

XVI

SYNOPSIS

AN OLD MAN'S FAREWELL

THE CONSOLIDATION OF THE CHURCH

The Catholic Church conquered the Roman Empire because it achieved an intellectual adaptation to its environment, which saved it from becoming merged in the general welter of syncretistic religion, before the generation brought up in Jewish ethical monotheism had died out. John the Elder the most striking leader in this process.

Speculative character of the remainder of this chapter.

THE CONSERVATIVE OPPOSITION

Both the Logos Doctrine and the spiritualising of the expectation of the visible Return of Christ likely to arouse opposition. Evidence of this in the Papias fragments and in 3 John.

THE APPENDIX TO THE GOSPEL

(1) The addition spoils the effective climax of ch. xx. It must therefore have been made to meet an acute need.

(2) Partly an attempt to reconcile Galilean and Jerusalem tradition of Resurrection appearances.

(3) It also corrects with great emphasis a current misapprehension that "this disciple should not die." Why was such correction urgent?

THE HOPE THAT FAILED

The revival of Apocalyptic fervour due (a) to persecution of Domitian; (b) to prophecies of John the Seer, author of Apocalypse. This led to popular belief that Christ would return before the death of the Elder John—the last survivor of the generation that had seen

Him in the flesh. The author desires to forestall the dangerous disillusionment which he foresees will inevitably result from the non-fulfilment of this hope.

THE YOUNGER GENERATION

The Logos doctrine is making possible the adhesion to the Church of the educated classes; but there is danger lest the progressive younger clergy may forget the primary command, "Feed my lambs."

XVI

AN OLD MAN'S FAREWELL

(*A Reverie on John xxi.*)

THE CONSOLIDATION OF THE CHURCH

THE Catholic Church could not have become an institution competent to conquer the Roman world unless, in the critical formative period that followed the fall of Jerusalem and the removal of the original Apostles, there had been "raised up" one or more men of genius capable of realising the new situation and responding to it rapidly and effectively—both in the sphere of thought and of organisation. In the sphere of thought the necessity arose for an intellectual basis for a theology which could hold its own in the educated Greek world. To Ionia—that is, to the Greek cities of the coast of what Rome called Asia—we trace the first beginnings of philosophy in Europe. The torch was handed on to Athens, and later on to Alexandria; but the flame was still alight in the old home, and the old Greek search for the immanent Reason behind the Universe had not lost its interest there. Alexandria, behindhand in welcoming Christianity—perhaps for want of such intellectual interpretation—was not yet ready; Athens was too fondly wedded to its immortal past. But Paul had planted a Christianity in Asia sufficiently reasoned to make an appeal to the Greek mind. Hence at Ephesus it first became necessary, and was also possible, for Christians "to give a reason for the hope that was in them."¹

¹ 1 Peter, where that phrase occurs, was written either to, or in, Asia Minor.

Here where the need was earliest felt it was first supplied, by the Logos doctrine of John.

In the sphere of practice the problem was solved by the development of the quasi-military organisation provided by the "monarchical episcopate" in the local churches, subordinated to the patriarchs of the great sees. This made possible a world-wide unity of fellowship, which no persecution could stamp out, and also an effective unity of doctrine and tradition which was proof against the attraction to the half-educated of Gnostic theosophies with their mixture of Persian dualism, Babylonian astrology, Hellenistic speculation, and primitive magic. But the Church, originally Jewish in mentality, and for the first generation mainly inspired by Apocalyptic hopes, had perforce, if it was to survive at all in the Roman Empire, to adapt its theology as well as its organisation to a wholly new and wholly alien environment.

But though without any adaptation Christianity must have remained an unimportant sect, with too ready an adaptation it would have become merged in the welter of syncretistic religions characteristic of the period. This last was the greater danger. The Early Christian Church was a Mission Church, but it had no "home base." The first generation of missionaries were Jews inheriting centuries of ethical monotheism. But in the great centres of Gentile Christianity the breach with the synagogue was very early a complete one; and after the fall of Jerusalem it is not likely that many Jews became converted. Thus, unlike the Mission Churches of the present day, the early Church lacked the inspiration and the guidance of an old-established community, the continuous influence of which could keep the newly founded churches true to type and check the reinfiltration of pagan ideas from school and club and social custom. It had no collection of sacred books specifically Christian, no coherently thought-out theology, and very little in the way of organisation. Its salvation was that it acquired all these things *before that generation had died out* which had been bred up in the Jewish

monotheism, Jewish ethical intensity, and the Jewish consciousness of being a separate people.

John the Elder was a Jew; probably the last Jew to be the dominating spirit in a great Gentile Church. His age, his personal gifts, the fact that he had seen the Lord, and the importance in Asia of the Church of Ephesus, would give him personally, especially towards the end of his life, an authority all but apostolic. His Gospel is the climax of the development of theology in the New Testament. It gave the Church an expression of its belief intellectually acceptable to the Greek mind, yet true to the Jewish thought of God as personal and as one.

To the theory that John the Elder is the author of the Gospel it is often objected that he is "a very shadowy figure." There are few characters in history who would not become "shadowy" if all their writings were assigned to someone else, and if all the information available about their character and career were supposed to refer to that other person. But the man who wrote the Gospel and First Epistle, who was esteemed as, and acted like, the author of the two minor epistles, and of whom stories such as that told by Clement of Alexandria about John and the robber,¹ even if not actually historical, seemed to a succeeding generation to be "in character," is a man of whose personality and position we get a *very* definite impression. Of course if the Apostle John did live in Ephesus, and if all these things are rightly referred to him, then the other John is a person of whom extremely little can be said. But if the Apostle never was in Ephesus, these things can only belong to the Elder John—and after Peter and Paul, John the Elder is the most striking figure in the early Church.

This having been said, I will—for the rest of this chapter—permit myself to stray from the paths of stern historical method, and, in the absence of determinative evidence, allow the

¹ *Quis Dives*, xlii., also Eus. *H.E.* iii. 23.

historical imagination to wander freely in the pasture-land of speculation.

THE CONSERVATIVE OPPOSITION

The Fourth Gospel was quite a new departure, and we must not assume that, even backed as it was by the immense prestige of the revered Elder who was known to have seen the Lord Himself, so startling a novelty would be welcomed at once and by every one, even in Asia. That has never been the fate of creative ventures in the history of religion.

The doctrine of the Logos, as the author of the Gospel saw, made it possible to present Christianity to the educated Greek world in a way that it could accept. It was the boldest "re-statement" of Christianity in terms of contemporary thought ever attempted in the history of the Church. True, it did not in substance go far beyond the later epistles of Paul. But the word Logos, though possibly familiar in lecture and discussion, had never been used in anything like an authoritative church document. Just as the insertion into the Nicene Creed of the term *ὁμοούσιον* (of one essence) on the instance of Athanasius was resisted by the more conservative bishops as unscriptural, so, we may be sure, the unapostolic term Logos would have been regarded with suspicion when first the attempt was made to use it in an official document of the Church by Athanasius' greatest predecessor.

But a feature in the Fourth Gospel which we may be sure would have been resented in some circles, far more even than the doctrine of the Logos, was the attempt to interpret the prophecies of our Lord about His Second Coming in a spiritual sense. It is true that John does not absolutely deny an Apocalyptic Judgment; nevertheless, *for all practical purposes* he substitutes the Coming of the Comforter for the visible Return of Christ. It may be argued with some plausibility that in this matter John was nearer than Matthew to the spirit, if not to the form, of our Lord's teaching; but the book of Revelation, produced about

the same time, shows that this was by no means the universal view in Asia. Dr. Charles holds that John the Seer knew the Gospel of Matthew,¹ and it is very likely that by this time copies of Matthew were being circulated in Asia. If so, this Gospel would certainly be appealed to by those who clung to the more literal Apocalyptic view in their attempt to stem the current of the "rationalism" of John. And for Matthew's Gospel the claim of apostolic authorship was made. The fragment of Papias, "Matthew composed the Logia in the Hebrew language, and each one interpreted them as he could," represents, I have argued, the substance of the Elder's reply; asserting that the Discourses in the Greek Matthew—he is thinking mainly of the Apocalyptic sayings—are not a first-hand report of what Christ said, they are only a translation.

The authority of John the Elder would commend the new Gospel to the more advanced circles in the community; in the city of Ephesus itself, where he had lived and taught so long, there would be nothing in it particularly novel. The Epistles to the Colossians and Ephesians contain phrases which, even if they do not imply Paul's own familiarity with some of the ideas which Philo (and no doubt others whose works do not survive) had made current coin in the Judaism of the Dispersion, would be widely interpreted in that sense. The conception of the Divine Logos, as hammered out by Philo to form a synthesis between Jewish and Neo-Platonic thought, was just the concept needed in a place like Ephesus, not only to interpret Christianity to the Greek in terms of Divine Immanence, but also to meet the standing taunt of the Jew that those who worshipped Christ were setting up a second God. Ephesus itself would be familiar with the idea, for John the Elder had of course preached his

¹ R. H. Charles, *op. cit.* p. lxxxiv. ff. The difficulty of being quite sure of literary dependence is unusually great where the common matter consists in apocalyptic sayings of a kind which were "in the air," even though it includes a similar combination of two separate OT passages, since this *may* have been derived from a collection of Messianic proof-texts. Nevertheless, in my opinion, the balance of evidence inclines in favour of Charles's view.

Gospel there for many years before he wrote it ; but in some of the smaller centres it would probably sound both new and dangerous. In any case, to put it down in black and white as the Preface to a Gospel was a bold step forward.

Progressive movements usually begin in cities ; the small towns and villages lag behind. The new Gospel would require commendation in the smaller cities of Asia. That, we may conjecture, was, partly at any rate, the purpose of the First Epistle of John. It is a letter intended to follow up the Gospel and commend its general standpoint and teaching, in the first place to Ephesus, but more especially to the smaller Churches. Its opening words, "That which we have seen with our eyes and our hands have handled," are intended to make it clear from the start that, for all his sympathy with the philosophic intellectuals, the author will have nothing to do with any kind of Gnostic "docetism" which makes the humanity of Christ unreal. Later on, again, the protest that the Christ came both "by water and by blood" (1 John v. 6) brings home the point that he is on the side of the tradition of the Church against innovators like Cerinthus.

A religious community is always conservative in regard to its sacred literature. At the time when the Fourth Gospel was published, Mark had already been *the* Gospel, read aloud at the weekly services, for perhaps five-and-twenty years. It was not as yet regarded as inspired scripture, but already it was looked upon with perhaps the kind of affection and prestige which attaches to the Book of Common Prayer in the Church of England. Here, then, is the most natural explanation of the other Papias fragment about Mark ; it shows us the Elder John put on his defence in regard to the chronology of his own Gospel—though, of course, what reached Papias must be taken as a summary of the general purport of his defence rather than the actual words he used. The Elder replies to his critics with an affirmation of respect for Mark's accuracy in points of fact ; but he puts forth a reason—Mark's dependence on casual utterances of Peter—to

account for its defect in the matter of the order and arrangement of events. The introduction of a new Gospel would be regarded at Ephesus much as that of a new Prayer Book in the Church of England. Some would be inclined to welcome, others to resent it. But a Gospel so unlike Mark as that of John must have been regarded even by the moderates without enthusiasm, and by the conservatives as a highly dangerous concession to that tendency to philosophising mysticism which, popularised by Gnostics, was at the moment the greatest peril of the Church. To old-fashioned Church members the Logos doctrine would be "the thin end of the wedge"; Gnosticism must follow.

It would look as if in 3 John we catch a glimpse of an incident in this struggle with the conservative party. I have shown above that this correspondence implies that Diotrephes, the local Bishop, had taken upon himself to exercise the right of exclusion—early conceded to the episcopate as a safeguard against wandering Gnostic prophets—against the authorised delegates of John the Elder. This would be quite explicable if Diotrephes was one of those who regarded the Johannine theology as dangerously akin to that of the Gnostics. It is the first, but not the last, instance on record when one who has grasped the vital necessity of interpreting the Christian message in terms of the thought of the age has been accused by certain of the country clergy of "selling the pass" to the Church's enemies.

THE APPENDIX TO THE GOSPEL

Numberless hypotheses have been put forward concerning the purpose and authorship of the last chapter of John. All those which do not begin by recognising that the chapter is a work of genius may be dismissed. Critics who have bemused their faculties by the study of one another's theories so far as to think that any purely mechanical editing or any pettifogging controversial motive has here found expression need not be listened to. The style of the added conclusion to Mark is

pedestrian ; the Appendix to John is great literature. Hence no hypothesis need be taken seriously which is not, from a religious and literary point of view, a worthy one. But just for that very reason any hypothesis that we entertain must be recognised as tentative. For of the laws which govern genius we know little. There are, however, three points which seem reasonably clear.

(1) The Gospel was originally intended to end with the concluding verses of chapter xx.—and a magnificent ending it is. “Thomas answered and said unto Him, My Lord and my God. Jesus saith unto him, Because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed : blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed.” . . . “Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples which are not written in this book : but these are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God ; and that believing ye may have life in His name.”

But, granted that chapter xxi. is of the nature of an after-thought, was it added by the author himself or by some later hand? The last two verses, we have already seen, by the change from the third person to the first, advertise themselves as by a different author from the Gospel. But the style, the gift of imaginative description, and the spiritual elevation of the rest of the Appendix, suggest the work of the same master mind that conceived and wrote the Gospel. There are, however, certain minutiae of diction¹ which point rather to some other hand, unless indeed it was written by the author of the Gospel after some considerable interval of time. But, if we accept the former alternative, the points of contact in general outlook and in large ideas are so marked that this other hand must have been that of a pupil of the author saturated in his master's spirit—putting in writing, perhaps after that master's death, what he knew to be the substance of his last message to the Church he had loved and served so long. But would such a pupil, any more than the author himself, have been likely to make an addition which so mars the effect of the impressive conclusion of the original

¹ These are conveniently given by Moffatt, *Introduction to the N.T.* p. 572.

work? Not unless something had happened in the meanwhile which made what he had to say in the Appendix of vital importance for the Church of the time. The Appendix then, we may surmise, was added to meet a new need.

(2) Apart from the Appendix, John only records Resurrection Appearances in Jerusalem. But we have seen some reason to believe that the recension of Mark current in Ephesus represented the first Appearance to any of the Twelve as that to Peter and others by the Sea of Galilee. Now John frequently corrects, and still more frequently ignores, statements in Mark. But we may well imagine that on a question like the evidence for the Resurrection a serious discrepancy between two Gospels, both by this time "read" in the Church, might cause disquietude. The Appendix, by its emphatic assertion "This is the *third* time Jesus appeared to His disciples," seems to be insisting that the Fourth Gospel is right in placing the Jerusalem Appearances *first*, while at the same time recognising the substantial historical correctness of Mark in recording an Appearance by the Sea of Galilee. This, be it observed, is exactly in the spirit of the Elder's comment on Mark preserved by Papias—Mark is correct as to facts, but not as to their order. But we ought also to explain the immense emphasis thrown, by the way in which the story is told, on the threefold commission to Peter, "Feed my sheep." It would look as if there were people at Ephesus who, in the author's opinion, would do well to draw a practical moral from the incident. I shall return to this point later.

(3) The last two verses (Jn. xxi. 24-25), we have seen, are a still later addition; so the Appendix would originally have ended as follows: "Peter therefore seeing Him, saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus said unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me. This saying therefore went forth among the brethren that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him that he should not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?"

The Gospel is thus made to end on a mere correction of a popular misapprehension of one of our Lord's sayings; this is the author's last word! The Greeks, like the French and Italians at the present day, could not tolerate anything rhetorically ineffective. And we are considering the work of one who was not only a writer of great literary and dramatic sense, but must also have been an experienced preacher. We can only conclude that the removal of this particular misconception was the *main* reason for adding the Appendix.

We ask, then, what special circumstances, what vital need, of the Church could adequately be met by an Appendix the climax of which deals with a difficulty connected with a supposed prophecy of Christ with regard to the death of the beloved disciple and His own Return.

THE HOPE THAT FAILED

I reiterate that the evidence at our disposal only justifies inferences of a very tentative character. But as a "provisional hypothesis" the following would, I think, adequately account for the facts to be explained. The Gospel, I suggest, was originally published without the Appendix shortly before the persecution of Domitian,¹ say about the year A.D. 90. Next to the Logos doctrine, its most noticeable contribution to contemporary Christian theology was the endeavour to interpret the Apocalyptic expectation of a visible return of Christ in a spiritual sense. This was by no means the ordinary view, but as time went on, and the Lord did not visibly return, Christians became more and

¹ The fact of a persecution under Domitian is denied by Prof. E. T. Merrill, *Essays on Early Church History*, ch. vi. (Macmillan, 1924). He admits, however, that Domitian was "more urgent about enforcing conformity than were his predecessors on the throne and most of his successors," especially in the matter of emperor worship; since, then, Asia was specially devoted to this cult, the Apocalypse is sufficient evidence of a revival of persecution in that Province. He admits also that Domitilla, the wife of Flavius Clemens, died a Christian; if so, it is pure special pleading to say that the "atheism" (i.e. non-conformity to the State religion) of which her husband was accused is more likely to have been Jewish than Christian.

more concerned at the apparent non-fulfilment of their hope. John believes that the coming of the Spirit, the Comforter, was, if not the whole, at any rate the only immediate, fulfilment to be expected to the prophecies of Christ in regard to His second coming. To those perplexed by the delay of the Parousia John says, "You are making a mistake, the promise has *already* been fulfilled in the coming of the Paraclete; both Eternal Life and Judgement have already begun, though neither is completely consummated in this life."

This doctrine would have found a welcome among a very large section of Christians about the year A.D. 90. It provided the answer to the outstanding practical religious difficulty of that age. And it did so on conservative lines, for it was merely a further development, a more definite formulation, and a new application, of the doctrine of the Spirit already to be found in Paul's Epistles.

But the outbreak of persecution under Domitian changed the situation. The whole history of Jewish literature during the three preceding centuries shows that, whenever there was a period of acute persecution, the fact that older writers had foretold a great tribulation as a necessary prelude to a catastrophic intervention of God to deliver His people from their oppressors, led to a revival of Apocalyptic expectation, accompanied by a republication of older Apocalypses and the composition of new ones. The world-wide tribulation of the recent Great War has produced in many circles an immense revival of interest in the doctrine of the Second Advent, Apocalyptically conceived. This gives an analogy which illuminates the psychological conditions of such a revival of Apocalyptic interest in earlier times. That the persecution of Domitian had this effect is not a matter of mere hypothesis. Irenaeus tells us that the Revelation of John, which I need hardly repeat cannot possibly be by the same author as the Gospel, was "seen" toward the end of the reign of Domitian; and modern critics are practically unanimous, on grounds of internal evidence, in accepting this

date. There is, moreover, the fact that the majority of the sayings of the Elders reported by Papias are strongly Apocalyptic in character. Papias himself is evidence how deeply rooted this became in the Christianity of Asia.

The symbolism, and indeed the whole world of thought in which the mind of the author of Revelation moves, is extraordinarily remote to the educated man of the present day. But, in spite of that, no one can read it without feeling the tremendous force and power of conviction that lies behind it. In that age and in those circles it came with a claim to be a direct revelation—a claim taken quite literally when made by a “prophet” recognised as such in the Church—and it came at a moment when the comparative tranquillity of the last twenty years had been brought to an end by Domitian’s attempt to promote the worship of the Emperor in the Provinces, and to enforce it by strong methods. We can hardly over-estimate the tremendous impression which such a book, at such a crisis, would produce upon the Churches to which it was addressed. Throughout the province of Asia there would follow a wild revival of Apocalyptic hopes, and of a fanatical conviction that the visible return of Christ was to be expected in the immediate future—doubtless, it would be argued, within the 1290 days spoken of by Daniel (Dan. xii. 11 ; Rev. xi. 2, xiii. 5).

But Domitian was assassinated in A.D. 96, and the persecution died down ; and the 1290 days within which the return of the Lord was expected passed, and the Lord did not return. As usual under such circumstances, perplexed believers sought a new interpretation of the old prophecies, and especially of the words of Christ which stood in the old Ephesian Gospel of Mark, as well as in the new arrival, Matthew. “There be some here of them that stand by, which shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the Kingdom of God come with power” (Mk. ix. 1). The original Apostles had passed away ; but perhaps the Lord had meant that His return would be within the lifetime, not of the Twelve, but merely of some who had been alive at the time

and had seen Him in the flesh. There was one man at Ephesus who had seen Christ—the Elder John. Inevitably the idea would get about that the prophecy of the Lord would be fulfilled if this one disciple should tarry till He came, and that this was the true meaning of the original words in Mark.

There are those alive who can remember the feeling of trepidation with which members of the Irvingite Church watched the declining years of the last survivor of those twelve "Apostles" within the lifetime of whom Edward Irving, the founder of the community, had prophesied the visible return of Christ. And when the last of these did die, and the Lord did not return, that community received a grievous shock. A similar situation seemed likely to develop in the Church of Ephesus about the year A.D. 100. The Elder John knew that, if he died before the Lord returned, the faith of many would receive a staggering blow. Long ago he had made up his own mind that Christ's prophecy of an immediate coming bore another interpretation, and that no visible Return was to be looked for. But experience had shown him that it was not possible directly to confute the fanatic hope of an immediate Return, recently revived by the passionate prophecy of John the Seer. Besides, the Elder was by now an old man with failing powers. All that he could do was to add something to his Gospel which would provide, as it were, a reserve trench against the hour of disillusionment which he saw to be inevitable—to append to it a word of the Master, which would be there when he was gone, as an evidence that it was, not the Lord, but their own misunderstanding that had misled them; "yet Jesus said not unto him, that he should not die"; but, "if I will that he tarry . . ."

"There be some which shall not taste of death." Is it fanciful to suggest that it was the death, many years ago, of John the Apostle, the last survivor of the Twelve, that had awakened the Elder himself from Apocalyptic dreams? The last of the Twelve had died, and the Master's words were unfulfilled; the shock of

disillusionment would be intense. To most of that generation the Return of the Lord in glory to inaugurate the new world order was "the Gospel"—it constituted the great good news for a despairing world. For a time, perhaps, his belief in Christianity was shattered. Then he had set out on a quest for an alternative interpretation of the Master's words—the quest which led him at last to the doctrine of the Paraclete. Perhaps—for we have seen that he was a "prophet"—while wrestling with the problem he had slipped into a mystic trance, and it was revealed to him¹ that what the Lord had really said to that Apostle was not, "He shall tarry till I come," but, "If I will that he tarry . . . what is that to thee?"

The doctrine of the spiritual Return—reached in a great religious crisis in his own earlier life—he had in its positive aspect set down in his Gospel. That was all that seemed needed at the time when that was written. But circumstances had changed. Now its negative aspect is of equal importance; it is vital that the Church should have it authoritatively on record that there was *no foundation* in the words of Christ for the belief that He would return visibly within the lifetime of those who heard Him. The belief, which a generation ago had centred round John the Apostle, the last survivor of the Three, perhaps also of the Twelve, was now attaching itself to John the Elder as the last survivor of the generation who had seen the Lord. But the Elder himself—or an understanding pupil, if the Appendix was written by such an one—knew that it was certain a second time to bring many to disillusionment and perhaps despair. The Appendix to the Gospel is an attempt to forestall this. It is a last message to the Ephesian Church, which, written and made public before the time, might, for some at any rate of his "little children," break the force of the inevitable shock.

¹ For an illustration of how a contemporary mystic, in a similar way, finds the solution of difficulties presented by Scripture, especially in regard to Apocalyptic, see *The Sadhu*, Streeter and Appasamy, ch. v.

THE YOUNGER GENERATION

The Apocalyptic reaction, of which the book of Revelation and the sayings of Elders which Papias reports are evidence, was, perhaps, not the only element in the religious situation which the Appendix has in view. We may surmise that, in spite of the storm which the publication of the Gospel had aroused in conservative circles, its doctrines had made rapid progress elsewhere. If, in the lack of definite evidence, we may allow ourselves to frame an imaginative reconstruction of the situation, we may conjecture that, since this "modernism" of John had become the fashion, it was noticed that more men of the professional classes were beginning to join the Church. Presbyters who had felt that the Elder was inclined to go a little too far, were reassured by finding that the attitude of educated pagan opinion was beginning to change. Christianity was becoming intellectually respectable; the Church was making headway among the student class, a number of young men from the school of Tyrannus, or rather his successor, had been baptized—a thing hitherto unheard of. All this was to the good; but there was another side. John's doctrine of the Divine Logos and his spiritualising of the Apocalyptic hope had made Christianity a possible religion for an educated Greek; but it had also opened the door to the intellectualism, the passion for eternal argument, to which the Greek mind was all too prone—witness that series of controversies which in the following centuries were the Church's bane. Already some of the younger presbyters, clever argumentative Greeks, were spending half their days in hair-splitting discussion.

That, so the old man may have reflected, was one reason why the obscurantist party was gaining ground—especially with the poorer classes. Hell fire, and the Immediate Coming with exact date given—these the working man could understand. Uncompromising traditionalism inspired by sincere conviction was, no

doubt, with its "definite teaching," winning souls. But what would become of those souls won by that teaching about the Second Coming—definite enough, but definitely untrue—when, as in the course of a very few years or even months was bound to happen, they discovered its untruth? What would happen to these then?

It might avail something to have put on record a saying that would show them that it was not Christ but their teachers who had misled them. But how many of the poorer sort would ever hear the new ending of the Gospel read, or, if they did, would grasp the point? And, their old teachers discredited, to whom would they go for help? These young presbyters, who had grasped the new theology, were the only hope—but could they be depended on? Would they be ready, as, to do them justice, the reactionaries had been, to meet the poor and simple on their own level, to go out to seek and save, to comfort and befriend? Or were "the little children," for whom he had lived and Christ had died, to fall away—between the earnest teachers of beliefs the complete discrediting of which was merely a matter of time, and the bright young progressives interested only in things intellectual?

The future of the Church depended on the men who would face, frankly and boldly, the intellectual problems of the day—but did the men who saw this see also that, though absolutely vital, this was neither the one nor the first thing necessary? And yet everything depended on them. Perhaps they might listen to him, or rather to a word of the Lord, if he emphatically recalled it to their notice as his own last message to them. To some of them he was already become something of the old fogey now, but to most he was still the great leader, the founder of a truly scientific theology. The word he wanted them to ponder may have stood at the end of the Ephesian copies of Mark, but that was the old-fashioned Gospel now. When originally he wrote his own Gospel it had not seemed worth while to reproduce this—it was so familiar. But he will do so now. He will add it to

his own Gospel to make it clear that he too thought it worth while to emphasise, as the last will and testament of Christ, the appeal three times repeated : " Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me ? " " Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee. " " Feed my lambs. "