

itself is not the truth, but by its presentation, by the interplay of the dialectical elements which comprise it, the parable leads the way to the truth and places the soul in the presence of the Truth, which is Jesus Christ. The Church is not the kingdom of God, but by the elements which comprise it, by the ways of life, the vocations and the ministries which are performed in it, it leads men to aim at the kingdom of God which it proclaims.'

The most significant statement—and it is one which has controlled the whole development of the particular arguments about marriage and celibacy—is this: the Church is not the kingdom of God; it is the great actor of a parable, the bearer of an idea. Is this not the essence of gnosticism?



THE LETTER OF ST IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH TO THE ROMANS (continued)

The first half of this letter appeared last month. St Ignatius was martyred in the Roman arena about A.D. 110. He was afraid that the Roman Church would bring influence to bear to secure him a reprieve, and on his journey there as a condemned prisoner he wrote them this letter.

FROM Syria all the way to Rome I am having practice in taking on wild beasts; by land and sea, night and day, I am tied to ten leopards, that is to a squad of soldiers who only grow more brutal the more consideration they are given. But their ill-treatment helps to make me a better disciple. Not that I am thereby justified (I Cor. iv, 4). Oh, how I am looking forward to the beasts that have been arranged for me, and I pray they will make short work of me! Indeed, I will coax them to swallow me smartly, and not as they have done with some, cringing away from them and refusing to touch them; and if they do not do it willingly, I shall force them to it myself.

Please look at it my way; I know what is good for me. Now at last I am beginning to be a disciple. May nothing, of things visible or invisible, grudge me my reaching Jesus Christ. Come fire

and cross and packs of savage beasts, let my bones be racked, my limbs cut up, my whole body crushed, come the devil's evil assaults upon me—only let me reach Jesus Christ. The uttermost bounds of the earth will be no use to me, nor all the kingdoms of this world. It is better for me to die for Jesus Christ than to be king of the earth from one end of it to the other. He who died on our account, that is whom I am looking for. He who rose again for us, that is whom I desire; the time of my birth is at hand.

Look at it my way, brothers; do not hinder me living, do not want me to die.¹ I want to be God's; do not make a present of me to the world, or coax me with material things. Let me reach the pure light; when I arrive there I will be a man indeed. Allow me to imitate the suffering of my God. If anyone has him in himself he should understand what I want, and be able to sympathize with me, having some idea of my anxiety.

The prince of this world is determined to plunder me and to break my resolve that is set on God. Let none of you then who will be present [when I enter the arena] go to his help; be on my side rather, that is on God's. Do not talk Jesus Christ and covet the world. Let no envy lodge among you [of my martyrdom]. Do not listen to me even if I exhort you in person [to get me a reprieve] when it comes to the point, but trust instead to what I am writing to you here and now. I am alive and well as I write, but lusting for death. My lusts have been crucified,² and there is no greedy matter-loving fire in me, but only living water leaping up in me, saying to me 'Come to the Father'. I take no pleasure in perishable food, nor in the enjoyments of this life. It is God's bread I want, which is the flesh of Christ who is of David's seed; and the drink I want is his blood which is imperishable charity.

Not a moment longer do I want to live this common life of men, and so shall it be, if you want it too. Please do want it, in order to be wanted yourselves. I am asking you in a short letter—just trust me. But then Jesus Christ will make all this clear to you, because I am telling the truth; he is the mouth that tells no lies, in which the Father spoke to us. Pray for me, that I may win through. I have not written to you after the flesh, but after the

1 By martyrdom he would be born to eternal life, which they would frustrate if they secured him a reprieve and a continuation of this mortal life, which would be as good as death to him.

2 This could be translated, and has been so taken, 'My love (i.e. Christ) has been crucified'; but this does not suit the Greek or the sense so well.

mind of God. If I suffer it means you have loved me; if I am set aside, it means you have hated me.

Remember the Church in Syria in your prayers, which in my place employs God as its shepherd; there is only Jesus Christ and your charity to be its bishop. I indeed am ashamed to be called one of them. I am not worthy of it, being the last and the least of them, an untimely birth. But I have been given the merciful chance of being somebody at last, if only I reach God.

My spirit greets you, and so does the charity of the Churches which have received me, and as no mere passing traveller either, in the name of Jesus Christ. Even those which lay off my road—physically speaking³—escorted me from one town to the next. I am writing this to you from Smyrna by the hand of the excellent Ephesians. With me, amongst many others, is Crocus, a name very dear to me. About those who have gone ahead of me from Syria to Rome to the glory of God, I trust you have been informed. Please let them know I am near. They all deserve well of God and of you—it is right that you should comfort them in every way you can. I have written this to you on the ninth day before the Calends of September (August 24th). Fare you well till the end, waiting patiently for Jesus Christ.



GAMALIEL

(Questions should be addressed to Gamaliel, c/o the Editor, THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT, Hawkesyard Priory, Rugeley, Staffs.)

Q. I find the expression 'kingdom of God' or 'kingdom of heaven', as used by our Lord, extremely puzzling. It seems to be used in so many different ways. What precisely does it mean?

E.C.H.

A. It means nothing *precisely*. It is a great mistake to try and limit any biblical word or phrase to one precise meaning. Precision is a virtue in *measurement* but not necessarily so in language or in

³ Literally 'according to the flesh'. According to the spirit all the churches everywhere lay on his road, because spiritually speaking both his road and theirs was Christ, who said 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life'.