

KINGDOM TO CHURCH

THE STRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT OF APOSTOLIC CHRISTIANITY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

DAVID M. STANLEY, S.J.

Jesuit Seminary, Toronto

DURING His earthly career Jesus Christ proclaimed the coming of the Kingdom of God. In the years immediately following His departure from this world the Christian Church made her appearance in history. What relation does the Church bear to the Kingdom preached by Christ?

The question poses a problem which has been of paramount interest to the Christian theologian and the New Testament critic alike.¹ The present study attempts to redefine the continuity between Christ's preaching of the Kingdom and the founding of the Church by tracing the lines along which, on the evidence of the New Testament, the Christianity of the Apostolic Age evolved, and by formulating the term of that evolution as perceived by the faith of the primitive Church. The principal sources for such an investigation are the Acts of the Apostles and the Greek Gospel of St. Matthew. Acts recounts the series of events through which the primitive community was gradually liberated from the influence of Judaism and became increasingly conscious of its missionary vocation towards pagan peoples. This experience led it to perceive that by this divinely guided growth it was realizing the notion of the Kingdom announced by Christ. Moreover, it was the utilization of this experience of the Christian community in the first decades after Christ's death which had enabled Greek Matthew to express in his Gospel his very profound intuition of the Kingdom's actualization in the Church.

Loisy once remarked with characteristic acerbity that the only "miracle" of Pentecost was the origin of the myth of the Church; the answer to the disciples' vain expectations of a parousiac coming of Christ in His heavenly Kingdom was the disillusioning arrival of the

¹ One of the principal aims of the treatise *De ecclesia* is to establish a relationship of identity between the Kingdom and the Church. The bibliography given by W. G. Kümmel in a recent article shows present-day interest in the problem amongst non-Catholics; cf. "Jesus und die Anfänge der Kirche," *Studia theologica*, VII (1953), 1-27.

Spirit with plans for the erection of a Church upon earth.² Apart from its evident cynicism this statement has the merit of picking out one of the essential elements in the problem before us. Loisy was at least right in perceiving that the relation of Kingdom to Church involved a psychological question: how did the apostolic community become aware that the Kingdom of God manifested its coming through the organization of the Church?

Another important aspect of the question is the phenomenological one: by what stages did the Church finally emerge as an entity distinct from the Judaism in which she was born, and what bearing has this emergence upon the growing consciousness of the early Church that in her life the Kingdom had come upon earth?

Such elements which pertain to the existential order do not readily admit of definition. But they must not, for that reason, be neglected. It is only by a study of the coming-to-be of the Church, a development of its very nature extended over a period of time, that the coming of the Kingdom in the Church can be properly perceived.³ For the coming of the Kingdom, like the founding of the Church, is a *Werden*, not a *Wesen*, and their relation to one another can be grasped only through an insight into experience. To recapture the salient features of that experience in the first age of Christianity is the purpose of the following pages.

THE APOSTOLIC COMMUNITY IN JERUSALEM

The present editorial arrangement of the New Testament, by which Luke's Gospel is separated from Acts, tends to obscure the fact that they constitute a two-volume work on Christian origins. By using the closing scene of the one to form the prologue of the other Luke underscores the unity of conception which governs the whole history. This repetition of the narrative of the ascension extends to several of the

² A. Loisy, *Les Évangiles synoptiques*, II (Ceffonds, 1908), 9; *Les Actes des apôtres* (Paris, 1920), p. 153.

³ For this reason the tendency of some treatises on the Church to express the relation of Kingdom to Church in a neatly conceptualized equation based on a text like Mt 16:16-18 cannot be regarded with complete satisfaction. What must be demonstrated is that, on the view of the writers of the New Testament, the coming of the Kingdom coincides with the developments which resulted, towards the latter part of the Apostolic Age, in the organization of the Church.

circumstances attending it: the mention of Christ's prophecy concerning the future universal character of the apostles' mission (Lk 24:47; Acts 1:8), the nature of that mission as a *marturion* to the resurrection (Lk 24:48; Acts 1:8), the promise of the Spirit (Lk 24:49; Acts 1:4, 5, 8), and the injunction to "remain in the city" until the reception of the Father's promise. By employing such a carefully constructed *trait d'union* Luke clearly indicates that he desires the reader to appreciate not only the continuity existing between the two great sections of his study but also the parallelism he has seen between the movement of the one and the other book. The first contains the story of Christ's work for the salvation of humanity. By laying its opening and closing scenes in the Temple, as Dr. A. M. Ramsey has remarked,⁴ Luke points out the complete transformation in the conception of divine cult and of religion itself which has occurred in the course of the events he has related. I suggest that the second volume has been constructed according to a similar plan. In the opening scenes of Acts the risen Christ instructs His apostles about the nature of the Kingdom of God (Acts 1:3), while its closing lines describe Paul in Rome "heralding the Kingdom of God" (Acts 28:31). Consequently it is not unreasonable to suppose that Luke, with whom it is common practice to present similar sequences as a kind of diptych,⁵ proposes to trace the evolution which occurred in the notion of the Kingdom during the first generation of the Church's life. From the beginning of Acts he clearly enunciates this theme: the propagation of the Kingdom through the apostolic testimony under the direction of the Holy Spirit.⁶

What promise for the future does Luke find in the little group which returned to Jerusalem to await "the promise of the Father"? Following an ancient source at his disposal, he points out that they numbered one hundred and twenty, sufficient in Jewish law to form a distinct community with its own sanhedrin. This sanhedrin is indicated by a repetition of the list of the apostles with Peter at their head. They are conscious of their office, which is to witness to Christ's resurrec-

⁴ Arthur Michael Ramsey, *The Resurrection of Christ: An Essay in Biblical Theology* (2d ed.; London, 1946), p. 80.

⁵ Cf. the remarks of L. Cerfaux in his *Introduction to Les Actes des apôtres* (BJ; Paris, 1953), p. 11; also Stanislas Lyonnet, S.J., *Le récit de l'annonciation et la maternité divine de la Sainte Vierge* (Rome, 1954).

⁶ Pierre Benoit, O.P., "L'Ascension," *Revue biblique*, LVI (1949), 191.

tion before the Jews and within the community.⁷ With this in mind, Peter declares that a twelfth must be elected to replace the unfortunate Judas (Acts 1:21-22). The stringent conditions laid down for eligibility prove the importance of this function; and, in fact, only two of the disciples appear to qualify as candidates.

Yet the limitations of the apostles' awareness of what lies before them is only too evident in Luke's account. Their question put to the ascending Christ, "Lord, is it at this time that you will restore the Kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6), betrays a crassly material view of the Kingdom of God, a view which may well have been operative in their election of Matthias. Why was it so necessary to have twelve witnesses rather than eleven? When, some twelve years later, James is executed, there is no move to replace him. The reason may have been that James had faithfully executed, as Judas had not, his function as witness. It is possible, however, that prior to Pentecost the apostles were concerned with filling those twelve thrones to be occupied by them in the great eschatological judgment of Israel.⁸

Another point, to which we shall return later, deserves mention here: Peter's insistence that the candidate for apostleship should have received the baptism of John (Acts 1:22). Several of the original Twelve had been disciples of the Baptist (Jo 1:40 ff.), and Peter's remark implies that the others had also received the same type of baptism. This will prove an important factor in the constitution of Christian baptism.

Luke depicts the little community as "at one in persevering in prayer" (Acts 1:14); but it does not appear that they celebrated the "breaking of the bread," or that they attempted to win any new adherents to their way of life. They were full of expectancy, as they awaited the mysterious baptism in the Holy Spirit and the return of the Master, predicted by the angels (Acts 1:11). Their consciousness that in electing Matthias they were accomplishing what had been foretold by the prophets (Acts 1:20) proves that they somehow knew that they were assisting at the consummation of Israel's sacred

⁷ L. Cerfaux, *La communauté apostolique* (2d ed.; Paris, 1953), p. 26 ff. I wish to acknowledge my indebtedness to this unpretentious but excellent little study of the Jerusalem community. Many of the ideas which I have developed in this essay are due to Msgr. Cerfaux's insights.

⁸ A. Wikenhauser, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (2d ed.; Regensburg, 1951), p. 30

history. Beyond that, they had no inkling of what was shortly to happen to them.

The Jewish feast of Pentecost brought a transformation of the community into something very different from what it had anticipated. It is likely that the disciples had conjectured that the baptism of the Spirit was to usher in the Parousia of the Lord, come back to restore the sovereignty to Israel. Luke has taken pains to disclose the revolutionary character of the descent of the Holy Spirit. Tongues of fire appeared, accompanied by a great noise as of wind; "dividing," they sat upon each of the disciples, with the result that all present fell into ecstasy and began to pray aloud in praise of God and of the wonder He had wrought (Acts 2:4).⁹ Two facts emerge clearly from the account: the community was caught up in ecstasy, and they were endowed with the gift of prophecy. Recent exegesis of the passage has shown conclusively that the gift of "tongues" had no relation to preaching but was "the voice" which attracted the attention of the crowds assembled in Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost. It was the prophetic charism,¹⁰ as Luke indicates, which was later exercised by Peter in his address to the multitude: "Peter then advanced with the Eleven. He raised his voice and began to prophesy to them" (Acts 2:14).¹⁰

The greatest change perceptible in the attitude of the disciples is their realization that the messianic times have thus been inaugurated by the descent of the Spirit and not by the Lord's second coming. It

⁹ The meaning of *kathōs* in this verse is obscure. It may signify "just as": the disciples began to speak with other tongues *just as* the Holy Ghost was giving them to prophesy, i.e., two charismatic gifts were bestowed upon the group, ecstatic prayer and prophecy. It may mean: the disciples began to tell in other tongues *how* the Holy Ghost was giving them to prophesy (cf. Acts 15:14 for this use of *kathōs*). The word *apophthengesthai* means to prophesy here and in v. 14, as it does in Acts 26:25.

¹⁰ Not the charism of "tongues," essentially an ecstatic prayer of divine praise (cf. the accounts of a repetition of the phenomenon at Caesarea, Acts 10:46, and at Ephesus, Acts 19:6). In composing his Pentecostal *résumé*, Luke has so closely interwoven the data of two sources (one describing the gift of tongues, another which provided him with the substance of the Petrine discourse) as to give the (unwarranted) impression to not a few readers that when Peter preached he spoke "in tongues."

¹⁰ The "speaking with tongues" is understood as ecstatic prayer by two prominent Catholic exegetes of the present day, Frs. Lyonnet and Wikenhauser; cf. S. Lyonnet, "De glossolalia Pentecostes eiusque significatione," *Verbum Domini*, XXIV (1944), 65-75; A. Wikenhauser, *op. cit.*, p. 34 ff., "Das Reden in Zungen ('Zungenreden')."

was of this hour that Joel had spoken when he declared that Yahweh's Spirit would be poured forth, prophecy would again return to Israel, and salvation would come to all men through the Name of the Lord already identified as the risen Christ (Acts 2:16 ff.). The prophet had moreover foretold the creation of this group of God's servants, filled with the Spirit, who were the "little remnant of Israel," the messianic community. Dr. Joseph Schmitt has rightly seen how this realization dominates the first five chapters of Acts and has insisted upon its importance as the first link between the preaching of Christ and the ecclesiology of Paul.¹¹ It remains to point out the limitations of this Pentecostal revelation to the apostles.

The new Israel has been born in the fire of the Spirit, and Peter and the Eleven are prophets of the new Israel. But they are prophets "to the house of Israel" (Acts 2:36), to whom the messianic promise primarily belongs (Acts 2:39); and if Peter refers at all to the call of the Gentiles "in as large a number as the Lord our God will call them" (Acts 2:39), the reference is certainly obscure.

While Luke does his best to stress the universality of this first proclamation of salvation to "men of every nation under heaven" (Acts 2:5), it must be remembered that those who heard Peter on this occasion, during one of the great national pilgrimages to Jerusalem, were all Jews of the Dispersion. Isaiah had made the Temple the focal point of reunion during the messianic age (Is 2:2 ff.), and the Jerusalem Christians can hardly have failed to be deeply impressed by the verification of this prophecy. The holy city must have seemed destined to be the centre of the new religion on the day of Pentecost, and their experience in gaining converts during the period which followed served to heighten the impression that the expansion of Christianity was to result from a centripetal movement towards Jerusalem.¹²

Thus what is emphasized in the Lucan *récit* of Pentecost is the function of the Jerusalem community in the formation of the Church until the Council mentioned in chapter 15: her role as symbol of unity in early Christianity. This is clear also from an allusion in Luke's account to the tower of Babel, mentioned in the Canticle of Moses (Dt

¹¹ J. Schmitt, "L'Eglise de Jérusalem ou la 'restauration' d'Israël," *Revue des sciences religieuses*, XXVII (1953), 209-18.

¹² A. Causse, "Le pèlerinage à Jérusalem et la première Pentecôte," *Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses*, XX (1940), 120-41.

32:8).¹³ The miracle of "tongues" is presented as a supernatural reversal of Babel's baleful influence upon the nations of the earth. In Genesis the story was made the vehicle for a religious explanation of the diversity of language upon earth with its resultant hostility between peoples. In Acts the tongues which became "divided" cause the disciples to speak one miraculous language of ecstatic prayer, which summons the men of various nations to receive, in the charismatic gift of interpretation, a share in the outpouring of the Spirit.

Finally, Luke's narrative suggests that the coming of the Spirit was the promulgation of the Christian law: the references to fire and to the sound which marshals the crowd are reminiscent of the giving of the Mosaic Law upon Sinai.¹⁴ In his Gospel Luke refrained from giving to his "sermon on the plain" the interpretation which Matthew plainly put upon the "sermon on the mount," that of a proclamation by the new Moses of the new law. In the chapters of Acts which follow the Pentecost narrative the evidence which has been collected from earlier sources points to the disciples' preoccupation with their status as the new *qahal* of Israel (cf. esp. Acts 2:47), an attitude which is one of the results of Pentecost.¹⁵ It can only be explained on the supposition that they looked on the descent of the Spirit as the imparting of the messianic law.

The first five chapters of Acts, which describe the fruits of the Pentecostal experience during the first years of Jerusalem Christianity, depict an ideal, even idealized, state of affairs. There is a continued and quite remarkable increase in the number of the disciples, who enjoy popularity with their Jewish neighbors, and who practice under apostolic direction heroic charity towards one another. Persecution, when it comes, is welcomed as a further proof that they constitute the messianic community of the "last days" (Acts 4:24-31), and the wonders of Pentecost recur, endowing them with new courage and patience. A brief reference to what is almost certainly a personal

¹³ The word *diaperizomenai* (Acts 2:3) used to describe the tongues is borrowed by Luke from the LXX translation of Dt 32:8, where allusion is made to the tower of Babel.

¹⁴ Cf. the account in Ex 20:18 ff. A patristic tradition, represented by Severus of Antioch (cf. Cremer, *Catena*, p. 17), points out this parallelism also. Pierre Benoit refuses to attribute this signification to Luke's account; cf. *art. cit.*, p. 193, n. 2.

¹⁵ J. Schmitt, *art. cit.*, pp. 212-17, has reviewed this evidence provided by the first five chapters of Acts. The results of his investigation are most impressive.

reminiscence of one of the apostolic group reveals the attitude of this heroic age as one of joyfulness "for having been judged worthy to suffer outrages for the Name" (Acts 5:41).

Three relatively long summaries with which the author punctuates his narrative serve to mark the passage of time and also to draw attention to the marvelous advance of Christianity (Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-35; 5:12-15). As has been pointed out,¹⁶ some earlier document is the source of these resumé's, but in each case their scope has been enlarged by the interpolation of an additional theme. To discover the reason for these insertions is to gain an insight into the spirit of primitive Christianity.

The first summary (Acts 2:42-47) follows the narrative of Pentecost and shows its effect upon the social-liturgical life of the disciples. It depicts them as following a course of instruction which is called "the teaching of the apostles," a presentation of the truths of the faith in the light of the exaltation of Christ and the descent of the Spirit.¹⁷ The author of the summary insinuates that this teaching was ordinarily connected with the celebration of the Eucharist. While the Temple remained the centre of public worship for these Jewish Christians, the "breaking of the bread" was the heart of their more properly Christian life. Carried out in the privacy of their homes during the course of a meal, it was characterized by joy. The disciples retained the vivid memory of how the risen Christ had come to them habitually in the course of a repast, and this sacramental coming of the Lord would remind them for a long time, as Paul testifies (I Cor 11:26), of the much-desired second advent of the Master.¹⁸

The community's keen sense of the social aspects of the Eucharist is also apparent in the practice of what Luke calls the *koinōnia*, a word which may be translated by "common life" in the sense in which

¹⁶ Pierre Benoit, O.P., "Remarques sur les 'sommaires' de Actes 2.42 à 5," *Aux sources de la tradition chrétienne*, pp. 1-10.

¹⁷ This *didachē tōn apostolōn* is the fruit of the deeper understanding of the mysteries of Christ's earthly career promised in the discourse after the Last Supper (Jo 14:26; 16:25).

¹⁸ The connection between the *fractio panis* and the post-resurrection repasts shared by the disciples with the risen Christ is suggested by O. Cullmann, "La signification de la sainte cène dans le christianisme primitif," *Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses*, XVI (1936), 1-22. Cf. also Yves de Montcheuil, S.J., "Signification eschatologique du repas eucharistique," *Recherches de science religieuse*, XXXIII (1946), 10-43.

it is used in religious orders. A description of it has been interjected into this first summary (Acts 2:44-45): "the faithful shared everything in common; they sold their properties and their goods, and divided the proceeds amongst the community, according to the need of each one." By this interpolation its author wishes to correlate the teaching of the apostles and the Eucharist with this "communism" of the primitive Christians. P. Stanislas Lyonnet in a recent article has further specified this relation of the *koinōnia* to the Eucharist: the "common life" was a necessary prerequisite for participation in the "breaking of the bread."¹⁹ The fellowship with Christ in the Eucharist demanded that disposition by which each of the first disciples refused "to call his own what appertained to him" and regarded "everything as held in common."

The second summary (Acts 4:32-35), originally devoted entirely to the social features of the community's life (Acts 4:32-35), has been enlarged by an intercalated reference (v. 33) to the dynamic nature of the apostolic teaching. It is linked to the "little Pentecost" (Acts 4:31) and is thus presented as one of the tangible results of the presence of the Spirit in the community. By this procedure the author stresses the fact that the "common life" is one of the fruits of early Christian theological thought, which in its turn stems from the Holy Ghost. This *marturion* given by the apostles "with great display of power" was accompanied not only by the miracles performed upon the sick but also by those less tangible, spiritual wonders, like the *koinōnia*,¹⁹ which this teaching evoked in the hearts of the disciples.

The third resumé (Acts 5:12-15), which sketches the thaumaturgical work of the apostles, is significant because of its remarkable reference to the privileged position Peter held in the esteem even of outsiders. They realize somehow that he has taken Jesus' place amongst the disciples, and they bring to him their sick and possessed as formerly they had to Christ (Acts 5:15-16).

The fact that each of these summaries insists on the great favor which the community enjoyed with "the people" enables us to form some estimate of the relationship between the Jews and the Jerusalem

¹⁹ Stanislas Lyonnet, S.J., "La 'Koinōnia' de l'Eglise primitive et la sainte Eucharistie," *Actas del XXXV Congreso Eucarístico Internacional-Barcelona 1952, Sesiones de Estudio*, I, 511-15.

Christians. To their fellow-countrymen the little group was simply a more fervent sect of Judaism, a *hairesis*, as Paul will later term them, like the Essenes or the Pharisees (cf. Acts 24:14; 28:22; 26:5). It may also be that the Jews tended to confuse them with the movement headed by John the Baptist. The fact that the Christian community was known in Palestine as "the Way," a title probably deriving, as we shall see, from the Baptist's preaching, seems to indicate this.

What may be gathered from Luke's narrative about the Jerusalem community's conception of itself? As we have observed, the Pentecostal experience revealed to the apostles the inauguration of the messianic age and the community's identity with the new Israel. The apprehension of this truth drastically altered their entire historical perspective: the Lord, they perceived, had begun His work as Messiah and Redeemer, not by a personal reappearance in the world, but by the mission of the Spirit.²⁰ The old Jewish scheme of history they had already recognized as obsolete on ascension day; instead of one, there were to be two comings of the Christ. But now the commencement of the messianic times without this second coming made it clear that the "last age" comprised two moments.^{20a} There was a time of preparation, during which the invisible Lord by the Spirit worked through the community for the building up of a spiritual kingdom. Consequently, their role in this period was to assist in aggregating Israel as a whole to the new faith. The second period was to be marked by Christ's second coming, when He would "bring the times of refreshment" and "the restoration of all things" (Acts 3:20-21). While the disciples did not know the date of this Parousia, they were certain of one thing: the Lord's coming was contingent upon the conversion of Israel (Acts

²⁰ Peter's speech on Pentecost shows that the disciples first perceived the redemptive character of Christ's passion, death, and resurrection as a consequence of the descent of the Holy Spirit. The coming of the Spirit, they realized, was due to Christ's exaltation to the Father's right hand (Acts 2:33). This proved His constitution as *Kyrios* and Messiah (v. 36) and, moreover, His *new mission*, through the workings of the Spirit, as *Saviour* of Israel (Acts 3:26). As far as I can ascertain, the importance of this last cited text has not been noted hitherto. It sheds much light upon the psychological process by which the apostles arrived at their conception of Christ's death and resurrection as redemptive. They first recognized Him as Redeemer through His sending of the Holy Ghost, i.e., in His exaltation *ad dexteram Patris*. Further reflexion revealed the salvific character of the two greatest acts of His life, His death and resurrection. But for a fully-thought-out presentation of such a soteriology we must await the writings of Paul.

^{20a} J. Schmitt, "Les sources et les thèmes de la naissante foi apostolique au Christ Sauveur," *Lumière et vie*, XV (1954), 39 f.

3:19). In the first flush of their enthusiasm and by the phenomenal success which attended their early efforts to convert Israel, they naturally considered that the period of preparation for the Lord's advent would be a matter of comparatively little time. For as yet they were unaware of the place to be occupied by the pagan nations in the divine plan of salvation. It was to be Stephen's privilege to begin the community's education on this important point.

For the moment, they regarded themselves as the "little remnant" whose duty it was to rescue as many as possible of the "wicked and perverse generation." They called themselves "the Way." This title, I believe, they took from the Second Isaias, whose prophecy was a favorite commonplace in their preaching: "Prepare the way of the Lord . . ." (Is 40:3 ff.).²¹ Since John the Baptist had been the first to use the passage in his call to penance (Mt 3:3), the designation of Jerusalem Christianity as "the Way" may be an indication of the close connection between it and the Baptist movement in the eyes of contemporary Judaism.

The community life of the disciples was, as we have noted, a paradisiac existence such as the prophets had foretold (Is 11:6 ff.). Full of joy, living in closest union with one another, having banished want by the sharing of their material goods, strengthened in time of persecution by the presence of the Divine Spirit, they seemed to enjoy the fulness of that messianic peace which was to mark the restoration of Israel. It is true that these Jerusalem Christians possessed a religion and a form of divine worship surpassing that of Israel; their evident belief in the divinity of Christ, their awareness of the personality of the Holy Spirit, and the "breaking of the bread" are evidence of that. Still it was the continuity between Christianity and the ancient religion which remained uppermost in their minds. The idea of receiving pagans, who had not first been converted to Judaism, was still inconceivable. The foundations of the Kingdom had been laid, but the nature of the superstructure which the Lord intended to erect upon it was hidden in the future.

THE HELLENISTIC ELEMENT IN THE JERUSALEM COMMUNITY

The picture presented in the opening chapters of Acts is an idyll. Such a state of things was not to last. Indeed it could not last, if the

²¹ Wilfred L. Knox, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Cambridge, 1948), p. 72 ff.

primitive community was to discover its full destiny and to develop that independence of Judaism which the complete universal coming of the Kingdom of God demanded. It was the vocation of a group of Greek-speaking Jews amongst the Jerusalem disciples, whom we may call the Hellenistic element, to dispel the idyllic atmosphere of the first years, which, however beautiful, tended to confine the new religion within the ambit of Judaism. These men, who were to commit Christianity to a course of action which would ultimately result in the admission of Gentiles within her ranks, make their appearance in Luke's story, characteristically enough, with the first signs of real dissension within the Jerusalem community (Acts 6:1).

However, the impact of this group of Hellenist Christians has already been felt in Acts' earlier chapters. The so-called Hellenistic character of some of the most ancient sources used by Luke has long been a puzzle to the critics. It is now explained by the presence of these men in the Jerusalem community from its inception. Among their more important contributions to early Christian theological thought were the elaboration of a rudimentary apologetics, based on the Greek Bible, the working-out of the theology of the Name (*Kyrios*), one of the clearest proofs of the primitive faith in Christ's divinity, and the speculation upon the servant-role of the suffering and glorified Christ.²² It may also be that the presence of anti-Jewish feeling in the examples of the Jerusalem kerygma found in Acts should be credited to them. At any rate, by their creation of a series of scriptural arguments for the truth of Christianity, which were intended for use amongst Greek-speaking peoples, and their reflections upon Christology, the Hellenists were already forging weapons that could be used in the great missionary enterprises of the future Church.

The greatest figure in the group was undoubtedly that of Stephen, a man "full of grace and of power," endowed with many of the charismatic gifts displayed by the apostolic college (Acts 6:8) and possessing the clairvoyance and fearlessness of the ancient prophets. A Jew, he was versed in the Scriptures; a Hellenist, he was without any of the narrow chauvinism which tended to cramp the Christian spirit of many of the "Hebrews." If the long discourse attributed to him in Acts be characteristic of his doctrine, Stephen liked to dwell upon the

²² E. G. Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St. Peter* (London, 1949), p. 93.

infallible triumph of the divine plan over every obstacle that human malice could devise to thwart its execution. At the heart of such a conception of sacred history lies a profound intuition of the central truth of the apostolic preaching: Christ's death at the hands of the Jews and His resurrection by the power of God the Father. This insight resulted in the first Christian interpretation of the Old Testament; and the histories of Abraham, Joseph, Moses, and the prophets revealed to Stephen the relative ephemeral nature of Judaism, as well as the basic incompatibility between the practice of Christianity and Judaism. In the context of Acts Stephen's *plaidoyer* is addressed to his Jewish judges, and as such it insists upon Israel's characteristic sin, the clinging to what is of passing value in code and cult as if it were definitive. Actually, however, the martyr's interpretation of Old Testament history contained a warning to his fellow-Christians, pointing out the anomaly of their position vis-à-vis Mosaic customs and the danger attendant upon the clinging to such practices.

But it was through his death that Stephen was destined to fix this lesson firmly in the mind of the primitive Church. Luke's account of the first martyrdom, drawn from an earlier source, proves that the disciples had been impressed by its close resemblance to the Master's passion. By dying on the charge of teaching that "Jesus will destroy this Place and change the traditions which Moses bequeathed to us" (Acts 6:14), Stephen reminds his brethren that Jesus had been condemned by official Judaism for declaring Himself "greater than the Temple" (Mt 12:6; 26:59) and setting Himself above the Law of Moses (Jo 19:7).²³

If the community of Jerusalem was slow to realize the inexorable logic of Stephen's teaching, the leaders of the Jews were not; and the persecution which broke out as a result of Stephen's death put an end forever to the ideal conditions in which hitherto the Christians had lived. Except for the absence of their exalted Lord, they had seemed almost to dwell in heaven, possessing the best of the two worlds of Israel and Christianity. Stephen's message brought the community down to earth, reminding them that it was in this world that they

²³ It is surely one of the conundrums of early Church history that, although the Jewish Christians knew that these charges had been expressly declared as cause of Christ's death by the Jews, still they were so slow in realizing that to follow Christ entailed the abandonment of Temple and Law.

must struggle, even to death, to establish the Kingdom, before they might hope to enjoy its glories in another world. In the divine call of Abraham, of Joseph, of Moses, with its peremptory demand to sever all attachment to people or country, Stephen had perceived types of the Christian vocation. But before this little seed which he implanted in the minds of the Jerusalem community could germinate into the missionary spirit of Antioch, a further divine intervention was required.

THE COMMUNITY'S GENTILE MISSION REVEALED TO PETER

Pentecost had revealed to the apostolic community the spiritual nature of the Kingdom. Stephen had hinted at a further stage of development in suggesting a broader and more universalist outlook. It was Peter's experiences at Joppa and Caesarea which were destined to add a new dimension to the plan of Christian expansion.

The episode connected with the baptism of Cornelius the pagan is clearly of great importance in Luke's eyes. Like the conversion of Paul, it is recounted three times, and with each retelling fresh light is thrown upon its meaning. Logically, if not chronologically,²⁴ it takes precedence over a similar phenomenon at Antioch. The initiative in admitting pagans directly into the Christian communion belongs, as of right, to the head of the Jerusalem community. Luke is at pains to point out that this unprecedented event is clearly willed by God. Before answering the call of Cornelius, Peter is supernaturally informed that a creative act of God Himself has abolished the impurity formerly attaching to non-Jews: "What God has purified, call not impure" (Acts 9:15). And this principle is seen to operate effectually in Peter's subsequent attitude towards social intercourse with the Gentiles (Acts 10:28; 11:3, 9, 18; 15:9).

In obedience to the vision, Peter accepts the hospitality of Cornelius, preaches the Gospel to his household; and, when the Spirit descends upon the group as upon the first Pentecost, he orders that they be baptized.

²⁴ It is impossible to decide the chronological order of the events subsequent upon the persecution of the Hellenist Christians in Jerusalem. However, Luke clearly indicates the literary (and hence, on his view, the logical) sequence by the use of the phrase *hoi men our diasparentes* in Acts 8:4 and again in 11:19.

This admission of Gentiles who had not come to the Christian faith by way of Judaism was a remarkable step towards the realization of the universal character of the Kingdom. The disciples who had followed Jesus in Galilee were aware that somehow the Gentiles were to be called to a share in the messianic blessings as the prophets had foretold. Still it seems, from the explanations Peter is forced to give upon his return to Jerusalem, that they had not conceived it possible that pagans should be admitted *ex aequo* with the chosen people. Despite Luke's characteristic remark that the community "glorified God" (Acts 11:18), it appears, from the difficulties that arise at Antioch, that for some time they regarded Cornelius' conversion as an exception to the general rule. What is significant, however, is that the issue, in Peter's mind, is settled once for all; when he appears at the assembly in Jerusalem some years later, he will merely reassert the principle revealed to him that day by the sea in Joppa.

A curious remark of Peter's in his account of the Cornelius episode to the brethren of Jerusalem deserves to be noted for the light it sheds upon the process by which the apostles had come to recognize the institution of the sacrament of baptism. "... The Holy Spirit descended upon them, just as upon us at the beginning. And I recalled the Lord's remark: 'John,' He said, 'baptized with water, but you will be baptized in the Holy Spirit' " (Acts 11:15 ff.). His recollection of this *logion* of the Lord is given by Peter as his reason for allowing Cornelius and his family to be baptized. What led Peter to such a conclusion? Why not consider these pagans who had received the Spirit, just as the apostles themselves had, members of the Church? It would seem that those who received the Holy Ghost on Pentecost were considered to constitute the messianic community without any reception of baptism. Moreover, in the very words of Christ which Peter recalls, the Johannine baptism with water is opposed to the baptism with the Spirit. Yet Peter had said at Caesarea: "Can we refuse the water of baptism to those who have received the Holy Spirit even as we did?" (Acts 10:47).

What led the apostles to practice a sacrament, defined in the fourth Gospel as a rebirth of "water and the Spirit" (Jn 3:5)? As we have already remarked, the reception of John's baptism had been a condition for candidature to the apostleship. Peter, Andrew, John, Philip,

and Nathanael seem to have been disciples of the Baptist; and since the disciples of Christ had also practiced this rite (Jn 4:2), the rest of the Twelve as well as the other disciples gathered in the upper room had also received it. With the reception of the baptism in the Spirit, the apostles were given a profounder insight into the antithesis: John with water, Christ with the Spirit. They had received the waters of Johannine baptism, and now Christ had baptized them in the Spirit. It was a "validation," a "sacramentalization" of the Johannine baptism. Water and the Spirit were henceforth to form a new reality, the Christian sacrament of baptism.²⁵

THE "NEW CREATION" OF ANTIOCH

With the sure instinct of the true historian, Luke connects the foundation of Antiochian Christianity with the death of Stephen (Acts 8:4; 11:19). Stephen's influence is felt not only in the fact that the founders of Antioch were Hellenists, but also in their departure from the ordinary rule of preaching only to the Jews (Acts 11:20). Their evangelization of the pagans met with unprecedented success, and the result was a community predominantly pagan in origin. Furthermore, three factors in the formation of the Antiochian church resulted in a strikingly new formula of Christianity.

Joseph Barnabas, a Levite of Cypriot origin (Acts 4:36), who enjoyed the confidence of the heads of the Jerusalem community, was sent to supervise the new foundation at Antioch. As leader of the new church, he displays the qualities which had earned him the sobriquet "Barnabas,"²⁶ by encouraging the novel experiment at Antioch whereby Jewish and Gentile Christian lived in Christian fellowship, and by promoting a marked growth in the congregation. Barnabas

²⁵ The apostles were aware that, upon emerging from the Jordan after His baptism by John, Christ had received the Holy Spirit, Who descended upon Him (Mt 3:13 ff.; Mk 1:9 ff.; Lk 3:21 f.). Moreover, in the Fourth Gospel, it is instructive to observe the marked connection between John's identification of Christ by the descending Spirit and the antithesis (John-water: Christ-Spirit) we have mentioned; cf. Jo 1:33. Thus the New Testament seems to indicate that the institution of the sacrament of baptism was begun in the Jordan but was only fully completed at Pentecost. The intuition of some of the Fathers of the Church (*Summa theologiae*, III, 66, 3) that Christ somehow instituted baptism at the river Jordan is substantially correct.

²⁶ The meaning of the name is explained in Acts 4:36 as "clever at encouragement" or "exhortation."

possessed, moreover, a rare gift for judging men; and the man he picked as his lieutenant was Saul of Tarsus, whom he had already sponsored in Jerusalem when Saul had been an object of fear and suspicion to the other Christians. Barnabas knew that Saul had retired to his own city of Tarsus because of his failure at evangelization in Jerusalem. There he sought him out and succeeded in getting Saul's cooperation. Barnabas' realization that Saul's talents could best be used in a mixed community like that of Antioch was a stroke of genius, from which both Saul and the Antiochian Christians were to profit.

Saul had returned to Tarsus with only the memory of a vision in which Christ had informed him that his vocation was to preach the Gospel to the pagan world (Acts 22:17-21). Perhaps also he still remembered Stephen's conception of a Christianity conscious of its freedom from the Mosaic Law and the Temple cult. In any case, it was at Antioch that Stephen's principle was being put into practice for the first time; and the year Saul spent there under Barnabas' direction prepared him for his future mission to the pagans. The example given him in the art of governing a congregation composed of some Jewish and many pagan Christians would serve him later in founding churches like Philippi, Thessalonica, and Corinth. The development of a completely Christian liturgy, centered in the Eucharist, would provide Saul with a form of cult that could be easily transplanted to new foundations. His period of training came to an end the day the Holy Spirit manifested His will regarding himself and Barnabas. The great missionary era of the Church was begun.

Luke points out that the completely distinctive character of Christianity was realized for the first time not at Jerusalem but at Antioch (Acts 11:26). There the group of disciples appeared as a "new creation" by contrast with both paganism and Judaism. This was due to the absence of the Temple's influence in their Christian life, together with the fact that the majority of the disciples were converts from paganism. The Jerusalem community had been, in fact, no less Christian, but it remained to some extent under the shadow of the Temple. At Antioch it was easier to forget the ancient discrimination between Jew and Gentile, where there was no "wall of separation" to divide Jewish Christians from the rest, as when the Jerusalem community assisted

at the public liturgy of Israel. Until certain Christian pharisees invaded Antioch (Acts 15:11), there were no such distinctions.

Owing to the distance from the Temple the Eucharistic celebration became the centre of the community's cultic life in a way it had never been in Jerusalem. It is significant that we find the word "liturgy" applied to the "breaking of the bread" first at Antioch (Acts 13:2). In Jerusalem, "liturgy" continued to signify the gorgeous ceremonial of Judaism.

The most important feature of the new spirit manifested by Christian Antioch was her answer to the divine call to the missions amongst the Gentiles. In Jerusalem the community tended to await the coming of the pagans to the centre of the new religion, the Temple. It is Antioch which first obeys the command of Christ to carry His Gospel "to the end of the earth." Her Hellenist founders had not forgotten Stephen's teaching that the Almighty had been a wanderer Himself during the greatest period of Israel's religious life, the march through the desert, that He "does not dwell in structures built by human hands" (Acts 7:48). They were aware that the Eucharistic liturgy, which was the centre of their Christian life, could be carried out wherever the preachers of the Gospel were to be found. It was scarcely an accident that the Spirit should summon the first missionaries of Antioch while they were engaged in the Eucharistic cult.

This divine revelation of the fully universal nature of the Kingdom of God was to be brought home to the apostolic Church through the missionary experiences of Paul. His travels throughout Asia Minor and Europe illustrate, in Luke's story, the witnessing "to the end of the earth" which the risen Christ had mysteriously pointed out as an element in the coming of the Kingdom. Moreover, as events were to prove, Paul was destined to enlarge considerably the early Christian view of the history of salvation.

The Jerusalem community had held firmly to two principles which she knew to be divinely revealed: the Gospel must first be preached to Israel (Acts 2:39; 3:26; 5:31), and the Parousia of the Lord was delayed only until Israel as a collectivity had accepted Christianity (Acts 3:19-20). Paul made the first of these his guide in preaching the Gospel; wherever he went, he first announced the Kingdom to the Jews of the Dispersion. Yet everywhere, as Luke testifies, he met

their almost unanimous opposition to Christianity. In many places the only obstacle to their killing him out of hatred for his message was the power of imperial Rome (Acts 17:5 ff.; 18:12 ff.; 21:31 ff.; 23:12 ff.; 25:2 ff.).²⁷ By contrast Paul was very successful in his attempts to convert the pagans. According to Acts Paul's most sustained effort to convince the Jews of the truth of Christianity was at Ephesus, where he devoted three months to the task (Acts 19:8); it seems that he did not succeed in making a single convert amongst his own race. Now it is interesting to note that it was around this point in his career, in the opinion of many commentators,²⁸ that Paul seems to have undergone a change of opinion with regard to the proximity of the Parousia. At any rate, by the time he wrote to the Roman Church from Corinth, about the year 56, he had clearly formulated a theology of history according to which, by her rejection of the Gospel, Israel had yielded her place in the Kingdom to the pagan nations and would only accept Jesus as the Christ "when the full number of the Gentiles has come in" (Rom 11:25-26). Whether Paul had been granted a special revelation on this point, we do not know. It is, however, not improbable that this conclusion was simply the result of his missionary experiences during the height of his career as an apostle. Once he had arrived at this conclusion, he must have seen the conversion of Israel as a hope indefinitely deferred, and with it the second coming of the Lord. For the earlier belief, stated by Peter, was not found to be incorrect: the Parousia was still contingent upon the collective entry of the Jews into the Kingdom. Paul's discovery was that this conversion itself was, in its turn, contingent upon that of the Gentiles. In the early days of Palestinian Christianity Israel's acceptance of the faith would, it had seemed, be almost spontaneous, a matter of no time at all; and the Lord's coming had in consequence appeared near at hand. It took the greater part of Paul's missionary activity to change that outlook. By the time Matthew's Gospel, as we possess it in Greek, came to be written, the divine plan for the

²⁷ It may be that this experience of Rome's protective might is the origin of Paul's doctrine about the "obstacle" to the appearance of the "man of lawlessness" and the great apostasy (II Thess 2:6). At any rate, a most ancient Christian tradition has long identified this "obstacle" with the Roman Empire.

²⁸ C. H. Dodd, "The Mind of Paul: A Psychological Approach," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, Manchester*, XVII (1933), 104.

propagation of the Gospel was known throughout the Christian Church. This realization of the delay in Christ's second coming was, I believe, an important factor in turning Paul's attention to the mysterious phenomenon of the Church herself and in promoting, perhaps chiefly through his instrumentality, the conviction in apostolic Christianity that the coming of the Kingdom was to be identified with the organization of the Church.

THE END OF JERUSALEM'S IMPORTANCE IN APOSTOLIC CHRISTIANITY

In the early years Jerusalem had seemed destined, with the Temple, to be the centre of Christianity. But Acts reveals a gradual movement away from the capital of Judaism. The Hellenistic element is driven out by persecution. Peter, more and more occupied with his pastoral visits to new foundations, finally goes off "to another place" (Acts 12:17). About the same time the apostles themselves appear to have sought new fields of evangelization. Paul, frustrated in his apostolate in Jerusalem, lives a year at Antioch and then begins a series of expeditions which lead him eventually to Rome.

Jerusalem had but one more function to perform in the history of the early Church: to promulgate the definitive charter of Gentile liberties. This she did in the Council of Jerusalem, in the presence of Peter, Paul, and others, if not all, of the apostles. Luke makes it clear that this formal acknowledgment of the fully revealed divine plan for the coming of the Kingdom emanates not from Peter but from the Jerusalem community, in the person of James, her bishop. Peter, for whom the question was settled long ago at Caesarea, is simply present as "the legate of Christ."²⁹ It was fitting that Jerusalem, the mother-Church and primitive guardian of orthodoxy, should publicly accept the declared will of God before disappearing, as she would soon after, with the advance of Titus' armies, into history. Her chief glory was ever to have submitted to that divine will, no matter what it cost her. Her original conception of the Kingdom of God had been very different from the reality as it evolved under the impact of events. Once the tide turned in the direction of the Gentiles, Jerusalem's task was ended, and the focal point of Christianity was henceforth to be located elsewhere.

²⁹ The phrase is that of Msgr. Cerfaux, *La communauté apostolique*, p. 96.

In Acts Luke sketches the gradual revelation to the early Church of what Christ had meant in His post-resurrection discourses by "the Kingdom of God." It is consonant with our author's purpose that, after its recurrence in this place (Acts 1:3), he makes no reference to the phrase during the part of his narrative which deals with the Jerusalem period, but only when he comes to Paul's missionary activity.

The phrase is first mentioned upon Paul's return to Lystra from Derbe; he and his companions "encouraged the spirits of the disciples, urging them to persevere in the faith, 'for,' they said, 'it is by many trials that we are to enter the Kingdom of God' " (Acts 14:22). It is clear from the context that by perseverance in "the faith" Paul means continued loyalty to the Church which he has organized among the disciples (v. 23 speaks of his establishing a hierarchical body), the only means of entry into the Kingdom. In Ephesus, as has been pointed out, Paul spent three months, as Luke remarks, "trying to persuade them [the Jews] about the Kingdom of God. But . . . some hardened their hearts and refused to be convinced, vilifying the Way before the assembly . . ." (Acts 19:8). This passage shows that to reject the Way is to reject the Kingdom of God. In his farewell discourse to the "seniors" of the Ephesian Church, Paul describes his part in organizing the Church amongst them as a "heralding of the Kingdom" (Acts 20:25). The preaching of the Kingdom, rejected by the Jews, has resulted at Ephesus in the founding of a Gentile Church.

These three passages depict in miniature the connection between the Kingdom of God and the Church which Luke has revealed to his reader by recounting the missionary experiences of Paul. The Church is the Way to the Kingdom; to reject the Church is to refuse God's Kingdom; the coming of that Kingdom upon earth was effected by the apostolic organization of the Church among the Gentiles. In Christ's earthly life, as Luke has shown in his first volume, the preaching of the Kingdom was greeted with incredulity on the part of His fellow-countrymen. When it ripened into hatred for His message, this incredulity compassed His death. But it was by the death of Christ and His resurrection that the coming of the Kingdom into this world was definitively inaugurated. In Paul's lifetime the preaching of the Kingdom met with this same Jewish incredulity and hatred. Through

this apostolic experience Paul came gradually to comprehend the successive stages in the divine plan for the establishment of the Kingdom. From all eternity God had decreed that Israel's exclusion from the Kingdom through lack of faith should lead to the call of the Gentiles, whose conversion in turn would provoke that of the Jews. Such a scheme of things was necessary in order that Christianity should be liberated from the thrall of Judaism, and by withdrawing herself from the shadow of the Temple should actualize the potentiality for true universalism which was an essential quality of the Kingdom of God.

All of this Luke implies when at the very end of Acts he describes Paul's activity in Rome as a "heralding the Kingdom of God" (Acts 28:31). A few days after his arrival in that city Paul had, in the Jewish assembly, "borne testimony to the Kingdom of God" (Acts 28:23) by trying to persuade them by scriptural arguments about the messianic character of Christ. When he meets with this last refusal, he states that "God's salvation has been sent to the Gentiles" (Acts 28:28). Acts closes with the preaching of the Kingdom to the Gentiles, thus reminding the reader that the divine revelation concerning the coming of the Kingdom, with which the book began, has reached its term.

KINGDOM AND CHURCH IN THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

A brief review of the first Gospel will clarify the relation between the coming of the Kingdom and the founding of the apostolic Church. It will also, in addition to providing a *confirmatur* for Luke's interpretation of the experience of the apostolic Church, throw considerable light upon the purpose of Matthew, who writes at the close of the developments we have been describing.

Like any other Gospel, that of Matthew narrates the story of Jesus' public life culminating in His passion, death, and resurrection. What is peculiar to Matthew's Gospel, however, is a very clearly marked progression in the dramatic movement centering in Jesus' preaching of the Kingdom of Heaven. This proclamation of the Kingdom arouses greater and greater opposition during the Galilean ministry, which reaches its peak in Jesus' refusal to give any sign "except the sign of the prophet Jonas" (Mt 12:38-42), and His terrible warning "to this

wicked generation" that the state of having positively rejected the Kingdom will be worse than their first state of ignorance regarding it (12:43-45). In the sequel Jesus devotes Himself to the instruction of His faithful disciples; apart from certain controversial episodes, He leaves the Jews to themselves. Meantime the Jewish opposition turns to hatred, draws down upon itself the angry fulminations of the seven-fold woe in chapter 23, and achieves its purpose in the passion and death of Jesus.

During this latter part of his Gospel Matthew dwells with increasing insistence upon another theme: to replace the Jews who have rejected the Kingdom, the divine plan calls for the admission of the Gentiles. This motif appears in a series of parables, most of which are found only in this Gospel: the parable of the eleventh hour (20:1-16), of the two sons (21:28-32), of the vineyard (21:33-46),³⁰ of the wedding feast (22:1-14).³¹

Matthew had made use of another device to highlight this presentation of the drama of Jesus' preaching of the Kingdom: five lengthy discourses, artificially constructed from the *logia* of Christ scattered throughout the traditions of the public life, which form a kind of *midrash* on the narrative sections which precede and delineate various aspects of the Kingdom of Heaven.³² The sermon on the mount (5:1-7:29) prepares for the coming of the Kingdom and promulgates its new code. The missionary discourse (10:5-42) contains Jesus' plan for the promotion of the Kingdom amongst the Jews of Palestine. The discourse in parables (13:3-52) portrays the mysterious nature of the Kingdom and explains, in effect, why it is rejected by the Jews, and why during the rest of the story Jesus will content Himself with instructing only His faithful followers. The fourth sermon (18:1-35) is an instruction to the disciples on the mutual duties of the members of the Kingdom. The final discourse (24:3-25:46) contains Christ's

³⁰ Although this parable is common to all the Synoptics, it has a special Matthean conclusion, v. 43: "Thus I declare to you: the Kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a people who will produce its fruits."

³¹ This parable is found in Luke but without the special Matthean note (v. 7) about the slaying of the murderers by the king and the burning of their city, and without the strange addition (vv. 11-14), which would appear to be a warning to the Church's Gentile converts against presuming too much upon their vocation to the Kingdom.

³² Cf. the very illuminating discussion by Pierre Benoit, O.P., in his *Introduction to L'Évangile selon saint Matthieu* (BJ; Paris, 1950), pp. 7-11.

prediction of the end of the world of Israel, the ruin of the Temple, which is presented as the externalization of the coming of the Kingdom in His death and resurrection.

A re-examination of these discourses in the light of Form Criticism reveals another source upon which Matthew had drawn: the experience of the apostolic Church. The recognition of this element in the Matthean picture of the Kingdom of Heaven gives a completely new insight into the purpose of the evangelist. By adding this new dimension to his picture of the Kingdom as preached by Christ, Matthew has set in parallel the experience of the Apostolic Age and that of Jesus' earthly life. This experience of the primitive Church during the thirty years which followed the Master's death has verified what He stated about the coming of the Kingdom. Thus within the description of the coming of the Kingdom we are enabled to discern the figure of the nascent Church.

The sermon on the mount teaches the proper dispositions for the receiving of the Kingdom when it comes, and presents what we might call the "pre-history" of the Kingdom. The beatitudes which form its exordium recall the two great classes of Israel who were types of the subjects of the Kingdom, the *anawim* and the prophets.³³ Christ insists upon the exact observance of the Law of Moses, as He did throughout His earthly career (5:17-20). By this means alone the will of God will be perfectly accomplished, and this is the *conditio sine qua non* for the coming of the Kingdom, as the "Our Father" (6:9-13) shows. Yet the passage which immediately follows the exhortation to observe the old Law promulgates, by a series of six antitheses, the new Law of the Kingdom. It is a code of perfection, but a code which concerns those who live in this world. It outlaws hatred, impurity of mind, divorce, perjury, vengeance; it insists on love of enemies (5:21-48). Like the command to leave to God all care of material needs (6:25), which Acts testifies was carried out in the apostolic *koinōnia*, this new legislation is the charter of the primitive Church. Yet, in this first discourse, which occurs in Matthew's Gospel before the constitution of the apostolic college (10:1-5), the picture of the future Church is only discreetly hinted at. The disciples are to be the prophets of the

³³ A. Lemonnyer, O.P., "Le Messianisme des 'béatitudes,'" *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques*, XI (1922), 373-89.

Kingdom (5:12), a theme which Matthew introduces immediately after the beatitudes; he will refer to it again in three subsequent discourses.³⁴ For the present, until "heaven and earth pass away" (5:18) as a result of Christ's death and resurrection,³⁵ the Kingdom is still in the future.

With the missionary discourse there appears a curious blending of the experiences of the little band of apostles, sent to preach the coming of the Kingdom, with that of the Apostolic Age. The instruction of the newly-chosen Twelve concerns at first only their immediate mission in Galilee (10:5-16). They are forbidden to evangelize pagans or even Samaritans; their message, like that of John the Baptist and Jesus Himself, concerns something still in the future: "The Kingdom of Heaven is near at hand." Abruptly, without warning, the whole setting is shifted (vv. 17-42); the apostles are dragged before "governors and kings" to present the *marturion* (v. 18) to Christ's resurrection described in Acts. Thus there is no longer any question of announcing the coming of the Kingdom: it is now proclaimed as having come through Jesus' death and exaltation. The "coming of the Son of Man," the divine visitation identified with the destruction of Jerusalem, will find the apostles still engaged in this missionary activity.³⁶

This deliberate foreshortening of historical perspective reveals a deep insight on the part of the evangelist. He has perceived that the kerygma of the apostolic Church is a continuation of Jesus' preaching of the Kingdom, although he is aware that the kerygma is centred upon the historical act of man's redemption by which the Kingdom is come upon earth, and is aimed at attracting new members to the community. In short, Matthew has seen that the organization of the Church is an integral part of the coming of the Kingdom.

By the time the instruction in parables is reached in the first Gospel Jesus' preaching has been rejected by the majority of the Jews; in

³⁴ The missionary discourse, Mt 10:41; that in parables, 13:17; that of the seven-fold woes, 23:34.

³⁵ A. Feuillet, P.S.S., "Le discours de Jésus sur la ruine du Temple," *Revue biblique*, LVI (1949), 85, n. 2.

³⁶ A. Feuillet, P.S.S., "Le triomphe eschatologique de Jésus d'après quelques textes isolés des Évangiles," *Nouvelle revue théologique*, LXXI (1949), 704-7.

consequence, the rejection of Israel comes very much to the fore. Matthew cites Is 6:9-10 at greater length than Mark. He includes two parables, not found elsewhere, which bear upon Jewish incredulity—that of the hidden treasure and the pearl of rare value, which insist that entry to the Kingdom entails the sacrifice of everything, even of the Law of Moses. Matthew still has Israel in mind when at the end of the sermon he recalls a personal experience of his own, the riches of the “scribe become a disciple of the Kingdom,” possessing the old as well as the new (v. 52).

Two other properly Matthean parables describe the Kingdom existing in this world as found in the apostolic Church at the date of writing. It contains the wicked as well as the good, “all sorts of things” (13:47), the just with the “promoters of scandals and iniquity” (v. 41). Included in this sermon is the parable of the sower with the explanation of it that was current in the primitive Church. Here we find allusions to the presence within the Kingdom-become-Church of the lukewarm who have been seduced by riches (v. 22) and of the half-hearted who apostatize in time of persecution (v. 21).

The point of departure for the fourth discourse is the disciples' question concerning “the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven” (18:1 ff.). The narrative section preceding this exhortation on the mutual duties of members of the Kingdom has recounted the promise of the primacy to Peter (16:18-19) and the incident of the Temple tax (17:24-27), which proves Peter's privileged position among the Twelve. The lessons which Christ gives are for the community which Peter will shepherd: the dangers of scandal, solicitude for the “lost sheep” (Jesus has already described His own mission in these terms, 17:24-27), fraternal correction (here the word *ekklēsia*, mentioned in the promise of the primacy, again occurs), the spirit of forgiveness (illustrated by a Matthean parable, the two debtors, 18:23-35, which probably concerns relations between Gentile and Jewish Christians). There is an imperceptible transition in this sermon from the real child, present at the beginning, to the humble and simple members of the future Church.

The last discourse, which foretells the end of the world of the Old Testament, dramatically depicts the definitive coming of the Church in the divine visitation of the glorified Christ which terminates the

existence of the Temple. Throughout the greater part of the Apostolic Age, the Christian community still clung to the traditions and cultic practices of Judaism. In this apocalyptic event Matthew sees the vindication of the universality of the new religion. The "*sēmeion* of the Son of Man" (24:30) displayed triumphantly above the devastation of Jerusalem is that *sēmeion* which Isaias foresaw raised up by the Lord for the Gentiles, and for those lost of Israel and the dispersed of Juda (Is 11:12): the Kingdom come as the Church.

Three parables, which seem to reflect the organization of the Church at the time this Gospel was written, are inserted towards the end of the eschatological discourse. All three concern the eschatology of individuals, and thus provide a valuable insight into the Church's realization of the indefinite period of time during which she must exercise her mission before the Parousia of her Lord. The parable of the steward (24:45-51) concerns the particular judgment of the apostles and the other administrators of the Kingdom upon earth; that of the ten virgins, who appear as spouses of Christ (25:1-13), suggests that there are already groups of specially consecrated contemplatives, of whom Tabitha and the widows of Joppa may well be an earlier example (Acts 9:36 ff.); the parable of the talents (Mt 25:14-30) depicts the particular judgment of those who form the body of the faithful. By the time this Gospel was written, therefore, the death of individual Christians before the Parousia was an accepted fact. The doctrine which we saw stated by Paul concerning the unlimited delay of the Lord's second coming is now common to the whole Church.

This eschatological discourse upon the ruin of the Temple performs a double function in the framework of the first Gospel. It serves to introduce the climax of the kerygma, the passion and resurrection narratives; as such, it explains the cosmic effects of the redemption depicted as a passing of the old heavens and the old earth in the creation of the new world. But it sets a term as well to the experience of the apostolic Church which Matthew has also depicted in these five sermons—the experience of the coming of the Kingdom in the Church as a result of the preaching of the Gospel. Matthew composed his Gospel at a period when the whole evolution of primitive Christianity described by Luke in Acts has resulted in a Church, in which pagans have replaced the Jews who have rejected the good

news of salvation. The centre of religious interest has already shifted from Jerusalem to distant Rome, whither Peter and Paul have migrated. As a result the mystery of the establishment of the Kingdom of heaven upon earth has been clarified for the apostolic Church; the entry of the pagans into the Kingdom has taken precedence over that of Israel, and with it the unlimited duration of the life-span of the Church has been recognized.

The purpose of the twofold theme, or rather of a single theme developed on two different historical levels, now becomes clear to us. Matthew has attempted in one volume what Luke has accomplished in two books: to show the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven as realized in the organization of the apostolic Church. He uses the literary scheme of presenting the preaching of Jesus in five great sermons primarily to expose the meaning of the passion and resurrection of Christ: Jesus' proclamation of the coming of the Kingdom fulfils Old Testament prophecy in a way so unexpected by the Jews that they reject Him, and so yield place to the Gentiles. A secondary purpose appears, however, in the references made in these same sermons to the apostolic preaching of the Gospel: the heralding of the Kingdom of God as come definitively upon earth through the principal act of Christ's redemptive work is the principal means of organizing the Church. The apostolic community has perceived, Matthew tells us in effect, that the rebuff met by Jesus in His attempts to convince Israel of the truth of His message is paralleled by the failure of the nascent Church to win over the majority of the Jews to Christianity. In the case of Christ Himself this attitude of Judaism led ultimately to His death; in the case of the apostolic community it led to the establishment of the Church as it existed when Matthew's Greek Gospel was written.

The date of the founding of the Church is a matter of much debate among theologians. Christ is considered by some to have founded it upon the cross; by others, when He rose as the glorified Head of the Mystical Body on the first Easter; by a third group, when He sent the Holy Spirit upon Pentecost. Luke's account of Christian origins in Acts indicates a solution to the problem along quite different lines: the coming of the Kingdom which coincided with the founding of the Church was an evolutionary process extended over a period of time.

Greek Matthew, who constructed his Gospel to underscore this same truth, has carefully marked the beginning and the end of the continuous movement which is the founding of the Church, by means of the first and the last of five great discourses. The *terminus a quo* is the sermon on the mount by which Jesus inaugurates His preaching of the Kingdom: the *terminus ad quem* is the destruction of the Temple, the divine manifestation of the coming of the glorified Son of Man in His Kingdom-become-Church.