment has already taken place, and the Parousia is effected through the Christian message. John agrees with Paul that the Christ-event represents God's victory in the great cosmic struggle between God and the world, because it is a proof of the righteousness of God and the unrighteousness of the world.¹⁶ But John does not give the central position to the cross as an atonement or substitution; his main emphasis is on the incarnation and obedience of Jesus, even to the Cross.¹⁷ In his Gospel the concept of time is even more relative.¹⁸ For it is precisely in the Son's absolute obedience, consummated in the complete humiliation of the Cross, that his oneness with the Father is revealed. This is God's message to the world, the revelation of His glory, the pledge of His love to the world.¹⁹ Anyone who comes to the faith here perceives God Himself—in the incarnate Christ.

This leads us to expect a reappearance of the idea found in Paul—the 'Body of Christ'. T. W. Manson maintains the theory that the concept of 'the Son of Man' in the New Testament tradition is to be understood primarily corporatively, in the light of the seventh chapter of Daniel.²⁰ Even those who (like myself) cannot share his view are grateful to him for showing that the idea of the

body of elect can easily be linked up with the figure of the Son of Man. This lends considerable justification to C. H. Dodd's comparison between John 15:1 ff. and Psalm 80:16 (where owing to a mistake in the text the Son of Man is connected and identified with Israel, the vine planted by God).²¹ Israel is replaced by Christ, the true vine, who bears the branches with their fruit. Expressed in an entirely different terminology independent of Paul, the same view appears here; Christ is a 'corporate personality' in whom all believers are incorporated. The 'true vine' of God is not Israel, nor a loyal remnant within Israel, but Jesus himself. It is only in him, as branches on the vine which can do nothing without him (John 15:5), that believers can be the Church. The thought here is no longer in terms of *Heilsgeschichte*. It is true, the relation of Jesus to the Israel of the Old Testament is dealt with throughout the Gospel. But there is no analogy to Rom. 9-11. And the unbelieving Jews are only representatives of the world as a whole. On the other hand the believer of 4:46 ff. is no more a pagan contrasted with the unfaithful Jews. Belief or unbelief are possibilities for every man. The election of Israel, which is not denied, is really only perceptible in the fact that its unbelief is the typical unbelief—the rejection *kat' exochēn*. The antithesis is always between faith (which responds to God's call) and unfaith (which closes its ears to Him). In this sense Nicodemus is addressed as 'the master of Israel' (John 3:10), Jesus is greeted as 'the King of Israel' (John 1:49; cf. 19:19-22), and salvation is said to be 'of the Jews' (John 4:22). That is why John, contrary to Paul, never gives a central place either to the antithesis between faith and works, mercy and justice, as was typical in Israel. It is true, Paul also regards the sins of the gentiles as ultimately the same as the sins of Israel. But only at the end. He has to show that the idolatry of the Gentiles contains the same attitude of *kauchēma* as the arrogance of those who obey the letter of the law, and that the pagan's frantic search for earthly security (such as wealth) is due to rejection of God in the same way as the Pharisee's accumulation of good works.²² But that means that the 'true vine' is not simply a comparison between the New Israel and the old Israel, as two periods of *Heilsgeschichte* on the way of God; the 'true vine' symbolizes the antithesis between the Church and the world, the sphere of God and the sphere of Satan, the sphere of light and the sphere of darkness. Anyone who is cut off from the vine is bound to perish.

IV. THE ROLE OF THE INDIVIDUAL IN THE
CHURCH, AS CONCEIVED BY JOHN

From what has been said it is understandable that for John the perception of God's revelation in Jesus means everything. Anyone who perceives God in Jesus is already surrounded by God's love, he is already saved, he has already passed from death to life, he lives in God and God lives in him. Such perception is a personal matter. In the Synoptic Gospels we read that whole towns accepted or rejected Jesus. Even when individuals are called to follow him, their personality remains completely obscure. It is truer to say that interest is expressed in the individual and his decision rather when someone turns away from Jesus (Matt. 18:12 ff., 15 ff.; Luke 15; Mark 10:17 ff.). In the Gospel of John, on the other hand, the call is always addressed to the individual, and the question how his resistance is overcome and how he comes to a perception of the revelation is of the greatest importance (John 1:35 ff., 3:1 ff., 4:7 ff., 46 ff., etc.). It is only in the fourth Gospel that some of the disciples are described psychologically.

This is also expressed in the fact that the symbols applied to the Church are taken from the world of nature. John does not compare the Church to a 'Body' which incorporates all the members from the beginning and grows as a whole. In John's Gospel the Church is compared to the vine which keeps sending out fresh branches (15:1 ff.). This is even more distinctly expressed in John 12:24, where the saving significance of Jesus' death is seen in the fact that the corn of wheat does not remain alone, but falls into the ground and produces a whole sheaf of corn. The same applies in the parable of the shepherd; some of the sheep hear his voice and follow him, while others do not know him. Some sheep will even come to him from other folds (John 10:4, 14 ff., 27; cf. 11:52).

John's emphasis on the individual does not apply only when the initial decision of faith has to be made. In the Synoptic Gospels a whole town may decide to listen to Jesus, and it is only later that it becomes clear who will really stay with him. But in the Gospel of John anyone who has perceived God in Jesus has already received everything. This thought is so radical that faith and perception are regarded as ultimates, which only need to be confirmed in the consummation of heavenly glory. Even if many misunderstandings have to be overcome, so that there is something

resembling a divine education,²³ nevertheless from the very outset the disciple possesses full perception (John 1:41, 45). In John's view, therefore, there are not different spiritual gifts. There is only one spiritual gift: the revelation of the Father in the Son. Thus Pentecost does not bring any miraculous tongues (20:22 f.). Nor is there any church order like that in Matt. 18, or in 1 Cor. 12 and 14. He who has seen the Father possesses everything. He does not need anything else. They are all equal, perfect units living side by side. One seed grows beside another, one branch beside another, one sheep feeds beside the other. They are held together because they all spring from the same root, the same vine, and are led by the same Shepherd. But they do not serve one another in the same way as the arm serves the fingers, or the mouth serves the stomach. John does not describe the Church as the New Israel or as God's People or God's 'Saints'; he never mentions the word 'Church' at all.²⁴

In the New Testament there is hardly a single book which stresses the unity of the Church as strongly as the fourth Gospel (John 10:17, 17:20 ff.). But it is just this which shows that unity has become a problem; the congregation are urged to pray for unity. In the Synoptic Gospels unity is taken much more as a matter of course. That may be due to the later date of John's Gospel. But that alone does not adequately explain it. For at a much earlier date Paul already realized the problems involved in this unity. We must therefore observe the theological approach from which an attempt is made to avoid the threatened breach. In Paul's view, one Church must help the other with the special gifts which it has received. The church in Jerusalem has given the Gentiles a share in spiritual things (*πνευματικά*); now the Gentiles must help the church in Jerusalem in a material way, through the 'fleshly things' (*σαρκικά*), through collections (Rom. 15:27). On the other hand the faith of the Gentiles must stimulate Israel to follow the way of faith (Rom. 11:11). Peter has received the gift of the mission to the Jews; Paul that of the mission to the Gentiles (Gal. 2:7 ff.). In the Gospel of John the position is seen quite differently. It cannot be said that one Church needs the services of the others. He regards unity and fraternal love as so important only because they reveal God's will to the world. Jesus himself is the revelation of God's glory to the world; and his church must be so also. Its unity is the unity of the vine itself. It can only bear witness

of the Son of God to the world if its members live in brotherly love with one another (17:21, 13:35).

V. THE CHURCH ALREADY CONSUMMATED, ACCORDING TO JOHN

John therefore understands the newness of the Church down to the last detail. It has no priests or officials. There is no longer even any diversity of spiritual gifts, so that one member can learn from another. There is no church order at all—not even a free, mobile order open to the workings of the Spirit, as in the churches founded by Paul. There are no ‘offices’ except among Jesus’ enemies—the Jews, Judas (John 12:6), Diotrephes (3 John 9). The twelve disciples have not disappeared (how could they?), but they are of much less importance than the disciple whom Jesus loved.²⁵ And he is a living example of the deep spiritual link between the believer and the Lord: he ‘leaned on Jesus’ bosom’ (John 13:23).

This Church has really no further to go, no battle to win, no goal to reach. It has only to ‘abide’ in Jesus; any tendency to move forward is regarded with suspicion (2 John 9). The Church has already reached its goal. Unlike Paul (e.g. 1 Cor. 9:19 ff.) John does not describe the church as being faced by a missionary struggle for the world. He does not mention either the election (Mark 3:13 ff.) or the sending forth of the disciples (Mark 6:7 ff.). The church has indeed the task of bearing witness.²⁶ But this means a testifying to the glory of God which includes condemning the world as well as calling the predestined children of God.²⁷ And even this is really done by the Spirit or by the Son himself (cf. John 16:26 f., 3:11) and is only the initial step which leads immediately to an independent perception of God’s glory, whereby the new Christian no longer needs the evidence of a witness (John 4:42).²⁸ Pentecost, as described by John (20:22 f.) is not a commission to evangelize the world. It is the bestowal of the Spirit, which has power to forgive sins or retain them.²⁹ This means: just as Jesus himself is the *crisis* simply by his existence, because in him light is separated from darkness, and faith from disbelief, the same is true of Christ in the preaching of the disciples.

Membership of the Church is here understood as an absolute gift of grace. It can be described only as being ‘born of God’ (1:13). The Father draws to Himself whom He will (6:44) and gives him to Jesus (6:37, 17:2). The Son, when he is lifted up,

draws his own to him (12:32; cf. 14:3). On the other hand Jesus himself hands his betrayer a sort of 'satanic sacrament'³⁰ which impels him to his foul deed (13:26 f.; cf. 6:64, 17:12, 18:9). Those who come to Jesus have always belonged to him; and those who reject him have always been 'of this world'. The world *cannot* recognize him, just because it is the world. It is bound to hate him and his Church (8:23, 14:17, 15:18 ff., 16:3).

The call to love one another is stronger in the Gospel of John than almost anywhere else. But he admonishes us always to love our *brethren* (John 15:17-19). He does not mention loving our enemies (Matt. 5:44 ff.; Rom. 12:14 ff.). 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his *friends*' (John 15:13). Towards the world our attitude can only be one of rejection; 'love not the world' (1 John 2:15). The trials of the Church are occasioned only because the world hates it and persecutes it; they are not due to its own 'flesh'. John does not speak of the struggle between the spirit and the flesh (as Paul does), nor does he relate the stories included in the Synoptic Gospels about Peter's sinking (Matt. 14:30), about Jesus addressing Peter as 'Satan' (Mark 8:33; cf. John 6:68 f.) and about the eleven disciples forsaking Jesus (Mark 14:50; cf. John 18:8).

VI. THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

Without going into the question whether they were written by the same person,³¹ these Epistles reveal a good deal of the same peculiarities in the conception of the Church as the Gospel of John. In fact even more clearly. Here again the idea is expressed that anyone who has perceived Jesus to be the true God therewith has everything (1 John 5:20), and that he then no longer needs any brother to teach him (2:20, 27). In the Epistles too the sending of the Son is the revelation of God's love (4:9 ff.). Eye-witnesses and witnesses of later generations stand on the same level and perceive the same Son sent by the Father (4:14 and 1:1 ff.). Here again, Christians are urged only to love one another and to keep themselves from the world (2:9 ff.).³²

It is clear that a more advanced stage of thinking has been reached. This may be shown by certain concessions made to the church doctrine of the Parousia (2:28 ff.). It is also shown by the fact that Christians are urged to love one another by means of

practical examples (3:17 f.). Most important of all, the unity of the Church has become much more of a problem. The Church of John is confronted by the problem of false teachers and 'anti-Christ's'. Is there not a falling off of perception and a hesitation in the way of faith? Does not this prove that the Church was conceived of on a false basis? But the concept of the Church is strictly retained; these false teachers only stand out because they never were part of the Church; they masked their worldliness, but they never perceived Christ (2:19). Their teaching (probably docetically) draws a distinction between the earthly Jesus and the heavenly Christ, and thus confronts Christology (and therefore ecclesiology) with a question: is not John's conception bound to lead to a heavenly Christ isolated from history, who stands in exactly the same relationship to contemporary Christians as to the disciples of the earthly Jesus, who is seen today just as he was then, and with whom Christians are linked today just as they were then? Does not this destroy the significance of his time on earth? 1 John 4:2 sharply corrects this misconception. But both points reveal a weak spot in John's conception of the Church. Does not the solution in 2:19 simply mean capitulation in face of the task of winning those who have strayed back to membership of the Church (Matt. 18:12 ff.; 2 Cor. 2:6 f.; 2 Tim. 2:25 f.)? And is not 1 John 4:2 a much-emphasized but unbased dogmatic statement rather than convincing mistaken teachers? Perhaps the change in the situation becomes clearest in the problem of church tradition.³³ John's view is that the Spirit cannot teach anything but what has existed 'from the beginning'. A particularly strong appeal must therefore be made to 'abide', and warnings must be made against 'going forward'. But this very 'abiding' has become a problem. It is no longer merely a question of faith and disbelief; there are also false faiths. Some criterion must be set up to distinguish between true and false faith; and that criterion is precisely 'abiding' in what has been since the beginning. But this is no longer abiding 'in him', which can still be interpreted as something living and dynamic; it has become an 'abiding' in the old teaching. In this case the Church tends more and more to become a group of orthodox people, of correct Christians, of conservatives. No wonder that it was necessary to make such strong appeals to show brotherly love.

Lastly, the development is shown by another point. The problem arises of sin after baptism. The author of the Johannine

conception of the Church is in some way helpless when confronted by this problem. This is shown in 2:1 where the sins of a Christian look like an exception which should never have happened. I cannot feel convinced that this problem would be solved on the lines of Luther's *simul peccator, simul iustus*.³⁴ I rather incline to think that the contradictory statements in 1:8 and 3:9 may be explained by pointing to the false teachers against whom the author has to contend. These false teachers declare (again as a wrong and dangerous consequence of Johannine statements) that those who have received the Spirit have a divine character which they cannot lose; it is no longer possible for them to sin. They can therefore be as immoral as they like, in order to demonstrate their complete freedom from the law.³⁵ In face of such assertions, the Epistle is bound to deny that man is divine and without sin; but it also opposes any frivolous immorality by stressing that sin is lawlessness and nothing else. Both points show wrong and dangerous consequences resulting from John's approach.

VII. COMMENTS

We have seen the strength and the weakness of John's concept of the Church. With impressive, systematic power he solves the difficult question as to how the Church here and now can live by what happened in Jesus of Nazareth at another time and place. There is no longer any problem about bridging over the distance in time and space between the events of salvation and the contemporary Church. For the Church is not a people based on an act of God in history—like the act of rescuing Israel by bringing them safely across the Red Sea. Nor is it a people whose wanderings are determined exclusively by its ultimate goal, namely entrance into the promised land, or the Kingdom of God which dawns with the Parousia. It is not even understood as a people guided by God's rule from day to day, under the protection and the commandment of the Risen Lord. It is the Church only in so far as it lives 'in' the Son and he in it. The Son is present in the Church today just as he was then, through the message—in fact it is only now that his presence is perfect (John 16:7, 13). This avoids the misunderstanding that faith might be merely a matter of approving some doctrine or some ethical pattern or agreement with the historical origin of the Church. It also makes it impossible to escape into

a better 'Beyond' which is yet to come. Here the Church is placed in the present time and is proof against all forms of historicism and of millenarianism. But one danger is clear: that the Church may become detached from history. Unless the Church bears strictly in mind that the Christ whom it preaches is none other than Jesus of Nazareth, and that there can be no heavenly 'Son' except the one who became man, it will develop into a group of Gnostics. John wrote a Gospel, not a dogmatic treatise. If this were to be forgotten, if the incarnation were no longer regarded as an act of obedience but merely as an (ultimately non-essential) *epiphania* of a divine nature which is eternally the same,³⁶ then the Church would be in danger of docetic disintegration.

Equally important is the firm way in which faith is understood by John as a gift, as the 'pull' of God Himself. John firmly rejects any misconception that faith consists in achieving correct ideas which bring *sacrificium intellectus*. He also rejects all pietistic ideas of justification through works. This situation is realized so intensively that the author states that the Church has always been 'born of God', and that the world has always been 'of the devil'. It is this which urges him to abandon the world and to apply love solely to the brethren. The 1st Epistle of John already shows how, from these premises, the author nevertheless has to insist on dogmatic orthodoxy and practical charity. This clearly involves the danger that the pious group will retire into itself and become completely rigid, making no real attempt to care for the spiritual needs of those who think differently from itself, and undertaking no real missionary work because God's children cannot change, neither can the world change. Here the important point in connection with the statements that the Father draws to Him whom He will, that the Son gathers in his own, and that the Spirit leads to all truth, is not to interpret them as automatic, mechanical processes but as living events. Just because faith is a gift, it must never be regarded as a possession which makes further effort unnecessary. Faith must always be expressed afresh—not intellectually but in such a way that the believer realizes that he must constantly be 'drawn' to God afresh and constantly led back to the truth. In this way the brother who thinks differently becomes a help and a task presented by God. The same applies to love. Love must be constantly carried out afresh, but not in the sense of 'good works' based on a law of the old kind; love must be carried out in such

a way that the one who loves realizes that he must *let himself* be constantly loved afresh, so that he can radiate the love which he has received (1 John 4:9 ff.). In this way the love of him who loved *the world* (as John states more clearly than anyone else) will radiate through the brotherhood and beyond them and touch the world.

Finally, with a clarity which is found hardly anywhere else, John insists that anyone who has perceived the glory of the Father in the Son has *everything*, and needs nothing else. Hence there is no real development of faith, and no falling from faith.³⁷ This avoids the danger of thinking that the message is to be progressively developed and re-adapted to the spirit of every age. It also avoids over-estimating any curious phenomena which might be regarded as proofs of the Spirit. Sensational modern formulations have no place in the Church, nor have sensational psychic phenomena. But again, everything depends on this: that perception of the Father in the Son must be understood as something which must constantly occur afresh. It must be emphasized that, although this perception contains the whole of salvation, it is nevertheless something which must grow, as it grew in Jesus' teaching of the disciples (also described by John). Otherwise it is impossible to avoid seeing that the Church is in danger of developing into a group of complete Gnostics,³⁸ of which each individual member has reached the goal independently. How could a Church *live* if each of its members already possessed *everything* in the Spirit and no longer needed his brethren and their encouragement? How could services of worship be held if the assembled congregation expected nothing new, and merely came to receive confirmation that they were children of God?

The fascination of the fourth Gospel lies in the fact that it insists that salvation has been fully accomplished in Jesus Christ, and that the Church is therefore the absolutely new flock in which God's Kingdom has already been achieved. This was shown in all three of the points dealt with. But (as seems strange at first sight) it was precisely here that the problems arose which later on broke out in Gnosticism. It is precisely because the unity of the Church follows so logically from this theological conception, that that unity becomes a problem. For the perfect man needs no other perfection. Thus unity becomes something which is only asserted in theory, but not visibly realized. Just here, where the importance of the

Church seems to be greatest (its unity with the Father being a present reality), that importance becomes problematical. For it cannot ultimately bring anything new either in its worship or in its missionary work. Thus its importance becomes merely theoretical; it is not expressed in practice. The Church of the second century gratefully accepted the Gospel and the Epistles of John, and it was certainly right in doing so. Perhaps there are no other writings in the New Testament which can be as stimulating and fruitful as these. But the Early Church placed them beside other writings—the Synoptic gospels and the epistles of Paul. It is only in connection with them, and modified and interpreted in the light of them, that we can understand the message of John.

NOTES

¹ K. Holl, 'Der Kirchenbegriff des Paulus in seinem Verhältnis zur Urgemeinde', Sitzungsberichte der Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin, 1921, 920-7 = *Gesammelte Aufsätze*, II, 1928, 44-67; H. v. Campenhausen, *Kirchliches Amt und geistliche Vollmacht in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten* (1953), 32-134.

² B. H. Streeter, *The Primitive Church* (1930), 83 ff., deals with the Epistles of John separately, but regards the Johannine Church as completely incorporated into the Church in Asia Minor. Some information may be found in A. Oepke, *Das neue Gottesvolk* (1950), 231 ff.

³ The Early Church and Paul can only be dealt with very summarily here. Further details may be found in E. Schweizer: 'Geist und Gemeinde im Neuen Testament und heute', *Theologische Existenz heute*, new series, 32, 1952.

⁴ Examples of the most extreme points are A. Schweitzer's book, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (1952), 328 ff. and C. H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom* (1936), 41 ff.

⁵ Cf. T. W. Manson, 'The New Testament Basis of the Doctrine of the Church', *JEH* 1 (1950), 1 f.

⁶ In this the Church was completely different from the Qumran sect. This is shown most clearly in the language: the word for 'office', *leitourgia*, taken from Greek usage and from the Old Testament, is often found in the New Testament, but is not used to describe the special service of an individual, which is what we call 'office'. For that a word-root occurs which is not found in the Old Testament except in two passages, where it is used purely secularly: *διακονία* (cf. E. Schweizer, *Das Leben des Herrn in der Gemeinde und ihren Diensten* (1946), 19 ff. On DIAKONIA, iQS 3, 26; Zad. Fragm. 20, 21; Jos. Ant. 18, 1, 5; E. Stauffer, *TLZ* 1952, 201 ff.; W. D. Davies, *Religion in Life*, 21, 265); E. Schweizer, *Gemeinde und Gemeindeordnung im NT* (in print), II, 2.

⁷ Cf. W. Michaelis, *Das Ältestenamt*, 1953; G. Bornkamm, *TWNT* 6, 651 ff.

⁸ E. Käsemann, 'Sätze heiligen Rechtes im Neuen Testament', *NTS* 1 (1954/55), 248 ff.

⁹ Gal. 6:16 (with N. A. Dahl in *Judaica* 6 (1950), 161 ff., contrary to G. Schrenk, *ibid.*, 5 (1949), 81 ff. and 6 (1950), 170 ff.); 1 Cor. 10:18; Rom. 9:6 ff.,

11:16 ff.; also 1 Cor. 10:1 ff., etc. On the 'heils geschichtlich' view see T. W. Manson, *op. cit.* (note 5), 2 f.

¹⁰ For the juxtaposition of the two lines see E. Dinkler, 'Earliest Christianity', *The Idea of History in the Ancient Near East* (1955), 181 ff.; also T. W. Manson, *The Church's Ministry* (1948), 22 ff.

¹¹ Of course, some explanation should be given as to the real meaning of this very vague idea. See E. Schweizer, *Erniedrigung und Erhöhung bei Jesus und seinen Nachfolgern* (1955), 75 ff., Lordship and Discipleship (in print), ch. 4.

¹² E. Schweizer, *πνεῦμα*, TWNT 6 (1956), 405 ff.

¹³ T. W. Manson points out the danger of stressing the concept of the Body of Christ exclusively (T. W. Manson, *op. cit.* (note 10), 20 ff.).

¹⁴ T. W. Manson, *op. cit.* (note 10), 56 ff., 78 ff. E. Schweizer, *op. cit.* (note 6), 95 ff.; *op. cit.* (note 3), 25 ff.

¹⁵ John 6:27, 12:25, 14:2 f., 17:24; also 11:24. Still clearer are the passages 5:28 f., 6:39 ff. (the genuineness of which is, indeed, disputed).

¹⁶ Th. Preiss, 'Die Rechtfertigung im johanneischen Denken', *Evangelische Theologie*, 16 (1956), 289 ff. = 'Hommage et Reconnaissance', *Cahiers théologiques de l'actualité protestante*, hors-série 2 (1946), 100 ff. English translation in 'Life in Christ' (S.C.M. *Studies in Biblical Theology*, No. 13, 1954), 9 ff.

¹⁷ As is the case in the hymn quoted by Paul in Phil. 2:6-11.

¹⁸ Although perhaps one should not insist on the present tense *ᾠν* in John 1:18 (cf. 2 Cor. 8:9; Luke 24:6, 44; 2 Clem 9, 5; F. Blass-A. Debrunner, *Grammatik des neutest. Griechisch*, § 231), one must take due account of 3:13 and 8:58. As a man on this earth Jesus 'has ascended' to the Father, and before Abraham was, he is (not 'was'!). John 3:11 (cf. 9:4) also makes it clear that Jesus goes on living in the 'we' of all his witnesses. Cf. R. H. Lightfoot, *St. John's Gospel* (1956), to 3:13.

¹⁹ Thus the last evening is described as the revelation of the love of the Son and of the Father: 13:1 ff., also 14:21 f., 15:9.

²⁰ T. W. Manson, *The Teaching of Jesus* (1931), 227 ff.; *Coniectanea Neotestamentica* 11 (1947), 138 ff.; *The Church's Ministry* (1948), 18 ff.; BJRL 32 (1950), 171 ff.; *The Servant-Messiah* (1953), 72 ff.

²¹ With regard to my view in EGO EIMI (1939), 37 ff., Dodd's argument (in *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (1953), 411 f.) has convinced me that the use of the word in the Old Testament is to be considered, especially as in 10:1 ff. the Jewish 'shepherds' seem to serve as a contrast with the true shepherd (*op. cit.*, 358 ff.). This is confirmed by J. A. T. Robinson's analysis (ZNTW 46 (1955), 233 ff.).

²² In Matthew the sins of the Gentiles are hardly mentioned. In Acts the difference between the Jewish and Gentile audience determines the form of what is said far more than the change in the person of the speaker (E. Schweizer, 'Zu den Reden der Apostelgeschichte', TZ 13 (1957), 10 f.).

²³ Jesus Christ is for John a living person. Therefore being in Christ, although it is already the final salvation, always means life. The disciple who *has* believed has to believe time and again (1:51, 2:11, 11:15, 13:19, 14:29, 16:31; cf. 15:2, 8). In 8:12 the future tense is connected with the ἀκολουθεῖν of the believer. Cf. also Lightfoot, *loc. cit.* (note 18) to 14:2. Bernard, ICC to 1:38.

²⁴ It does not occur again until 3 John 6, 9 f. Particularly striking is the for-

mulation *ἐκλεκτὴ κυρία* in 2 John 1. Nor does the fact that false prophets are mentioned in 1 John 4:1 in any way prove that there were charismatic prophets in the Church (R. Schnackenburg, *Die Johannesbriefe* (1953), 190 (cf. 216). The tension between the individual and the social view in John is carefully described in D. Faulhaber, *Das Johannes-Evangelium und die Kirche* (1938), 51-6, 60, 65 f.

²⁵ Only in the postscript (21:15 ff.) is a special commission mentioned. And even this is connected with the special position of the eye-witness. John 20:22 ff. does not belong here; it is not even clear in that passage whether the ten (!) disciples or a larger group are referred to. At any rate the *μαθηταί* here as everywhere are representative of the church as a whole (C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John* (1955), 472 f.). If one wished to regard them merely as office-bearers one would also have to restrict the commandment to love, in Christ's farewell words, only to office-bearers.

²⁶ M. Barth, *The Reformed Review* 10 (1957), 5 f.

²⁷ Like Jesus himself (3:11, 7:7, 14:31, etc.) or the Spirit (16:8-10) the church also is witness for God against the world. It is true, there are men coming out of the world into the church (17:20, 20:29), but the world as a whole remains immersed in evil (17:15). Although the world is loved by God (3:16) and should believe (17:21) it is overcome by Christ (16:33). The disciples are chosen out of the world (17:6). Cf. Barrett, *loc. cit.* (note 25) to 16:33, 17:2; Lightfoot, *loc. cit.* (note 18) to 17:21.

²⁸ John 1:46 shows the dilemma of the witness who can only point to the disciple's direct encounter with Jesus.

²⁹ Note the formulation. The judgment does not imply 'binding' as in Matt. 16:19, 18:18. It implies leaving the world in the condition in which it already is. The same formulation occurs in John 3:36: 'the wrath of God *abideth* on him who believeth not.'

³⁰ W. Wrede, *Vorträge und Studien* (1907), 136 (quoted according to R. Bultmann, *ad loc.*).

³¹ The difference in authorship is supported particularly by C. H. Dodd in *The Johannine Epistles*, 1946; also by H. Conzelmann, 'Was von Anfang war', *Neutestamentliche Studien für R. Bultmann* (1954), 194 ff., who regards John as a 'Johannine Pastoral Letter'.

³² John 16:33 says that Christ has overcome the world. In 1 John 5:4 f. (cf. 2:13 f.) this is applied to the Church.

³³ Cf. Conzelmann, *op. cit.* (note 31).

³⁴ Cf. R. Bultmann, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (1953), 426 (paragraph 50, 3).

³⁵ Like the Gnostic opponents mentioned by Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.*, I, 6, 2.

³⁶ Cf. note 18. For the interpretation of 1:14 see E. Käsemann, 'Aufbau und Anliegen des johanneischen Prologs', *Libertas Christiana* (Festschrift F. Delekat, 1957), 88 ff.; R. Schnackenburg, 'Logos-Hymnus und johanneischer Prolog', *Biblische Zeitschrift*, neue Folge 1 (1957), 79 f.; E. Schweizer, *σάραξ*, TWNT.

³⁷ The danger is removed by the word of Christ: 16:1, 4.

³⁸ According to 3:8, not only the Spirit but also the man born of the Spirit is like the wind, and cannot be judged by his fellow-men. Cf. Barrett, *loc. cit.* (note 25) to 16:23. T. W. Manson warns against this danger, *loc. cit.* (note 5), 8 ff.