

THE NAME ΧΡΙΣΤΙΑΝΟΣ.

THE meaning and derivation of the form *Χριστιανός* seem hardly to have been so carefully discussed as the importance of the word demands. The aim of the following observations is to show that the new name carried with it certain associations which would account for its origin and give a point to the witticism from which it is supposed to have sprung.

We assume for the present that the name was given to the disciples of Christ by the pagan population of Antioch. The name so far recognised in the early Church had been the brethren (*ἀδελφοί*), the disciples (*μαθηταί*), those of the way (*οἱ τῆς ὁδοῦ*), the believers (*οἱ πιστεύοντες*), the called (*οἱ κλητοί*), the saints (*οἱ ἅγιοι*), and, perhaps, we may add, as a designation bearing on the present discussion, those who are Christ's, or the men of Christ (*οἱ Χριστοῦ* (1 Cor. v. 23)).

None of these names, however, was destined to be the permanent and distinguishing title of the community founded by Christ. St. Luke narrates the origin of the new name as follows: "They therefore that were scattered abroad upon the tribulation that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phœnicia, and Cyprus, and Antioch, speaking the word to none save only to Jews. But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great multitude that believed turned unto the Lord. And the report concerning them came to the ears of the Church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas as far as Antioch; who, when he was come, and had seen the grace of God, was glad; and he exhorted them all that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord: for he was a good man, and full

of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord. And he went forth to Tarsus to seek for Saul: and when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that even for a whole year they were gathered together with the Church, and taught much people; and that the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch" (*χρηματίσαι τε πρώτως ἐν Ἀντιοχείᾳ τοὺς μαθητὰς Χριστιανούς*) Acts xi. 20–26.

On these circumstances, in which the name of Christian originated, we remark, that the name was unknown to the Church in Jerusalem, and that St. Luke connects it with three important incidents in the progress of the Church, the first of which is the communication of the Gospel to the Hellenists (*v.* 20); and, as we learn from the Epistle to the Galatians (*ii.* 12, 14, 15), to the Gentiles also in the densely populated city of Antioch, the capital of Syria.

The second incident in connection with the imposition of the name of Christian is the arrival of Barnabas in Antioch, the powerful and persuasive preacher, as his name, *υἱὸς παρακλήσεως*, implies. St. Luke notes the fact of his preaching (*παρεκάλει*, *v.* 23) at Antioch, and makes it clear that the effect was considerable (*καὶ προσετέθη ὄχλος ἰκανὸς τῷ κυρίῳ*), *v.* 24. By this time, therefore, the name of Christ and the existence of the community of believers would, doubtless, be widely known beyond the limits of the Church itself.

It was at this crisis that Barnabas went to Tarsus to seek Saul—the third incident recorded by St. Luke in connection with the name of Christian. Saul was, we may be sure, in entire sympathy with the work which had been going on in Antioch. His presence would undoubtedly give a great impulse to the process of conversion. His personality, his zeal, his ceaseless energy, would arrest attention, and draw crowds to listen, as afterwards in the cities of Galatia and Asia.

The fame of the wonderful teacher would spread among the Gentiles to whom St. Paul felt himself bound by special commission to address himself. And though there would be esoteric teaching for the circle of believers, the Gospel would be freely preached to all who came to hear. We cannot doubt, therefore, that not only the name of Christ, but some of the leading words and arguments of the apostolic teaching would now be diffused among the proverbially witty citizens of Antioch, and made the subject of jesting allusion.

Other instances of the kind occurred in the course of St. Paul's preaching. At Philippi a poor slave girl caught up the word "salvation" (*σωτηρία*) from the apostles' lips (Acts xvi. 17). At Thessalonica the preaching of the Messiah-King is distorted into a charge of treason (Acts xvii. 7). At Athens the keynote of the Apostle's preaching, the resurrection from the dead—*ἡ ἀνάστασις*,—is fastened upon as a fitting object for mockery (Acts xvii. 32).

Now there are two topics which we may, with some confidence, assume to have been prominent in the teaching of St. Paul at Antioch: one, the proclamation of the kingdom of heaven, and of Christ as the King of that kingdom; the other, the representation of the life of discipleship as a warfare—the thought of the soldier of Christ.

1. The first of these topics was from the beginning a note of the preaching of the gospel. The voice crying in the wilderness was the voice of a royal herald. The expressions used in Luke iii. 4, 5 are appropriate to the victorious advance of a great king. And the Lord Jesus, at His coming, confirms the proclamation of His herald. He preached the gospel of the kingdom (Matt. iv. 23). And when, after His Resurrection, He discoursed with His disciples about the future of His Church, He is described as speaking to them of "the things pertaining to the

kingdom of God" (Acts i. 3). The Lord's Prayer itself contained the words, and every believer prayed daily for the realization of the kingdom of heaven.

But to the pagan listener the terms βασιλεύς and βασιλεία meant more than king and kingdom; they meant emperor and empire. This is certainly the meaning of βασιλέα ἕτερον in Acts xvii. 7; and in 1 Timothy ii. 2, ὑπὲρ βασιλέων, and 1 Peter ii. 17 τὸν βασιλέα τιμᾶτε, the apostles are, of course, thinking of the Emperors Claudius or Nero. And the same usage is found in the later Greek historians. Consequently the words applied to Christ and His kingdom would, if taken seriously, have a treasonable significance (Acts *loc. cit.*); if otherwise taken, they would serve to point a jest, as in the cruel mockery of the Saviour by the soldiers of Herod (Luke xxiii. 11) or Pilate (Matt. xxvii. 30).

2. The conception of the religious life as a warfare, or campaign, is not found in the Old Testament writers; and in the New Testament, though not confined to the Epistles of St. Paul, is more frequent with him than elsewhere, and is certainly a favourite Pauline mode of presenting the gospel. For instances of this, see 1 Timothy i. 18, *ἵνα στρατεύῃ τὴν καλὴν στρατείαν* (where the article perhaps implies the familiarity of the expression); 1 Timothy vi. 12, *ἀγωνίζου τὸν καλὸν ἀγῶνα τῆς πίστεως*; 2 Timothy ii. 3, *ὡς καλὸς στρατιώτης Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ*. In Colossians ii. 5 *τὴν τάξιν* and *τὸ στερέωμα* are both military terms, "orderly array, and solid front" (Lightfoot). Compare also Acts xiii. 40, *ὅσοι ἦσαν τεταγμένοι εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον*; 1 Corinthians xiv. 8; 2 Corinthians x. 3, 4.

If, then, a travesty of St. Paul's preaching presented to the Greek citizens of Antioch the picture of a rival Emperor, Christos, supporting his sovereignty by a military force of slaves, and Jews, and others of small account, a nickname tersely expressing the sense of ridicule would rapidly grow

into popularity. Such a nickname we believe "Christiani" to have been, as we shall endeavour to show.

The termination *-ανός*, or *-ιανός* is Latin rather than Greek. As a Greek termination it was used only in forming derivatives from the names of cities, as *Σαρδιανός*, *Άγκυρανός*; compare the similar form *Κυζικηνός* (Jelf. § 338 g.; Winer, part ii., § xvi.). A purely Greek formation would have given *Χρίστειοι* or *Χριστικοί*, like *Ἐπικούρειοι*, *Λυκούργειοι*, *Πλατωνικοί*, *Δημοσθενικοί*.

In Latin the termination *-ianus* or *-anus* is used chiefly in derivatives from proper names. The adjectives thus formed signify what belongs to a man or is named after him; *e.g.*, *Æmilianus*, *Claudianus*, *Fabianus* (Madvig, § 189; Roby, bk. iii. p. 308).

From the nature of the case it follows that such derivatives usually related to persons of distinction, who had a party attached to them; hence the adjectival nouns, *Mariani*, *Cæsariani*, *Pompeiani*, *Crassiani*, *Luculliani*. Of these, it will be noted that the last two are nearest in form to *Christiani*. It will also be noted that the form became very suggestive of the soldiers or partizans of the great generals who rose to eminence in the closing days of the Republic. Compare *Brutianæ Cassianæque Partes*, *Vellei. l. 2, c. 74*. Under the Empire the same formation of name carried with it the association of close connection with the person of the Emperor. Here we have the germ idea of *Christiani*, soldiers attached to the personal service of the King or Emperor Christ. Such current forms in relation to imperial personages as *Cæsarianus*, *Tiberianus*, *Claudianus*, would readily suggest the new name. But another word came into vogue soon after this period (and may have existed previously) which affords even a better illustration. Tacitus and Suetonius narrate that under Nero a select body of Roman knights was enrolled, whose duty it was to attend on the Emperor and load him

with adulation. To this body the name of Augustani or Augustiani was given. The words of Tacitus are: "Tunoque primum conscripti sunt Equites Romani cognomento Augustanorum, ætate ac robore conspicui. . . . Hi dies ac noctes plausibus personare, formam Principis vocemque Deum vocabulis appellantes" (*Annal.* xiv. 15). Compare Suetonius, *Nero*, 25: "Sequentibus currum ovantium ritu plausoribus, Augustianos, militesque se triumphij ejus clamitantibus." To this we may add the proper name Sebastian, Σεβαστιανός, the precise equivalent in Greek to Augustianus, and closely corresponding in form to Χριστιανός, being a Greek derivative with a Latin termination. Moreover, the well-known Saint Sebastian was a Christian soldier in the body guard of the Emperor Diocletian; and it is not impossible that Sebastian was not strictly a proper name, but the title of his official position.

The name, given in jest, struck the true note of the Christian life and position and aims. When the Emperor Julian (his own name a counterpart of Christian) pronounced those memorable words, "O Galilean, Thou hast prevailed," it was a declaration that, in the conflict of two empires, Christ the King had won the victory.

The name of Christian, coming as it did from a hostile source, did not at first win acceptance among the disciples. It occurs thrice only in the New Testament, viz. Acts xi. 26, xxvi. 28, and 1 Peter iv. 16. In each case it appears as a name recognised by those who are outside the community of believers. In Acts xi. 26 the word *χρηματίσαι* implies this. It was the name by which the disciples were known in their dealings with the external world. In chapter xxvi. 28 there is a tone of derision and contempt in the way in which the word is used by Agrippa. Again, in 1 Peter, the reference must be to the slave-owner or persecutor who punishes or illtreats his slave or inferior simply because he is a Christian.

Before long, however, the name of Christian came not only to be used by believers, but to be gloried in. Chrysostom, addressing the citizens of Antioch, says: *καθάπερ Πέτρος ἐν τοῖς ἀποστόλοις πρῶτος ἐκήρυξε τὸν Χριστόν, οὕτως ἐν ταῖς πόλεσιν αὕτη πρώτη ὥσπερ στέφανόν τινα θαυμαστόν, τὴν τῶν Χριστιανῶν ἀνεδήσατο προσηγορίαν* (Homil. iii.). "As Peter was the first among the apostles to preach the Christ, so was this city the first to be crowned with the name of Christian as with a diadem of wondrous beauty."

But with its reception into the Church fresh interpretations were given to the name of Christian, and it was consecrated by associations widely differing from those with which it originated. Theophylact (on St. Mark, p. 283) speaks of the name as bringing believers into union with the name and office of Christ: *Χριστιανοὶ λεγόμεθα τοῦτό ἐστι, κεχρισμένοι καὶ αὐτοί, ὥσπερ τότε οἱ βασιλεῖς ἐλέγοντο χριστοί*. "We are called Christians, having ourselves been anointed, just as kings used to be called anointed ones." So Theophilus: *ἡμεῖς τούτου ἕνεκεν καλούμεθα Χριστιανοί, ὅτι χριόμεθα ἔλαιον θεοῦ*. "We are called Christians because we are anointed with a divine unction." Again, *τῇ μετοχῇ τοῦ Χριστοῦ τὴν τοῦ Χριστιανοῦ προσηγορίαν ἐσχίκαμεν* (Gregory Nyssen, iii. p. 270). "Through sharing the Christ have we received the name of Christian." Hence the name came to be intimately linked with baptism. Cyril of Jerusalem writes: *τούτου τοῦ ἁγίου χρίσματος καταξιθόντες καλεῖσθε Χριστιανοί, ἐπαληθέσοντες τῇ ἀναγεννήσει καὶ τῷ ὄνομα*. "Being deemed worthy of this holy Chrism (or unction), ye are called Christians by regeneration affirming this name."

But what, perhaps, more than anything else, stamped the name of Christian with an undying association of sacredness was its connection with martyrdom. It became the test-word of faith. The martyr Lucian had but one answer to all questions, says Chrysostom. Asked what

was his country, his mode of life, his ancestry, each time he answered *Χριστιανός εἰμι*.

The name originally imposed by way of scorn having thus become linked with the holiest associations, an attempt was made, under the Emperor Julian, to stigmatize Christianity by a fresh word of contempt. He was accustomed, says the historian Socrates, to call Christ "the Galilean," and Christians "Galileans"; and Gregory of Nazianzus states that Julian endeavoured to enforce this change by a public decree. This Emperor's last words, already cited, marked the failure of this and all his other attempts to stamp out the name or the life of Christianity. So swift indeed was the reversal of Julian's policy that his successor Jovian refused to assume the important dignity until his soldiers had declared themselves Christians: *ὡς οὖν φωνὴ κοινὴ πάντοτε ἐγένετο, ὁμολογοῦσα καὶ αὐτοὺς εἶναι Χριστιανούς, δέχεται τὴν βασιλείαν* (Socr., *Eccl. Hist.* iii. c. 22).

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