

tion benches for the poor when they change places with the rich, and a paternal Government, on the principles of Rousseau and the French Convention, to provision the planet, while "the toiling many," emancipated from labour, enjoy "the rights of man," is simply the last form of a very, very old fable. The beauty and plausibility of such fables, and not less the honest simplicity with which those who preach them sometimes believe in them, constitute, of course, the subtlest and most perilous element in their power. Nathaniels are often delightful people, but they are at their best where Christ, with characteristic sagacity, left their prototype—in the shade.

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## NEW TESTAMENT TEACHING ON THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST.

### III. THE SYNOPTIST GOSPELS.

WE shall now consider the teaching of documents presenting a type of thought differing widely from that embodied in the Epistles of Paul.

The phrase "that day," already found in 2 Thessalonians i. 10, 2 Timothy i. 12, 18, iv. 8, occurs again in Matthew vii. 22, xxiv. 36, Mark xiii. 32, Luke x. 12, xvii. 31, xxi. 34, referring in each case to Christ's return to judge the world. Its use, without further specification, in this definite sense, reveals the definite place of the day of judgment in the thought of the early followers of Christ. The words "till the Son of Man come," in Matthew x. 23, recall at once Daniel vii. 13, "there came with the clouds of heaven one like a Son of Man"; and the similar teaching in the Book of Enoch, quoted in my first paper. This reminiscence is confirmed by the frequent use in the Synoptist Gospels of the term *Son of Man* in reference to His return to judge the

world. (See below.) That in the casual allusion before us the word "come" is considered sufficiently definite to indicate our Lord's meaning, proves that His coming was already familiar to His disciples.

The coming of Christ is depicted in plain language in Matthew xiii. 40-43: "So will it be at the completion of the age. The Son of Man will send His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all the snares and those that do lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be the wailing and the gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father."

Still more definite is Matthew xvi. 27, 28: "The Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and then He will give back to each according to his action. Verily, I say to you, there are some of those standing here who will not taste of death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom." Notice here twice the term *Son of Man*. The *coming* mentioned in verse 27 is evidently Christ's coming to judge the world: for only then "will He give to each one according to his action." And it is difficult to give any other meaning to the words "see the Son of Man coming" in the next verse. Yet nothing happened during the lifetime of the men then standing around Christ which could fairly and intelligibly be described by the words "see the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom." Certainly there was no visible coming of Christ, as some have suggested, at the destruction of Jerusalem.

This serious difficulty is, I think, somewhat relieved by a comparison with the parallel passages in the Second and Third Gospels. In Mark ix. 1, Christ is represented as saying "until they see the Kingdom of God having come in power." The Greek perfect *ἐλθῆναι* describes the abiding effect of the coming of the Kingdom of God. In Luke ix. 27 we read simply "till they see the kingdom of God."

Now the general context, and especially the words "there are some of those standing here who will not taste death till they see," which are found almost word for word in each of the Synoptists, leave no room for doubt that the three are reports of the same discourse of Christ. But we notice that, whereas Matthew<sup>1</sup> speaks of seeing "the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom," Luke speaks only of seeing "the Kingdom of God," and Mark of seeing "the kingdom of God come in power." The second and third phrases describe correctly the events of the day of Pentecost. On that day, the Apostles, who a few months before had heard, standing by Christ, the words now before us, saw the Kingdom of God actually set up on earth in a manner unknown before, and amid a wonderful manifestation of the power of God. If this exposition be correct, the coming of the Son of Man in Mark viii. 38 and the coming of the Kingdom of God in the next verse (so Luke ix. 26, 27) refer to different events: and this is permitted or suggested by the different words used, by each Evangelist, in the consecutive verses. On the other hand, in Matthew xvi. 27, 28, the similar phraseology suggests irresistibly a reference, in both verses, to the same event.

The only explanation of all this, which I can suggest, is that of the three reports before us the second and third, which are practically the same, reproduce more correctly the words actually spoken by Christ; and that the account given in the First Gospel was coloured by the eager hope of the early followers of Christ for their Master's speedy return.

The hope thus expressed has important apologetic value. For no writer or compiler in the second century, when the last survivor of the days of Christ had long ago passed away,

<sup>1</sup> The use of the names "Matthew" and "Mark" to distinguish the Gospels is merely conventional. My argument does not involve any assumption about the authorship of the Gospels.

would have represented Christ as saying that some around Him would survive His coming to judge the world. Consequently the passage before us is a sure indication of the early date of the First Gospel; and the early date, thus proved, greatly increases its value as a witness of what Christ actually did and said. If our Lord spoke the words attributed to Him in the Second and Third Gospels, we can easily understand how His contemporaries, confusing two distinct events, each of which was then hidden in the unknown future, attributed to Him the words recorded in Matthew xvi. 27, 28, words differing in form so little, though in meaning so much, from those which He seems to have actually used. But this confusion would have been impossible after our Lord's meaning had been made clear by events. This important evidence abundantly compensates for the difficulty now before us.

In Matthew x. 23 Christ enjoins His disciples when persecuted in one city to flee to another; and supports His injunction by adding, "For verily, I say to you, ye will not have completed the cities of Israel till the Son of Man come." These words, which have no parallel in the other Synoptists, are not, like chapter xvi. 28, an explicit assertion, but only a casual allusion. It is, however, an allusion which could not have been made after the land of Israel had for more than a generation been depopulated of its ancient inhabitants. It is therefore another sure mark of the very early date of the First Gospel.

In Luke xvii. 22-37, a passage which has no exact counterpart in the other Synoptists, although containing verses which have close parallels there, we read, in close agreement with 2 Thessalonians i. 7, of the "day when the Son of Man is *revealed*." This day is compared, in Luke xvii. 26, to the "day when Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came and took them all away"; and in verse 29 to the "day when Lot went forth from Sodom, and it rained fire

and brimstone from heaven and destroyed all." Our Lord thus teaches, in close agreement with 1 Thessalonians v. 3, that His coming will be to the wicked a sudden and overwhelming destruction; and, as Paul teaches more fully in 2 Thessalonians ii. 9, 10, that it will be preceded by general demoralisation.

The important and difficult parallel chapters, Matthew xxiv., Mark xiii., and Luke xxi. 5-36, demand now careful study.

In all three Synoptists, the discourse is introduced by the disciples showing to Christ the beautiful buildings of the temple, and by Christ's reply that the time will come when of those buildings not one stone will be left upon another. The disciples ask Him, (some time afterwards and sitting upon the Mount of Olives, as Matthew and Mark narrate,) "When shall these things be?" To this question Matthew adds another, "What shall be the sign of Thy coming (*παρουσία*) and of the end of the age?" The word *παρουσία* recalls at once the same word used frequently by Paul, in a technical sense, for the return of Christ to judge the world. The phrase "completion of the age" we have found already in Matthew xiii. 39, 40, 49, denoting the close of the present order of things by the final judgment; and in chapter xxviii. 20, denoting the close of the evangelical activity of the servants of Christ. The use elsewhere of the terms *παρουσία* and *completion of the age* suggests irresistibly that both refer to one event, and to the event to which the former term refers when used by St. Paul.

To these questions, our Lord replies by words of warning, "See that no one deceive you"; and then opens to His disciples a vista of tumults and persecutions, concluding with an announcement, "This Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a testimony to all the nations: and then shall come the end." The word *τέλος*

refers evidently to the *συντελεῖα τοῦ αἰῶνος* about which the disciples had questioned their Master.

Next follows a practical and positive direction. The sign given by Matthew and Mark is "the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place," or "where it must not" stand: that given by Luke is "Jerusalem surrounded by camps." But in all three the injunction is the same, with one trifling exception, word for word: "Then let those in Judæa flee to the mountains." Then follows (Matthew and Mark) unheard-of tribulation; and (Luke) slaughter and the people carried away captive to all lands, and "Jerusalem trodden under foot by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." These last words suggest that the destruction of the city will be followed by a long period of desolation.

After these words, Luke represents Christ as announcing the dissolution of nature and the appearance of the Son of Man in the sky. Matthew and Mark give a warning against false-Christ's and false-prophets, and add "immediately after the tribulation of those days" (Matthew) or "in those days, after that tribulation" (Mark) "the sun shall be darkened . . . and then shall they see the Son of Man coming in the clouds." The appearance of Christ will be followed, as He teaches here and elsewhere in these Gospels, by the sending forth of His angels to gather together His people from the ends of the earth.

An important turning point common to the three accounts of this discourse is found in Matthew xxiv. 32, Mark xiii. 28, Luke xxi. 29, in the parable of the fig tree putting forth its young shoots as harbingers of approaching summer. In each account, this parable is followed by the assertion, given in almost identical words, "Verily I say to you, this generation shall not pass away until all these things take place." The word *γενεά* can refer only to the men living in Christ's day. And, at first sight, the words "all these things"

seem to include the appearance of Christ from heaven. But this first impression is somewhat modified by the verse following, which is the same almost word for word in the First and Second Gospels: "But about that day and hour, no one knoweth, not even the angels of heaven, neither the Son, except My Father only." For, in these words, the day of Christ's return, which is unknown even to the Son, is placed in conspicuous contrast to events which will happen during the present generation. The colourless English rendering "*that day*" poorly reproduces the emphasis of the Greek pronoun *ἐκείνης*, which points conspicuously to something at a distance from the speaker. This contrasted collocation suggests that the "all these things" in Matthew xxiv. 34, Mark xiii. 30, refer to the fall of Jerusalem, and the verse following to the Second Coming of Christ. This explanation, however, does not apply to the Third Gospel, which has no parallel to the verse in question.

The above explanations remove the difficulty before us, even in the First and Second Gospels, only partially. All three reports of this important discourse of Christ seem to be coloured by the eager hopes of the first generation of the followers of Christ. And this colouring bears witness to the very early date of the tradition embodied in the Synoptist Gospels.

Then follows in Matthew and Mark a comparison of the coming of Christ to the flood, similar to that recorded, in an earlier period of our Lord's ministry, in Luke xvii. 26, 27; and in all three Gospels a warning to watch.

As the Bridegroom in the parable of the Ten Virgins, the coming of Christ is mentioned again in Matthew xxv. 10: and we notice that He is represented as lingering; another indication of delay in Christ's return, among indications that His return was close at hand. This apparent contradiction is easily explained by the uncertainty of the early Christians

about an eagerly-expected event still future. A similar indication of delay is found in verse 19: "After a long time the lord of those servants cometh." The whole parable refers evidently to Christ's coming in the Day of Judgment.

In verses 31-46 we have another description of the coming of Christ to judge all men good and bad: "When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He shall sit upon the throne of His glory, and before Him shall be gathered all the nations, and He shall separate them one from another as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats."

The coming of Christ to judge the world is one of the most conspicuous features of the First Gospel. And, with the exception of somewhat varying indications of the earlier or later time of His return, the picture is harmonious throughout. Equally harmonious, and scarcely less conspicuous, is the teaching of the Second and Third Gospels. Still more remarkable, considering the wide difference in forms of expression and modes of thought between the Synoptist Gospels, especially the First Gospel, on the one hand, and the Epistles of Paul on the other, is the close agreement, both in thought and diction, of all these documents touching the matter before us. The only real differences are that the hope of an early return of Christ, which in the Epistles of Paul finds only faint expression in two ambiguous passages, finds in the Synoptist Gospels, especially in the First Gospel, much more definite expression; and that the new and terrible form of evil foretold by Paul is by the Evangelists only suggested in a comparison of the days before Christ's return with those before the flood. The eager desire of His followers anticipated their Lord's return as close at hand: but the sober thought of Paul warns them that before the coming of Christ there must come first an embodiment of evil in its most awful form.

The same teaching about the return of Christ is found,



though less conspicuously, in the Book of Acts. In chapter i. 11, angels announce to the disciples on Olivet, "this Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will so come in the manner in which ye saw Him going into heaven." In Acts iii. 19-21, St. Peter sets before his hearers a hope "that there may come times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Christ Jesus, fore-appointed for you, whom heaven must needs receive until the times of restitution of all things." He speaks again in chapter x. 42 of Jesus as "ordained by God Judge of men living and dead." Similarly St. Paul at Athens, as recorded in Acts xvii. 31, preached that God had "set a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness by a Man whom He has ordained." In chapter xxiv. 15 he expresses a hope that there "will be a resurrection of both righteous and unrighteous."

Similar thought and phraseology are found in James v. 7-9: "Be patient, brethren, till the *coming* (*παρουσία*) of the Lord . . . the *coming* of the Lord has come near . . . the Judge stands before the door." The phraseology and thought of St. Paul are found also in 1 Peter i. 5, "salvation ready to be revealed at the last time"; and in *vv.* 7, 13, "in the revelation of Jesus Christ." So again in chapter iv. 5-7, "who will give account to Him that is ready to judge living men and dead. . . . The end of all things has come near." And *v.* 13, "that, at the revelation of His glory, ye may rejoice exultingly." Also chapter v. 1., a sharer of the glory about to be revealed"; and *v.* 4, "when the chief Shepherd is manifested, ye shall receive the unfading crown of glory." These passages prove that the thought and phraseology of St. Paul were shared by the Galilean Apostles.

The harmonious testimony of these various and different witnesses affords complete proof, apart from any special authority of Holy Scripture, that Jesus of Nazareth an-

nounced that He will return visibly from heaven to earth to close the present order of things and to pronounce and execute judgment on all men good and bad ; that He taught that at His coming evil will be prevalent on earth, and that consequently to some men His appearance will bring sudden destruction, but to the righteous deliverance and eternal blessing. The exact time of His return, Christ did not specify. But He spoke words which evoked in the hearts of some of His disciples a hope that some then living would survive His coming. St. Paul, however, taught that the Day of the Lord was not at hand, and that before Christ comes some new and terrible form of evil will first appear. That Christ left in the minds of some of His disciples this hope of an early return, and that He actually and conspicuously taught that He will come to close the present order of things and to judge all men living and dead, must be accepted, on reliable documentary evidence as an assured result of New Testament scholarship.

In my next paper I shall consider the teaching of the Johannine Writings.

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## *ST. PAUL'S CONCEPTION OF CHRISTIANITY.*

### XX. THE CHURCH.

IT is natural that one should desire to know what is taught in the Pauline letters, and especially in the controversial group, on the subject of the Church, and in what relation the Pauline idea of the Church stands to the idea of the Kingdom of God so prominent in the teaching of Christ as reported in the Synoptical Gospels.

As to the latter topic, for we may begin with it, it is to be noted that both ideas, Church and Kingdom, and the terms corresponding, occur both in Synoptic Gospels, and in Paul-