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THE BIBLE'S
PHILOSOPHY of HISTORY

A Series of Three Lectures

delivered by

PRINCIPAL JOHN McNICOL, D.D.

at the

Alumni Jubilee Conference

September, 1944

the

50th Anniversary of the Founding

of

The Toronto Bible College



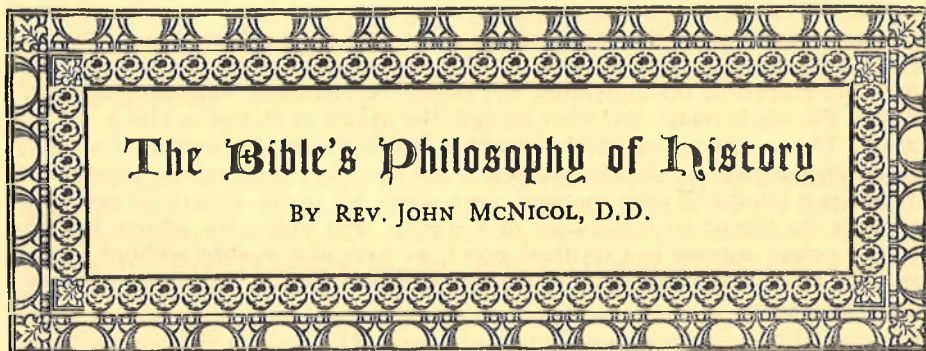
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AT no time in the world's history has the need of a true philosophy of history been more manifest than it is today. Our generation has seen two world wars. They have been of such a nature as to demonstrate the utter failure of the human race. In the present war the modern world-order has gone to pieces. It has collapsed, notwithstanding all its high culture and scientific achievement, because it was unable to prevent the outbreak in its midst of corporate wickedness of a peculiarly demonic character. The fact that the Nazi party, with its open and arrogant defiance of moral principles, could rise into power in Germany in the very heart of European civilization, while the rest of the world simply looked on, has shattered every evolutionary theory of human progress. What then is the meaning of history?

The true answer is to be found only in the sacred Scriptures. In the Bible God has revealed His mind and will regarding the human race and the world in which we live. Here we are told of the beginnings of history; here we are shown God at work through history; and here the end of history is foretold. Here, therefore, we should be able to discover the divine philosophy of history, and the meaning it was intended to have for us.

Let us consider the question in three progressive parts: first, the Old Testament outlook on history; then the New Testament outlook on history; and finally, the place of the Church in history.

PART I. THE OLD TESTAMENT OUTLOOK ON HISTORY

The Bible's Sense of Another World

The Bible differs from all other books in being pervaded by the sense of another world—the unseen world where God is, and out of which He speaks. It is a spiritual world, peopled by spiritual beings, who appear again and again in the pages of the Scriptures. While this is true of the Bible as a whole, it is especially true of the New Testament. There we read that the outlook of the Christian Church was upon "the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4: 18). The visible world belongs to time, and time is always passing away. But the invisible world belongs to the eternal order, and that abides. Behind this material world of man's abode lies the unseen spiritual world of ultimate reality.

Even scientific thought, when logically followed, leads to the same conclusion, as Prof. Piper points out in his recent book, "God in History." "There is practically no phenomenon in this world," he declares, "which can be satisfactorily explained without the assumption that such a world exists. What we call the Ego or the soul, for example, belongs to that world. It is a power which determines the direction and achievements of the individual, but cannot be identified with any part of the body or the whole body. But what we call 'the nature of things' is also a spiritual nature. The fact that the seed of a plant always grows into a specimen of the same species may depend on the chromosomes; but that the chromosomes possess such properties is not due to their chemical composition but to the 'generic power' which regulates the life of all individuals of a species. But unless we assume that this 'generic power' subsists in a spiritual world, we have only a word without a meaning. The metaphysical weakness of modern science is the direct outcome of its lack of higher realism."

The Beginnings of Mankind

The opening chapters of the Old Testament, which tell of the beginnings of the human race, take us to the borders of that world. They have a peculiarly pictorial character. They reflect a condition of life in which man had a fellowship with God that was open and direct. This fellowship was of a different kind from the spiritual communion which we now know. It was on a different plane, the plane of a supra-sensible world, where the material and the spiritual were equally real, where God and man could meet together. Such a condition of life is utterly beyond our present experience, and this accounts for the pictorial form of the narrative. In our fallen state we have no faculty for comprehending it, and there was no other way in which it could be represented to us. What the story of these three chapters means is, that in his original state man had free access to the spiritual world where God is, and that he lost it by the Fall.

The picture of our first parents being driven out of the Garden of Eden represents their expulsion from that spiritual world. Their fall was not only a fall into sin: it was a fall out of a higher world. Since then man has had no access there. The way to God, and to the world where God is, is barred. Man is not only unable to enter that world; he can no longer see it. It is utterly unknown to the natural man. From this point of view we get light on the meaning of redemption. It is God's provision for man's return to fellowship with Himself by removing the barrier of sin and thus restoring access to the world which man was created to dwell in. It means making a way for man to come back home to God.

The Homelessness of the Patriarchs

Coming down to the age of the patriarchs, we find that they had a sense of homelessness in this world and were longing for the other world. This is the way their experiences are explained by the inspired writer of Hebrews (Heb. 11: 8-16). They confessed themselves to be "strangers and pilgrims on the earth." Abraham left Ur of the Chaldees, where, recent archeology has discovered, the civilization of this world had been developed to a very high point. He took this step because of an urge for the unseen spiritual world: "For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." This was the real significance of his call. The earthly land of Canaan was not the final object of God's promise to him, but only the frame in which it was set; and Abraham knew this. He dwelt in the land only as a sojourner. He was being trained in faith, and so was learning that the promise of God went far beyond any material possession.

Isaac and Jacob shared Abraham's hope, and showed the same patience of faith. There is a striking illustration of this at the end of Jacob's life. As he was

forecasting the future career of his sons and the earthly destiny of their descendants, he paused in the midst of it all and uttered this ejaculation: "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord" (Gen. 48: 18). Above and beyond all the earthly and material blessings he was describing, which belonged to this world alone, the heart of the aged patriarch was set on something else. His hope reached out to another world altogether different.

Israel's Peculiar Place in History

The nation of Israel, which Jacob's family founded, occupied a peculiar place among the nations of the world, and it had a different kind of history from theirs. The other nations were suffered to walk in their own ways and to develop their own natural characteristics (Acts 14: 16), but Israel was separated from them to become the covenant people of God. The primitive knowledge of God with which the human race began became gradually obscured and perverted as men turned away from "the invisible things of Him" and became more and more occupied with the visible things of the material world. As the nations developed down the course of history, they lost the conception of an invisible spiritual world where God is, and they drifted away from Him into materialistic conceptions of the Deity and into gross idolatry. This is Paul's explanation of the course of human history and the state of the pagan world (Rom. 1: 20-23).

Israel's special function among the nations as the Lord's covenant people was to bear witness to Him as the true God by the way they worshipped Him. The Mosaic tabernacle, where their worship was carried on, was so constructed as to be a shadow of the unseen heavenly world. Moses was commanded to make it according to the pattern that was shown him in the Mount (Heb. 8: 5). In order to fulfil this function the more effectively, Israel was placed in the land of Canaan, which was on the cross-roads of the ancient world. There the people were to live out their national life in the midst of the nations, not by developing a civilization of their own as the other nations were left to do, but by carrying out the will of God as revealed in the Moral Law given to them at Mount Sinai and in the social and economic system that was based upon it.

For this reason the Israelites were given no king of their own such as the other nations had, for they were to look to God as their King. This was the significance of the discipline they were put through in the days of the Judges. They were being trained in the obedience of faith. It was the divine purpose to teach them that their national life depended upon a moral and spiritual order administered by their invisible King. But Israel grew weary of this discipline of faith-it was so different from the way the other nations were ruled-and they came to Samuel demanding a king whom they could see, "like all the nations" (1 Sam. 8: 4-5).

The misgovernment of Samuel's sons was the occasion for this request, but its real cause lay deeper. "They have not rejected thee," said the Lord to Samuel, "but they have rejected me, that I should not be King over them." It was not that they had denied the Lord their God, but that they had rejected His invisible Kingship. It was the beginning of Israel's "falling away" (cf. 2 Thess. 2: 3). It was the first step in the nation's departure from its proper and peculiar function of bearing witness to the invisible rule of God in the world. It ultimately led, after some centuries of continued backsliding, to gross idolatry and to the tragic judgments of the captivities.

The Divine Intervention in Israel

God met the request of the people, first by giving them a king of the kind they wanted, a magnificent specimen of a man, who had many attractive qualities.

Saul's reign had a good beginning, but he carried it on after that by his own self will and did not seek the will of God. He failed to maintain Israel's special witness in the world. Then God interposed by raising up a king of His own choosing—"a man after His own heart"—who would do all His will (1 Sam. 13: 14; Acts 13: 22). David sought the will of God. He began his reign by consulting God as to what he should do (2 Sam. 2: 1; 5: 19, 23), and thus he showed his true character. Although he made many mistakes afterwards and sinned grievously, yet he established his throne in the will of God. This was the general character of his reign, and it was the essential and significant difference between his reign and that of Saul. David's throne bore witness to the rule of the invisible King, and it was thus a type of the heavenly throne.

It is only in the light of this feature of David's reign that we can understand the true nature of the special promise that God gave to him. A Son of his own house was to be raised up in whom his throne should be established for ever (2 Sam. 7: 12-13; 1 Chron. 17: 11-14). This promise made a profound impression upon the king, as is shown by the adoring prayer he offered immediately afterwards. Evidently he saw that it meant something far more than that his royal seat in Jerusalem should be occupied in perpetuity by one of his line and that his earthly kingdom should last forever. It had to do with the redemption of the race, which had been promised ever since the fall of Adam. The Redeemer was to come of David's house and family. He was to continue the order of things which David had begun and make it everlasting. He was to establish the will of God among men.

This promise is the germ of all the subsequent Messianic prophecies, which looked forward to the Kingdom of God. The Apostle Peter declared, in his sermon on the Day of Pentecost, that it had its initial fulfilment in the resurrection of Jesus Christ and His exaltation to the right hand of God in heaven (Acts 2: 30-31). The throne of David, therefore, belongs to the unseen world-order. It is the throne from which the will of God is administered and the Messianic Kingdom is governed. It is the centre of that spiritual world of ultimate reality from which all power in heaven and earth proceed-s (Matt. 28: 18).

The Satanic Perversion of the Nations

While the Old Testament reveals God's purpose with Israel as coming to a head in the Kingdom promised to David, it has also something to say about the way the other nations developed. Gentile kingdoms appear from time to time on the stage of Old Testament history, as it moves down the ages from the story of Babel in Genesis to the world kingdoms of the Book of Daniel. They are all marked by the same characteristics. They are described as founded on organized rebellion against God and as built up by human pride and self-will. Each of them produces a civilization of its own, which magnifies man, and develops certain qualities of his fallen nature without any reference to the will of God.

While God's purpose of redemption for mankind was being carried out through Israel and was manifested in the kingdom of David, a perversion of the race was going on at the same time, and this was manifested in these other kingdoms. A power hostile to God was at work among the nations around Israel. It was in accordance with this Old Testament view of history that Jesus spoke of Satan again and again as "the prince of this world" (John 12: 31; 14: 31; 16: 11). Paul referred to "the course of this world" as being under "the prince of the power of the air" (Eph. 2: 2). Here we reach the point of view which characterizes the whole Bible in its outlook upon world history. It is only in this light that the events of our own day become intelligible.

The Judgment of God Upon the Nations

The Hebrew prophets, who understood history aright, saw a two-fold process in it. On the one hand they taught that God was holding the nations to account for the way they exercised their rule. All the evils in the world were due to their forgetfulness of Him. There would be a day of judgment for the nations. God would bring down all world systems built, on the pride of human achievements. "There shall be a day of the Lord of hosts", declared Isaiah, "upon all that is proud and haughty, and upon all that is lifted up; and it shall be brought low: And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down and the haughtiness of men shall be brought low: and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day" (Isa. 2: 12, 17). "The great day of the Lord is near", was the warning of Zephaniah. "That day is a day of wrath And I will bring distress upon men" (Zeph. 1: 14-17). We are learning the meaning of these Old Testament prophecies today.

God exercised His judgment upon nations in the course of history. He used wars for this purpose. "When thy judgments are in the earth", said Isaiah, "the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness" (26: 9). This prophet had a clear view of the unseen forces that operate behind all world history. He had seen the Lord "sitting on a throne, high and lifted up" (6: 2). All nations before Him were as nothing, and He used them for His purposes, permitting some powerful nation to rise up and make war upon other nations for the ends of His moral government, and then overthrowing it when His work with it was done. This He did with Assyria. He used that mighty and cruel empire as His instrument for the chastisement of His own chosen people because of their persistent national sin and backsliding. "Ho Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, the staff in whose hand is mine indignation" (10: 5). But when the axe boasted itself against the hand that wielded it (10: 15), when the human instrument dared to defy "the Holy One of Israel" -then hear the prophet's message: "Wherefore it shall come to pass, that when the Lord hath performed his whole work upon Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the King of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks" (10: 12). This was God's method of judgment, as the Moral Governor of the world. The destiny of the nations in history depended upon their relation to Him, and not upon their mighty armies or upon any material and visible power. The arrogant Assyrian found that the God whom he had defied before the walls of Jerusalem had command of unseen forces before which his own proud host was helpless. The God of Israel, who used these methods of judgment in those old days, is still the Moral Governor of the world.

The Kingdom of God in the World

The prophets also taught that God's purpose in these judgments upon the nations was the ultimate establishment of His own kingdom in the world. This kingdom, they declared, would be an ideal state of human society in which not only Israel, but also all the nations, should share. It would be a kingdom of righteousness and peace. Righteousness would be its fundamental feature, and peace would be the result. "The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and confidence for ever" (Isa. 32: 17). This meant that the foundations of the kingdom of peace were to be laid first, and they were to be laid in the moral and spiritual order.

This spiritual and heavenly order is foreshadowed by the Old Testament prophets. It is implied in Isaiah's statement, in describing the Messianic Kingdom, that "the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills" (Isa. 2: 2). The prophet may not have seen the ultimate significance of the words he was inspired to use, but the

phrases, "in the top of the mountains", and, "above the hills", point to something above the plane of this present visible earthly world. There are other foregleams of the same kind in his prophecies. He tells of a time that was to come when men should see a world that was then hidden from their view. God would destroy "the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations" (25: 7); and men should behold "the land that is very far off", or as the R.V. has it, "the land that reacheth afar" (33: 17).

All this shows that the real significance of the Messianic Kingdom to which the prophets pointed forward lay in the fact that it would open up again that unseen spiritual world where God is to be found and which was lost to mankind by the Fall. Isaiah declared that the government of this Kingdom was to be exercised from "the throne of David" (Isa. 9: 7). We have already seen that this throne is now established in heaven, and that it is occupied by the risen and exalted Lord Jesus Christ. He ascended that throne when He was taken up from the disciples on the Mount of Olives and disappeared behind the veil of the cloud that hid Him from their sight. On the heavenly side of that cloud, as they stood gazing upward, took place the enthronement and coronation of the Son of Man. This leads us on into the New Testament.

PART n.-THE NEW TESTAMENT OUTLOOK ON HISTORY

The Fulness of the Time

The idea that "the fulness of the time" had arrived runs through the whole New Testament. The first note in the preaching of Jesus was, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand" (Mark 1:14). The Apostle Paul declared that God sent forth His Son, "when the fulness of the time came" (Gal. 4:4); and again, that Christ died for the ungodly, "in due season" (Rom. 5:6). The Epistle to the Hebrews speaks of Christ as having appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, "at the end of the ages" (9:26, R.V.).

When the Lord Jesus Christ appeared in the world, history had come to a climax. The historical development of the race had reached a point beyond which it could not go. No entirely new principle has been introduced into human civilization since that time. All that has occurred in the way of apparent progress has consisted in changes in the way existing principles have been manifested. This may be seen in the case of the three universal institutions which had reached their culmination at the time of the New Testament. In Jewish religion, the worship of one personal God had been established and widely spread through the Jews of the Dispersion, and along with that went the publication of the Moral Law. In Greek culture, the highest development of human genius had been reached in literature, philosophy, and art, and all western civilization is based upon it. In Roman law, the elemental principles of human justice had been expressed and embodied, and all modern jurisprudence is founded upon it.

But notwithstanding all these achievements, mankind was left frustrated and helpless. The general result was a universal sense of dissatisfaction. The human race had exhausted its powers. The world had come to the end of itself, and there was a deep yearning for something beyond. That which alone could satisfy the heart of humanity, whatever it might be, still lay out of reach.

The Significance of the Incarnation

Then Jesus Christ came. He came as the Head of a new creation. The voice that issued from the throne at the end of the Book of Revelation marks the essential nature of all Christ's work: "Behold, I make all things new" (21:5). Paul describes the effect of the Gospel in the lives of men as being of this nature: "If any man be in Christ," he told the Corinthians, "he is a new creature", or literally, "there is a new creation" (2 Cor. 5:17). The Incarnation was a completely new event in history, and it meant a new beginning in the world. In Jesus Christ, God came down among men and incorporated Himself in the human race. He did this, as Paul points out, for the purpose of "reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them" (2 Cor. 5:19). That is, Christ came to deal with the existence of sin in the human race—that great barrier which had separated man from God ever since the fall of Adam.

But Christ's work in bringing men back to God involved more than the removal of sin. It meant introducing men into a new world, the world where God is. The Gospel is not a convenience for enabling us to live on respectably in the old world, being conformed to its spirit but not sinking into its sin. It ushers us into another sphere of life and another way of living. By His work on earth—His righteous life, atoning death, and triumphant resurrection—the Lord Jesus Christ made a new kind of life possible and available for men. It is a different kind of life altogether from that of this present world. It does not belong to

this world; it is lived on another plane. Jesus stated that fact again and again during His farewell discourse to the disciples in the upper room. "If ye were of the world," He said, "the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you ... In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." (John 15: 18-19; 16: 33.) And in His high-priestly prayer later on that night, He referred to His disciples in these words: "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (John 17: 16).

What Happened at Pentecost

The disciples did not understand what this meant at the time, but they came to realize it after Pentecost. On that day a new stream of life entered the lives of the followers of Jesus—a life that came from above. Something happened which delivered them "out of this present evil world" (Gal. 1: 4), and translated them "into the kingdom of God's dear Son" (Col. 1: 13). This is manifest in the experiences that followed the event. A new set of spiritual forces had come into operation. These were the powers of the new creation which Christ had brought into being by His redemptive work. The disciples now found themselves in the midst of it and were reacting to it.

The nature of the change that came upon them at Pentecost was not an exuberance of joy in the fact that their Master was alive again. This element was in it, of course, but they had known that fact ever since His resurrection. It was not due to the assurance that He was now in heaven, for they had seen Him taken up ten days before. Nor was it due to a rising conviction that they should try to follow their Master's example and bring His teaching to bear upon the world around them, for they did not set out to do that. It was something quite different from all these things which took possession of them that day. It was an overwhelming consciousness that their living and glorified Lord was among them. Their lives were charged with a sense of His spiritual presence. He had become for them the one great living reality. They found themselves belonging to the world into which He had gone.

They looked upon this present world now from an entirely new point of view. They were members of a new order of being, whose seat and centre were in another world, and whose living springs were there in the glorified Person of their Lord. They were bound together in a new kind of fellowship. They had all things common, not because they entertained some socialistic ideas about community of goods, but because their hearts were flooded with the love of Christ. They were fulfilling the Law without thinking of it—in the same way as He had fulfilled it. This kind of life did not grow out of the old order of life by a natural process of development. It had not come into being because the disciples were practising the principles of Jesus or following His example. Instead of that, they were reproducing His life in the power of a new creation.

The first effect produced upon the community around them was one of surprise and awe—"fear came upon every soul" (Acts 2: 43). This was occasioned, as the context indicates, not so much by the apostolic miracles, which are mentioned afterwards, as by the nature of the change which Pentecost had wrought in the disciples of the Lord and their first Christian converts. It was manifest that strange new powers were at work among them, powers that were not of this world. Another order of life had broken in upon the course of this world's life and had produced this new thing. As the community became more accustomed to the presence of the new order of things in its midst and more familiar with its char-

acteristics, this first sense of awe passed away; and it was not long before a spirit of bitter hostility took its place. So far from adopting the principles of life manifested by that first Christian group, the world came to recognize in *the* new order something alien to itself. Then the disciples understood the meaning of the warning that the Lord had given them about their relation to the world.

The Opening of the Kingdom of Heaven

The significance of all this lies in the fact that the Kingdom of God, which the Old Testament prophets had announced and Jesus had come to establish in the world, had been opened on the Day of Pentecost and the disciples had been received into it. Peter had been promised "the keys of the kingdom of heaven" when he made his great confession of the Divine origin of his Master (Matt. 16: 19), and in his sermon that day he had used them. When he answered the anxious question of the people, who had been convicted by the first part of his address, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" and went on to proclaim the Gospel to them—"Repent, and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2: 37-38)—he thereby opened the doors of the Kingdom to men, and some three thousand at once entered in.

The Kingdom had been announced as at hand by John the Baptist; and Jesus began His ministry with the same message: "Repent; ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3: 2; 4: 17). It was "at hand" then—only three short years away—but it was not yet ready. It could not be made ready for men until Jesus had accomplished His work on earth and laid its foundations. It was necessary that the Kingdom of God should be founded deep in the unseen and abiding realities, and this could be accomplished only by the way of the Cross. Human nature itself must first be changed at its roots and its whole course and tendency must be reversed. Jesus had to create human nature anew before men could enter His Kingdom.

The kingdoms of the world were founded on the self-will of man's old nature; and they were characterized by self-assertion and maintained by force. The Kingdom of God must be founded on God's will, and it was to be characterized by man's self-abnegation and maintained by the Spirit of God. "Not by an army, not by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts" (Zech. 4: 6, marg.). Jesus struck the keynote in the opening words of His sermon on the mount: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5: 3). This was entirely new, and it was contrary to all the old ideas of men. It was quite alien to the spirit of this world.

In His teaching about the Kingdom Jesus always presented it as something which men had to enter, not as something which He expected them to establish by reforming the kingdoms of this world. The Kingdom of God was essentially a supernatural order, the founding of which was His work alone, and entrance into it could be obtained only by a radical change in man. This was so great a change that Jesus described it as a new beginning of life—a new birth.

On one occasion the Pharisees asked Him when the Kingdom of God was coming, and He replied that it was not coming "with observation",—there would be no outward signs of worldly splendour about it,—"for 10", He went on to say, "the kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17: 21). What He meant was "among you", or as the R.V. margin has it, "in the midst of you". He was speaking to the Pharisees and could not have meant that the "Kingdom of God was within them in the sense of being in their hearts. He was referring to Himself and His presence

among them. In the kind of life He was living they could see, if they would, the powers and principles of the Kingdom already in action. In the earthly life of Jesus, human nature was being created anew in preparation for the founding of the Kingdom by the way of the Cross.

The Nature of the Kingdom

In the course of His ministry, Jesus went on to describe and illustrate the Kingdom in a great variety of ways. In His sermon of parables by the lake He explained what He called, "the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 13: 11). What He meant by this phrase was its inner nature; and this was something that could not be discovered by human effort and required a divine revelation to make it known. In these and other parables of the same group, Jesus set forth the Kingdom as a new order of things breaking into world history. It would not be built out of the old world-order, but would have a secret, self-propagating power of its own, like good seed sown in a field. It would develop an organized system of its own from a very obscure origin, as when a grain of mustard seed grows into a mustard tree. Its very presence in the world would cause reactions. It would be imitated and counterfeited by systems alien to it, like tares growing up in a field of wheat. It would start hidden movements under the surface of world society, pervading and disturbing it, like leaven working in a mass of meal.

All these features in our Lord's account of His Kingdom meant that its powers and principles were to belong to another order of life from that of this present world, and that the impact which it would make upon this world would be due to that fact alone. "My kingdom is not of this world", said Jesus to Pilate (John 18: 36), who knew nothing of any other kind of kingdom or any other kind of life. The Kingdom which Jesus came to establish was fundamentally a "kingdom of heaven". It belonged primarily to the heavenly world where God is and from which Jesus came, and it would operate upon the life of this world from the Godward side of the veil.

These parables of "the mysteries of the kingdom" also show that the new order which Jesus was to introduce into the world would not take the place of the present earthly order, but would run side by side with it down the course of human history until "the end of the world"-literally, until "the consummation of the age" (Matt. 13: 20, 29). It would be essentially a spiritual order with its springs in the unseen, but operating within the framework of the material and visible order, and producing a certain effect upon it.

Such was the Kingdom as Jesus proclaimed it. It was this Kingdom that the Jews missed when they rejected Jesus. They were looking for an earthly and material kingdom belonging entirely to this present world-order (Matt. 21: 43). It was this kingdom that Jesus promised to His own disciples when He said: "Fear not, little flock: for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12: 32). And now they had been ushered into it on the Day of Pentecost by the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit. They had been born again into another world. This was the new birth which, Jesus had told Nicodemus, was the only way of entrance into the Kingdom (John 3: 3-5). This supernatural work of the Spirit was the baptism which Jesus commanded the disciples to wait for when He left them at His ascension (Acts 1: 4-5).

The Preaching of the Kingdom

In the Epistles of Paul we find the Kingdom described as the sphere of the Holy Spirit's operations and distinguished from the sphere where earthly and physical functions operate (Rom. 14: 17). Paul regarded believers in Christ as

belonging to the heavenly world where Christ is enthroned (Eph. 1: 3; 2: 6; Phil. 3: 20; Col. 3: 1-3), and he identified this with the Kingdom (Col. 1: 13). He regarded "preaching the kingdom" and "testifying the Gospel of the grace of God" as one and the same thing, for he used these phrases interchangeably (Acts 20: 24-25). The Book of Acts closes by describing Paul's evangelizing work in Rome during his imprisonment there as, "preaching the kingdom and teaching the things regarding the Lord Jesus Christ" (28: 31).

It is obvious, therefore, that the New Testament regards the preaching of the Gospel as the means of propagating the Kingdom. The growth of the Kingdom in the world is taking place as the Gospel is being spread abroad in the world. But this is a hidden process, and it is not accompanied by any open and visible manifestation of the triumph of the Kingdom. The Kingdom of God is not coming "with observation". The evangelizing of the world is not resulting in the conversion of the world.

The New Testament gives no indication that the conversion of the world was to be expected. Only one part of the good seed in the parable came to fruition. The wheat and the tares were both to grow together in the same field until the harvest. Jesus warned His disciples that when they went out into the world their message would not meet with universal acceptance. He told them that the result, of His own presence in the world would cause such a division among men that it would cut asunder even the closest domestic ties (Matt. 10: 34-36). The gradual conversion of the world, therefore, by means of the Gospel is not the New Testament outlook.

What the New Testament does indicate, however, is that the preaching of the Gospel is preparing the world for a crisis, and that the triumph of the Kingdom will come in that way. This crisis is likened to a harvest, which will take place when such movements as are represented by the growth of the wheat and the tares reach their maturity, or when the impact of the Kingdom upon world society has reached the point represented by the leaven in the meal permeating the whole lump. This will happen when the work of evangelizing the world has reached a certain point of completeness.

In the whole course of His reply to the question the disciples asked of Jesus on the Mount of Olives,—"What shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the world?"—He mentioned only one thing as marking the time of that event"; "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all the nations: and then shall the end come" (Matt. 24: 3, 14). We have no means of determining to what extent the Gospel must be preached to make its witness extend to all the nations in the world, but the "end" is always associated with the return of the Lord. It is clear, therefore, that He intended this work to be continued till that event takes place.

The Consummation of the Age

The second coming of Christ, then, marks the final crisis and will bring the Kingdom to a triumphant manifestation. This event is the real New Testament outlook. It filled the horizon of the Apostolic Church. The Apostles told their converts to "wait" for the coming of the Lord, and all the New Testament churches have this expectant attitude. But the event is never described in any specific way.

When the Apostles saw Jesus ascend from the Mount of Olives they were told by the two men that stood there in white apparel, who were probably the same two men that stood with Him on the Mount of Transfiguration (Luke 9: 30),

that He should "so come in like manner" as they had seen Him go into heaven (Acts 1: 11). This did not mean that He would come back again to this earthly plane of life, for He had not been living on the earthly plane since His resurrection, and it was not in that manner they had seen Him go. What it did mean was, that as He had disappeared behind the veil of the heavenly world, so some day He would appear from behind that veil again. This He would do when the task He left with His disciples was fully carried out, and they had been HIS Witnesses "unto the uttermost part of the earth."

The New Testament writers do not represent the Lord's appearing in terms of this world-order, as though He were coming to reign on earth in the same material way and with the same material power as characterize the present order of world rule. In their attitude toward His coming, the early Christians were not merely looking into the future along the level of time and of human history. They were standing face to face with the heavenly order and were looking into the unseen. The event lay in the future, of course, but its springs were not there. These lay in the world of eternal realities where their Master was now enthroned. He would come "in the clouds of heaven," releasing new powers from that heavenly world in another Divine intervention, and carrying His redeeming purpose to *its* goal.

When He came the first time He did something which made redemption an eternal fact, and brought the Kingdom of Heaven into being as a real spiritual order. When He comes the second *time* He will do something that will carry the spiritual order triumphant into the material order. Then the invisible Kingdom which the Gospel proclaims will come in visible manifestation on the stage of human history. Then the kingdoms of this world will become the Kingdom of our Lord and His Christ. Then the holy city, New Jerusalem, will come down out of heaven from God, "and they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it" (Rev. 21: 26). But how this will take concrete shape in history we are not told, and it is folly to go beyond what is written and speculate about it.

The Judgment of the World

One thing, however, is clearly involved as the crowning issue of the Second Advent. The present stage of human history will be closed, and the race will be called to its account. During His earthly ministry Jesus spoke again and again of a coming judgment for the world, and declared that this judgment would be executed by Himself, for the Father had given Him that authority (John 5: 22, 27). The Apostle Paul told his cultured and sophisticated audience in Athens that God had appointed a day, "in which He will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom He hath ordained" (Acts 17: 31). A symbolic forecast of this judgment is given in that sublime scene in which Jesus represents the Son of Man as sitting on "the throne of His glory" with all mankind before Him (Matt. 25: 31). This is not to be taken altogether as a separate and isolated event, but rather as the consummation of a process of judgment which He is administering throughout the present age. What it signifies is that He Himself is the key to the meaning of human history.

In the Book of Revelation the Lord is seen on the throne of His glory. There the veil of the heavenly world is drawn aside and the exalted Christ is revealed. He is revealed as "the Lamb in the midst of the throne," taking His place there immediately after His triumph on the Cross (5: 5-6). Here we are shown the heavenly side of the Ascension. This is the point of time from which the whole Revelation proceeds. From that point onward the book gives a prophetic view

of world history, unfolded in a progressive series of symbolic visions, and seen from the heavenly side. It reveals the change that took place in heaven when the Son of God returned from His great descent to the Cross, and all power was given unto Him in heaven and on earth. It also traces the consequent results that have been taken place on earth since then. It reveals the significance of the Cross in human history.

Here, therefore, we see world history in a true light. Here is depicted a tremendous conflict between the self-will of man, inspired by Satan, and the will of God, administered by the enthroned Son of Man. We are shown the unfolding procedure of judgment, as His reign *goes* on, which Paul tells us must last till He has *put* all His enemies under His feet (1 Cor. 15: 25-26). In the course of it the kingdoms of the world become "the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ" (Rev. 11: 15). And at last the whole Revelation comes to a head, when all its judgments are finished, in a new heaven and a new earth (21: 1). This is the end of history as the New Testament sees it, Peter, too, points forward to the same consummation in his Second Epistle (3: 10-13). He uses vivid symbolic language, taken from the Old Testament prophets, which means that the present world-order is to be dissolved in a universal convulsion, and that a new world order is to take its place in which righteousness at last will prevail.

In the meantime, "the marriage of the Lamb" has come (Rev. 17: 7). The Church, which was given the task of witnessing for Christ throughout the age and has shared the conflict with Him, is taken to share His throne (3: 21). This is the "blessed hope" for which Paul says we are to look (Tit. 2: 13), and it leads us to consider next the place which the Church occupies in history.

PART III. THE PLACE OF THE CHURCH IN HISTORY

How the Church Began

The Christian Church made *its* appearance on the stage of human history at Pentecost. It was brought into being by the supernatural event which took place that day. The descent of the Holy Spirit upon the *disciples* of Jesus brought them into vital union with *His* exalted Person, and thus His Church was created. It was a new community, composed of people who recognized Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Lord and were bound together in a common fellowship around *Him*.

The primitive Church had no outward organization to begin with. The first Christians were Jews, and they continued to take part in the Temple services and attend the synagogue like other devout Jews. They had no idea of abandoning their Jewish form of worship or changing their religion. Their break with Judaism did not occur until some time afterwards, when persecution arose and drove them out. The distinctive thing about them was the nature of their companionship. They met together in private houses, breaking bread in memory of their risen and ascended Lord, attending upon the teaching of the Apostles, joining in acts of prayer and worship, and manifesting a spirit of unity and love that was radiant with joy. The early Church was a simple fellowship, with a new principle at its heart and a Divine element in its *midst*.

The elaborate ecclesiastical system of order and worship which marked the Church of later times grew out of this fellowship, but it was not the significant thing in the Church. The significant thing was the new vital force which had entered the world at Pentecost and was operating in and through the Church. Even church buildings were unknown until the third century. In the meantime the Christian faith had spread throughout the whole Roman Empire under the surface of its society. In the middle of the second century Justin Martyr could write: "There is not one single race of men, whether barbarians or Greeks, or whatever they may be called, nomads or vagrants, or herdsmen living in tents, among whom prayers and giving of thanks are not offered through the name of the crucified Jesus." This growth had taken place without any systematic effort on the part of the Church, and in spite of the Empire's repeated attempts to destroy it. It was manifest evidence of the Divine nature of the Church, and of the sheer vitality of the new movement in the world which it represented.

The essential feature in the Christian Church, as *it* first appears in history, was the presence of the Holy Spirit in its corporate life. It was a heavenly organism in an earthly framework. Its function was to bear witness to the Kingdom of Heaven which was no longer merely "at hand", but was now ready and open for men to enter. The Church was not identical with the Kingdom, but *it* was the earthly *side* of *it*. It grew in numbers as the Gospel of the Kingdom was proclaimed and as witness was borne to the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus the Church entered world history as the representative of the new spiritual order which Christ had created by His redemptive work on earth and which has its seat and centre in Heaven.

The Continuation of the Incarnation

In the Epistles of Paul we find the Church regarded as the Body of Christ. The Apostle presents this idea most fully in the *Epistle* to the Ephesians, which has been described as "one of the divinest compositions of man." Its tone is the most exalted of all the Epistles and its outlook the most sublime. At the end of the first

chapter, in a transcendent passage, Paul tells of the power which God wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and exalted Him to the highest place in Heaven; and then he declares that God put Him there that He might be "the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all". In the fourth chapter he gives a list of the spiritual gifts with which Christ endowed His Church and the various offices through which they were to function; and he describes these as all having one purpose- "the building up of the body of Christ." This figure of the body means that, in its essential nature, the Church belongs to the same world where Christ is, the spiritual or heavenly world, and that it derives its life and unity from Him.

When Jesus first announced the formation of His Church, He declared that He would found it upon His own Person. This is the meaning of His statement: "Upon this rock I will build my church" (Matt. 16:18). The title "rock" is used again and again of the Lord God in the Old Testament, but never of a man. The main theme of the whole conversation in which Jesus made this statement, and which was introduced by Himself, was the nature of His own Person; and it would break the course of His argument to refer "this rock" to Peter, or even to the doctrine of His own deity which Peter had just confessed. The Church is not founded upon a doctrinal creed, - although it necessarily involves a creed, - nor upon the person and work of any man. It has no other foundation than Jesus Christ Himself. It is the one means He has of expressing Himself in the world. As the soul of a man is revealed through his body, so the soul of the Church is Jesus Christ Himself.

The process of building up the Church goes on as the Gospel is preached and believers are united with Christ. This is the special work of the Holy Spirit, the continuation of the work which He began at Pentecost. "As the body is one," wrote Paul to the Corinthians, "and hath many members ... so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body" (1 Cor. 12:12-13). The Apostle is referring here, not to the rite of water baptism, but to the special operation of the Holy Spirit in regeneration. Baptism by the Spirit is the transcendent and supernatural operation that goes on at the heart of the new creation as the Gospel spreads throughout the world. It has been going on ever since the Spirit was poured out on the Day of Pentecost. It means that Christ Himself is born again in every new believer. It is thus that believers are being added to the Lord and the Body of Christ is being built up. It is not untrue, therefore, to say that, in one sense, the Church is the extension in the world of the Incarnation.

The Church Invisible

In this sense, however, the Church has no visible manifestation in the world. It does not appear as such on the open stage of history. It lies behind organized Christianity and belongs to the unseen world. It has real existence, however, for it comprises all who are truly united with Christ and have been received into His Kingdom. It is only in this sense that we can speak of the Catholic or Universal Church. "Wherever Jesus Christ is," said Ignatius early in the second century, "there is the Catholic Church". A statement issued in the course of the present ecumenical movement of the churches defines it as follows: "As there is but one Christ, and one life in Him, and one Holy Spirit who guides into all truth, so there is and can be but one Church, holy Catholic, and Apostolic." This alone can be the true Church in the original New Testament sense.

The invisible Church is the Church as seen from Heaven, and it includes the saints of all the ages. The writer of Hebrews calls it, "the general assembly and

church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven" (12:23, R.V.). It has been described in a recent book, "A Preface to Christian Theology," by an outstanding evangelical scholar, in these terms: "The great group of people, dead as well as living, belonging to every class and race and nationality, residing in every land and clime, members of all existing empirical churches and of none, who have believed in God through Jesus Christ and are members of the Body of Christ." The various organized systems of Christianity are but partial and earthly aspects of this true Church. As the same writer goes on to say: "Such churchly reality as any Christian group may possess is due to the measure of its participation in this one Holy Catholic Church."

This means that the spiritual influence which any organized Christian group exerts upon the world at anyone time depends upon the degree in which its corporate life is united with Christ and shares in the life of His spiritual Body. This is something, however, for which there are no human tests, and we have no means of determining it. The one Holy Catholic Church exerts its influence upon the world through the various organized churches, and it is with these that we have to deal in considering the place of the Church in history.

The invisible Church, considered in itself as the Body of Christ, transcends history and looks out beyond it. Paul presents us with a sublime conception of God's ultimate purpose with the Church. It is His good pleasure, says the Apostle, in a dispensation of the fulness of time, to "gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth" (Eph. 1:10). The message of reconciliation, that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself", which He has committed to the Church (2 Cor. 5:19), has in view the ultimate reconciling of the whole universe to God (Col. 1:20). The whole creation is to be brought into "the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Rom. 8:21), and the Church is to be presented to Christ "a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing" (Eph. 5:27). But all this takes us into "the ages to come" beyond history altogether (Eph. 2:7).

The Church Visible

As it is seen in the world today, the Church means organized Christianity. It denotes the sum total of all Christian groups in every part of the globe who profess a common loyalty to Jesus Christ. In this sense it has to be distinguished from the actual spiritual body of Christ, and hence comes the term "the visible Church". This does not mean that there are two Churches, but that the Church occupies the border-land between the visible and the invisible world. It performs functions in both worlds. As the invisible Church is the Church considered on its Godward side, so the visible Church is the Church considered on its earthly side.

As such it comprises a vast variety of organized Christian systems, bearing different names, and known as different denominations. These denominations form separate divisions of the Church, not because of some spiritual differences in their inner life, but because of some material differences in their outer framework. Neither episcopal ordination, nor presbyterian polity, nor congregational independence, nor adult baptism or baptism by immersion, has anything whatever to do with the one significant thing that makes the Church the Divine thing which it is—the presence of the Holy Spirit in its corporate life. And yet it is only through these various divisions that the one true Church of Christ can bear witness to Him. He has no other agency to use for proclaiming His Gospel throughout the world, and for preparing for the consummation of His Kingdom. The one visible Church has broken up into these manifold divisions through the long course of history. None of them can be said to represent the original New Testament Church:

The Church's Course in History

After the New Testament age a great change began to come over the Church. As it spread through the world its inward spiritual function was slowly weakened and its outward earthly framework was steadily magnified. The presence of the Holy Spirit as the secret of its corporate life and fellowship began to be ignored, and the position of the pastor who presided over the congregation was made more and more prominent. As a result, the Church began to regard itself, in each individual congregation, as organized around a man, and to regard this man as its visible head and centre. This process began even in the Apostolic age. "I have somewhat against thee," said the Lord in His letter to the church in Ephesus, "because thou hast left thy first love" (Rev. 2:4). And Paul declared in one of his earliest letters that "the mystery of iniquity doth already work" (2 Thess. 2:7).

The Apostle is not referring here to iniquity in the world, for there is no mystery about that, but to "lawlessness" (the R.V. rendering) within the Church. The passage describes something that was at work in the Church "already" - even in those early days - and is not concerned with the wickedness of the world outside the Church either then or at some future date. The mystery of lawlessness was the secret incipient tendency which was leading the Church to ignore the presence of the Spirit in its midst as the law of its being, and was causing it to drift away from its original spiritual basis. It was the same kind of tendency as that which led Israel in the days of the Judges to forget that the Lord God was their invisible King and to ask for a king "like all the nations". It was the beginning of the movement which led the Church to identify itself more and more with the systems of the present world, and consequently to neglect its primary relation with the spiritual world to which, in principle and in accordance with its origin, it really belonged.

Early in the second century the bishop, or the pastor of the congregation, had come to be regarded as the necessary centre of the life and fellowship of each local church and as the bond of its unity. About the year 110, Ignatius of Antioch, the same Church Father who defined the Catholic Church as being "where Jesus Christ is", wrote to a local church as follows: "Do nothing without the bishop: love unity: avoid divisions." He went even farther than that: he regarded obedience to the bishop as the means of maintaining not only the unity of the church, but also its union with God. "Let us be careful," he urged, "not to set ourselves in opposition to the bishop, in order that we may be subject to God." Before another century had passed, this conception of church life and work had become almost universal. The bishop was everywhere recognized as the centre of church fellowship. The presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church as the secret of its corporate life was well nigh forgotten. Fellowship with the bishop of the local church was the test of membership in the Catholic Church; and the fellowship of the bishops of the various local churches was regarded as the bond of union which marked the Catholic Church.

By the middle of the third century, what had begun in the days of the Apostles as the Church of the Spirit had become the Church of the Bishops. On this basis there was built up the ecclesiastical system of the subsequent centuries - the government of the Church by ascending orders or grades of bishops. The Church had become one of the institutions of the world, and its organization was modelled on the political organization of the Roman Empire. The bishop of a metropolitan city, under whose supervision there would be a number of Christian congregations, had naturally larger power than the bishop of a single congregation. Among these metropolitan bishops, the bishop of Rome had special prestige, because of his unique position as the chief pastor of the church in the capital of the Empire. He

claimed, and was granted by other bishops, a certain measure of authority, and in the course of time he proceeded to exercise this authority more and more. Thus, through the early centuries of Christianity, there slowly arose in the Christian Church the system of the Roman Papacy—the strangest institution that has ever appeared in all world history.

Paul's Historic Forecast

This development in the Church was foretold by the Apostle Paul. As Moses warned Israel, at the very beginning of the nation's history, of their subsequent failure to follow the Lord, and gave them a forecast of the tragic consequences (Deut. 28:15-68), so the Apostle who planted the Church in the Gentile world gave it a similar warning at the very beginning of its history in a remarkable prophecy. This forecast is contained in 2 Thess. 2:1-12.

The Protestant Reformers interpreted this passage as a prophecy of the Roman Papacy, and they spoke of the Pope as the Antichrist. The Westminster Confession of Faith contains the following passage: "There is no other head of the Church but the Lord Jesus Christ; nor can the Pope of Rome in any sense be head thereof; but is that Antichrist, that man of sin and son of perdition that exalteth himself in the Church against Christ and all that is called God." As long as this view prevailed the power of Romanism in Protestant lands was kept in check. But about a hundred years ago this interpretation began to be suppressed and the theory of a future Antichrist was introduced in its place. Since then the new view has been popularized and widely circulated. It has been imposed upon this passage in 2 Thessalonians, thus removing its warning of the Papal peril. This has played into the hands of Rome, for during the last few decades her power has spread into Protestant countries to an alarming extent.

Paul's prediction is full of difficulties, and he himself probably did not understand the full significance of what he was inspired to write. But when the passage is read in the light of other Scripture and set in the broad field of Christian history, it will be seen that the Reformers understood it aright. Consider some of its phrases:

(1) "The falling away" (R.V.). The use of the definite article indicates that no local or temporary apostasy from the faith is meant, but something that affects the whole Church and stands out in its history. It is not said to be a falling away from faith in Jesus Christ. Apostasies of that nature have been temporary, and have never affected the Church as a whole. What is meant is the falling away from the original spiritual constitution of the Church and the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

(2) "Sitteth in the temple of God". This cannot be the Jewish temple in Jerusalem. That could no longer be called "the temple of God" when its meaning was fulfilled in Christ. Nor can it be any material temple, for whenever Paul speaks elsewhere of the temple he always means the Christian Church. Only once does he refer to the temple in Jerusalem, and then he uses a different word in the original (1 Cor. 9:13).

(3) "Showing himself that he is God". Not every Pope has deliberately done this; but, in the Roman Church, the Pope is given the place which belongs to the Holy Spirit. Besides that, here are some claims actually made in Papal decrees: "What can you make of me but God?" (Boniface VIII, 1300). "The Pope and God are the same" (Pius V, 1570). "We hold upon this earth the place of Almighty God" (Leo XIII, 1900).

(4) "That which restraineth"; and, "there is one that restraineth" (R.V.). Paul was evidently writing with deliberate reserve in using these phrases. He could not name the restraining power directly, for he was referring to the imperial authority and the reigning Emperor. It was when the Roman Empire began to decline and the presence of the Emperor was removed from the city of Rome that the Roman Papacy began to take shape.

(5) "Whose coming is after the working of Satan". This description of the rise and appearance of the Papacy corresponds exactly with historic fact. The phrase, "after the working of Satan", accounts for the subtle intrigue and bold deceit by which the system was developed through the Middle Ages. The miracles it claimed for its credentials were "lying wonders".

(6) "Because they received not the love of the truth". These words convey the impression that what the Apostle is predicting was to be a judicial dispensation on God's part because of the general refusal of the Gospel on man's part. The best commentary on this is the story of Rome's persistent antagonism to evangelical truth throughout the ages, and the substitutes which Romanism puts in the place of the Gospel.

The End of the Church in History

Paul's prophecy declares that "the lawless one" (R.v.) shall be destroyed by the Lord Jesus "with the brightness of his coming". This seems to imply that the Papacy would continue throughout the history of the Church and that its final overthrow would not take place until the second coming of the Lord. The signs of the time give no hope of any other end.

The Church of Rome, in many respects, has had a noble history, and it has produced many Christian saints in the course of the ages. But the Papacy grew up in the midst of that Church, and has imposed its power upon it to such an extent that Roman Catholicism is now inseparably linked with the Papal System and is under its despotic rule. The Church which gave Christianity to the nations of Europe in the early centuries has become, in the present age, the greatest hindrance to world evangelism. It is not only an ecclesiastical system but also a political force. Wherever it can, it uses political power to prevent the preaching of the Gospel and the circulation of the Word of God. One of the most ominous features of the present world-outlook is the growing influence that the Roman hierarchy, which heads up in the Vatican, is able to exert behind the governments of Protestant lands.

Among the visions of the Book of Revelation is that of a woman sitting upon a scarlet-coloured beast, arrayed in purple and scarlet, and named "the mother of harlots" (17: 3-5). It is the symbol of a Church that has been faithless to her Lord and become allied with the world, and uses the political power of the world to magnify herself. There is nothing in all history to correspond with this symbol except the Church of Rome, and the symbolism is as true of Rome's place in the world today as at any former time.

The Papacy dominated most of Christendom for a thousand years, and then, in the sixteenth century, the Protestant Reformation curtailed its power and limited its scope by taking part of the Church from under its rule. But the Reformation did not finish its work, for Protestantism itself broke into sections, and failed to restore the original significance of the Church as a spiritual fellowship with the Holy Spirit at its heart. The present ecumenical movement among the Protestant churches is a hopeful sign, for it means that under all its various divisions the one universal Church is becoming aware of itself. But something yet more is needed

to impress the world with the fact that the life of the Church is "given" from above. Rome maintains the sense of the supernatural among her people by her doctrine and practice of the Mass. Over against this perversion of the truth, Protestantism should set the presence of the Holy Spirit in the life and worship of the Church, and seek to make that a reality. This is the real problem of the ecumenical movement, for unless that is done the Church will not be able to convince the world that it is a Divine institution. There is little evidence anywhere that the world gets this impression of the Church today.

What then is to be the end of the Church in history? There is a remarkable parallel between the history of Israel and the history of the Church. Both "fell away" from their original spiritual function. Israel fell away from witnessing to the unseen Kingship of Jehovah in the corporate life of the nation. The Church fell away from the leadership of the Holy Spirit in her corporate life. Notwithstanding this failure in their primary functions, both Israel and the Church were continued by God for the carrying out of His redemptive purpose in the world. Through Israel He prepared for the first coming of Christ and the founding and establishment of His Kingdom. Through the Church He is preparing for the second coming of Christ and the consummation of His Kingdom in power and glory. The Church's business is to go on with its witness to the Lord Jesus Christ while history lasts. This witness appears in its highest form when Christians of all groups gather together at the Lord's Table. The Communion Service is the truest symbol of the Church. In it there is a manifestation of the one Body of Christ and a demonstration of the way its life is derived from Him. In the Lord's Supper, as Paul told the Corinthians, the Church proclaims to the world the significance of His death, and this witness is to be continued by His Church "till he come" (1 Cor. 11:26).