

Secondly, are we saving the unity of Isaiah at the expense of his intelligence? Since this is a scientific inquiry, that question cannot be asked; however, in the case of Vergil, who is not only a great poet but a man of learning also, errors worse than those noticed have to be condoned. The island Inarima is acknowledged to be due to an erroneous reading of Homer's "in Arima." The wish, "let everything be the middle of the sea," is a *Verballhornung* of "may the whole course of nature be changed." Isaiah's geographical errors will have sufficient justification if they serve to save his date.

Thirdly, is the mention of the Lydians by Isaiah consistent with the statement of Assurbanipal (Rm. i. col. 2 line 96) that Lydia was "a far-off country, the mention of whose name the kings my fathers had never heard"—a formula which, it must be confessed, seems to be the basis of the phrase which follows in Isaiah—"the distant islands which have never heard the rumour of me"? Assyria, it must be remembered, was very much farther from Lydia than Palestine. The style in which Lydia is mentioned in that most interesting passage is not inconsistent with the supposition that the fame of Lydia may have reached Palestine a half-century before.

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DOCTRINES OF GRACE.

THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH.

No doctrine of the Catholic Faith has been more keenly debated than that which defines the Church; for while Christian people unite with their lips in saying, according to the final form of the fifth century, "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church," they differ widely in their hearts about the spiritual content of the words. There are some, both of

ancient and modern times, who have so exalted this belief that the Church has seemed to be the controller, and not merely one of the channels of the Divine Grace; to be a mediator between the human soul and Christ, not merely His servant for the help of the soul; to be the tyrant of the human reason, not merely the teacher which brings to that reason its most perfect light. Such persons have not intended to do despite unto the Lord whom they reverence, or any injury to the souls of His people whom they love, but rather to make Christ visible and to bring Him nearer to a faithless world by His body the Church, and to supply to Christ's disciples, walking by faith and suffering daily from the bondage of things seen, that audible voice and that tangible assistance which would be theirs if the Lord were visibly present in the world. No doubt there have been others who have exalted the Church in order that they might exalt themselves, and to whom the Body of Christ has simply been a worldly corporation—more opulent and exacting than the Roman Empire, because its authority was over the souls of men and its revenue only limited by their devotion to the Lord,—whose government they seized and whose material riches they exploited for their own benefit. "Let us enjoy the papacy," said Pope Leo X., that pure child of the Renaissance and baptized Pagan, "now that God has given it to us." Pope Leo, however, with the ambitious and sacrilegious ecclesiastics, whom he so perfectly represents, have been condemned by the consensus of the Christian Church, whose purity they outraged; and it were not just to cast this Simon Magus in the face either of Irenæus of the second century or Newman of the nineteenth century. Nothing has indeed been less worldly and selfish, nothing more pure and chivalrous, than the devotion of certain saintly persons to the Church, which is to their faith the Bride of their Lord and the Mother of their

soul; and if they have exceeded in this passion and have disturbed the balance of truth, it has been only through that limitation of the human intellect which finds it hard to preserve the proportion of faith, and through an admirable enthusiasm of love, which saw in His Church the continued Incarnation of their Lord.

Certain other persons—who are found in modern rather than in ancient times—have so reduced and emptied the idea of the Church that they seem to imagine it to be a voluntary society, created for the highest ends, such, for instance, as a Bible or Missionary Society, rather than an institution, founded and inhabited by our Lord Jesus Christ; a friendly fellowship created by the social instincts of men rather than the earthly home of the soul, builded and appointed by God; a private witness to spiritual things rather than the commissioned ambassador of the Most High. This modest idea of the Church has commended itself to many pious people, not by its dignity, or spirituality, in which qualities it is very deficient, but for two accidental, though no doubt influential reasons; because it affords no opportunity for what such persons would consider priestly usurpation, and sacramental superstition, and because it fits in with the theory of democracy and realizes that spirit of brotherhood which Christ certainly taught, and for which we all long. No doubt there are on this side of thought some to whom the Church is still less spiritual and indeed is nothing more than a philanthropic or ethical agency—distributing charitable aid to poor people, and teaching the less intelligent classes of the community that they must not steal or injure their neighbour; but here again it would not be fair to cast this arid and secular position in the face of a multitude of devout Christians, to whom the Church may after all be only a society, but to whom it is a society, wherein the disciples of the unseen Lord meet for the closest fellowship, and

which exists to preach the gospel of His person and His Cross.

When the atmosphere of the day is secular and what is supernatural is apt to be supposed untrue, it is inevitable that the Divinity of the Church of God should be as much suspected as the Deity of her head ; and since Christian folk are unconsciously influenced by this time-spirit, it might be a good corrective to consider what place has been given to the Church in the Gospels and in the Epistles as well as by the Fathers and Theologians, the Mystics and the Saints of all ages. It is true that our Lord only twice refers to the body of His disciples under the name of the Church, but on one of the two occasions He declares that the Church is to be founded upon a rock, and that He Himself will build it ; that the Church will be a fortress so outstanding that it will provoke the utmost strength of the powers of evil, but will be so impregnable that the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it. Upon the other occasion He commanded that if any man had been wronged by his brother, and the offender would not listen to private remonstrance, an appeal should be made to the Supreme Authority ; and that if he would not hear the Church, he was to be considered as a heathen man and a publican. The Lord also added that what the Church bound on earth should be bound in heaven, and whatsoever the Church loosed on earth should be loosed in heaven. If our Lord had made no other reference to His Church than in those two passages of St. Matthew's Gospel, then we were entitled to form the conclusion that the Church has been in some sense entrusted with the power and with the authority of God Himself. Readers of the Gospels will, however, remember that those two brief, but most weighty references of the Lord are supplemented and amplified by His teaching on the Kingdom. While our Lord mentions Church twice, He mentions Kingdom one hundred and

twelve times, and it goes without saying that the two words must be correlated before we can understand the mind of Jesus. This is a subject on which many learned persons have written and on which further light will always be welcome, but it is sufficient for my purpose to make a suggestion that the kingdom consists of men of a certain ethical character, together with the works which they do and the influence which they exert in human society; that the kingdom, therefore, has no limits except the race, and needs no organization: that it is secret, being within and not without a man; that it is subtle as a fragrance, viewless, like the wind, pervasive as the atmosphere, and yet visible in its effects of righteousness, joy, and peace. That the Church consists of the members of the kingdom united together in one body, which is organized and visible, whose members are bound together by a solemn covenant, and whose different duties are allotted to them by their Head; which has a mission to perform by visible means and an authority to exercise by appointed officers; which receives men into its fellowship, and nurtures them, and chastises them, and can even cast them out. The kingdom is as the Jewish people, scattered abroad without political institutions and without political status, but showing everywhere the same features of face, holding with all their soul their fathers' faith and keeping in their integrity the commandments of Moses. And the Church is the Jewish people, organized as a nation with the rights of citizenship, and a formal constitution, with the offices and the privileges and the obligations of a state. Anything, therefore, which Jesus said of the kingdom applies to the Church in her ethical and far-spread influence on human life. The Church is indeed the capital of the kingdom, where are gathered its riches and glory, its spiritual authority, and means of action. And, therefore, if any one thinketh lightly of the Church, he so far despises the kingdom of Heaven, which

Christ everywhere magnifies, declaring it to be a pearl of great price, for which a man would be wise to sell all that he had, and the great feast which God had prepared for all who would come.

When we leave the Gospels and cross the threshold of the Apostolic Scriptures, we find the Church filling the imagination and commanding the devotion of the holy writers. It is to the Church in the Acts of the Apostles that the Lord adds daily "such as are being saved"; it is to the Church that Paul and Barnabas rehearse all that God had done for them; again and again St. Paul salutes and greets the Church; he declares that by the Church the wisdom of God is made known, and mourns as his chief sin that he once persecuted the Church; for love of the Church Christ gave Himself, and He will not be satisfied till He has presented it unto Himself a glorious Church; and when St. Paul giveth glory unto God, Who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask of Him, it is "in the Church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end."

From the days of the Apostles the Church of Christ has had a place second only to her Lord in the hearts of thoughtful and reverent men. Upon her august claims and gracious ministries, upon her spiritual glory and kindly shelter, the early Christian fathers expatiated with intense conviction and warm personal affection. With the sanction of Holy Scripture they called her by the most tender word in human speech—their Mother, and this title for the Church of Christ has never ceased from the speech of His disciples. "He cannot have God for his Father," Cyprian used to say, "who has not the Church for his mother." If it be thought that Cyprian may somewhat exceed in his churchly fashion, and if in the minds of some he be suspected through his exaltation of the holy ministry, then let such persons turn to Calvin's *Institutes* and read the fourth

book on the "Holy Catholic Church." Referring to the visible Church under her title of Mother, this great theologian and acute thinker writes: "There is no other means of entering into life unless she conceiveth in the womb and give us birth, unless she nourish us at her breast, and, in short, keep us under her charge and government until, divested of mortal flesh, we become like the angels." Again: "Beyond the pale of the Church no forgiveness of sins, no salvations, can be hoped for." "The abandonment of the Church," Calvin declares, "is always fatal," and he goes the length of saying "that all who reject the spiritual food of the soul divinely offered to them by the hands of the Church, deserve to perish of hunger and famine." Was it wonderful with this teaching before her mind that the Church of Scotland should have always held a just and worthy idea of the Church visible, and should have gladly accepted and always maintained the statement in the confession of faith, "Unto this Catholic Visible Church Christ hath given the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God for the gathering and perfecting of the saints in this life to the end of the world, and doth by His own presence and Spirit, according to His promise, make them effectual thereunto"? No Church, and I do not except the Roman Church, has administered discipline with a more profound conviction of its spiritual utility and her own solemn responsibility for the souls which Christ purchased with His blood. "To these officers (that is, the officers of the Church) the keys of the kingdom of Heaven are committed," so runs the article in the Confession, "by virtue whereof they have power respectively to retain and remit sins, to shut that kingdom against the impenitent, both by the word and censures; and to open it unto penitent sinners by the ministry of the Gospel, and by absolution from censure, as occasion shall require." Persons acquainted with the Church life in Scotland will know that

the Holy Table does not lie open there to unbelievers and evil livers, but is carefully "fenced" and guarded. A communicant—especially in country districts where life is simpler, and the traditions of the past stronger—will not approach the sacrament if living in any sin, but will confess the sin unto the minister, and invite the discipline of the Church; but it may not be known to many that the whole system of discipline is minutely and carefully regulated by law. That there are offences which cannot be dealt with by the minister and elders of the local Church, but have to be referred to the superior spiritual court, and that there is a graduated system of Church censure, "admonition," "rebuke," "suspension" from the sacraments, "suspension from office," where the person holds any office, "deposition" which is solemnly pronounced in the name of the Lord Jesus, and "excommunication." Such censures, when inflicted on right grounds, are declared to be "sanctioned and ratified" by the Church's Living Head in Heaven. Absolution is pronounced by the moderator in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and it is only granted when the person under discipline gives "hopeful evidence of penitence," and it is granted by the Church on the presumption that the offender has "obtained pardon through His atoning blood." Brilliant historians of an unbelieving and cynical temper, like Mr. Buckle, in his *History of Civilization*, may make themselves merry over the details of Church discipline, and wax indignant over the tyranny of the Scots clergy, but it remains a suggestive circumstance that an intractable and stiff-necked people, who have ever been jealous of their independence, and been willing to die rather than be slaves to any person, should have been so submissive to the Church. Perhaps it would be difficult to find a more convincing evidence of the majesty of the Church of Christ and her inherent claim upon the conscience of believing

people; while the high intelligence and practical ability of the Scots nation go to show that if the Church in that land has sometimes been a severe, as she has always been a faithful, Mother, she has been abundantly justified of her children.

It is surely also in this connexion a fact worthy of note that in proportion as the believer has been touched with the spirit of poetry, or, in other words, as his piety has been refined and sublimated, he has had a special vision of the beauty of the Church, and an intense devotion to her service. From beyond Jordan the lonely exile recalls the day when he went to the house of God with God's people, "with the voice of joy and praise, with the multitude that kept holyday," and his prayer is that God would send His light and His truth, and then would he go "unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy." Another saint cries out at the thought of the temple which was to him the home of God and the symbol of the Church, "How amiable are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts!" and declares that he envies the happy birds which make their nests under the eaves of God's house. The faithful churchman of the former dispensation is glad when the time comes round that he shall go "into the house of the Lord," and he prays that "peace may be within her walls and prosperity within her palaces." When the captivity of the Church is turned, he is like them that dream, and far away by the rivers of Babylon he weeps when he remembers Sion. There is nothing on earth to him so strong as the Church "which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever," and this is the height of all blessing to see the good of Jerusalem all the days of his life. No doubt this and many another noble passage from the Psalmists and the Prophets, are the voice of poetry; but it is to be remembered that poetry and religion move in the same sphere, and those writers, being wonderfully inspired

by the Holy Ghost, expressed the emotion which stirred the mind of many a silent believer, but which he never could have caught and cast into words. The first songs of the New Testament Church were awakened by the Messiah of God, at Whose coming the heavenly host and the saints on earth burst into praise, and the last song shall also be "unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own Blood." For the risen Christ is the King of the Church, and to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Before, however, the New Testament Scriptures had been completed, the sacred muse was again fired with the ancient theme which had moved the chief singers of Israel. St. John, sick at heart as he looked out upon that ancient world, turned from Rome, the mistress of foul vice and the persecutor of saints, and being in the spirit, as men must be who can see such things, he beheld the "saints who had washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb," and the armies of Heaven clothed in fine linen, white and clean. He saw the holy city coming down from God out of heaven, and prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And at the sight of the holy Jerusalem, with her twelve gates of pearl, and her streets of pure gold, and her walls of jasper, and the glory of the Lord as her sun, the servant of Jesus Christ cut off from all fellowship save that of his Lord, and seeing no light anywhere save through the gates of the city, caught the glory of the Church, the Lamb's Wife, and was satisfied.

It has not been given unto the saints of later days to be touched with so heavenly a flame of inspiration, but they have not been indifferent to the excellent glory of the Church. Among the sons of the Church of England none appears to the writer to have more perfectly caught her spirit,—

A fine aspect in fit array,
Neither too mean, nor yet too gay,—

than the author of the *Temple*, and surely the wisest, gentlest, holiest pastor who ever cared for the souls of countryfolk. Within George Herbert the special affection of Hebrew piety seemed to revive, and all which belonged to the Church was dear to him and the sign of heavenly mysteries. From the Church porch and stile, from the Church lock and key and the Church floor, to the pulpit and the Communion Table, and ordained ministers, and the Holy Scriptures—everything was sacred, and he served her with the mingled devotion of a courtier to his queen and a son to his mother.

I joy, dear mother, when I view
 Thy perfect lineaments and hue,
 Both sweet and bright:
 Beauty in thee takes up her place,
 And dates her letters from thy face,
 When she doth write.

Nor had our Scots saint and mystic Samuel Rutherford any less a love to Christ's Kirk, who through all his impassioned letters mourns less his own sufferings than the shame put on Christ's Bride, and would willingly be in bonds if the Church of Scotland went free.

That Christian has missed one of the most spiritual emotions of our faith who has not felt the fascination of the Church, which is above all controversies, behind all divisions, holier than all Christians, kindlier than any home; for which a man might be willing to die, which he ought to love even as he loveth Christ.

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(To be continued.)