

THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY.

VOL. XIX.

OCTOBER, 1915.

No. 4.

IRENÆUS ON THE CHURCH.

The topic for consideration leads to ground where every inch has been fought over, and is still contested. The greatest controversies have been actuated by dogmatic interests.¹⁾ From the time of the *Magdeburg Centuries* and the *Annales Eccle-*

1) The basic argument against the Catholic Church during the Reformation period was not historical, but Scriptural. It is only natural that the historical argument should appear, in fact, quite frequently and quite spontaneously. Hans von der Planitz, writing from the *Reichsregiment* at Nuremberg to his Elector about the discussion on the mass and monastic vows, January, 1522, says: "Dan vor dieser zeit nach der himmelfahrt Christi eezlich hundert jar kein monchsorden vom babst bestetigt gewest, sso hetten auch die prister eezlich hundert jar weiber gehabt. Und were ein lange zeit under beiderlei gestalt das heilige sacrament den leihen und christen gereicht worden." This is a very clear and concise expression of the historical view-point at the very beginning of the actual reorganization according to the Reformation principles. However, in the controversy it remained but a side-issue. With the reformers of every type, as well as with Frederick and the other rulers drawn into the controversy, the decisive criterion was the teaching of Scripture.—The *Magdeburg Centuries* were the first—and ever will remain one of the most massive—attempts to shatter the Catholic system by showing how it grew century after century into its medieval form. The *Annales Ecclesiastici* of Baronio were the Catholic answer to them. With the stimulus of these two exhaustive treatises, representing opposite view-points, one would expect to meet a host of scholars scanning the records of the early centuries. Largely owing to the continuation of that earlier interest in the Bible only, this prospect did not come true. A monumental *Historia Literaria* was published by Cave, which is the first real effort in giving a comprehensive account of Christian authors and their writings. The work has merit to-day only as a curio. The real study of that early period began with the spread of rationalism and higher criticism. Christianity was considered a historical growth,

JOHN 17, 20—24.

This paper was originally prepared for the English Conference of the Eastern District of the Norwegian Synod, and read before this conference at a meeting held at Madison, Wis., in February, 1914. By request it was later read before the Decorah Special Conference of the Synod at Decorah, Iowa, the same year, as also before the Joint German-English Missouri and Norwegian Synod Conference held at Chicago a little later. In September, 1915, it was read before the Albert Lea Conference at Thompson, Iowa. Published by request in a somewhat abbreviated form.

To gain the proper understanding of any portion of Holy Writ, sound exegesis requires, as we know, that we determine its relation to the preceding and following verses,—in other words, that we do not separate it from the setting in which it is found. The 17th chapter of St. John constitutes what is now generally known as the high-priestly, or sacerdotal, prayer. It was so designated by David Chytraeus, a disciple of Melancthon and one of the six theologians who in 1576 prepared the Book of Concord for publication. And it is properly so called, because "this is, indeed, the act of the High Priest of mankind, who begins His sacrifice by offering Himself to God with all His people, present and future" (Godet).

The prayer was uttered while the Eleven were still together with Him in the communion hall in Jerusalem, after the farewell address of admonition and comfort to His disciples, after the partaking of the Lord's Supper, after the departure of Judas, that son of perdition (and let us notice this well; we may have use for this fact later), and before they began the journey which took them from the communion hall over the Brook Cedron to the Garden of Gethsemane. So most authorities.

In offering this prayer, Jesus looks upon His work, as the Redeemer of the world, as an already accomplished fact. It follows immediately after His shout of victory, which forms the closing sentence of the address to His disciples: "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer: I have overcome the world." The disciples have just been stunned

by the message that He is about to leave them to return to His Father; but "amid all this," says Luthardt, "Jesus does not forget His followers. For in that He leaves them in thought and feeling, in order to tarry in heaven with the Father, He thence lavishes the blessings of His love upon them, spreading out His hands over them, as if down from heaven in His high-priestly intercession," or as Bengel puts it: "Spectans practerita, praesentia et futura" (viewing things past, present, and future).

Luther says: "It is indeed an exceedingly earnest, hearty prayer, since He opens and empties out entirely the depths of His heart, both towards us and towards His Father." (Erl. ed., Vol. I, p. 158.) And again: "If, however, we could see and feel who the Man is who prays there, and also to whom He prays, and, moreover, how great a thing it is for which He prays, we would not think it so worthless and little, but would pay attention, and feel what a superabundant power and what comforting things these simple words possess and bestow." (p. 159.) And Bengel: "Hoc caput in tota Scriptura est verbis facillimum, sensibus profundissimum" (Of all chapters in the whole Scriptures this is the easiest as far as the words are concerned, the deepest, however, as to meaning). And over against Lampe, who says: "Orationem non tam sui quam suorum causa ad Patrem fudit" (He poured forth the prayer to the Father, not so much for His own sake as for their sake), we would say with Bengel: "Orat Patrem, simulque discipulos docet" (He prays to the Father; and at the same time teaches the disciples).

The prayer is divided into three distinct parts:—

I. Vv. 1—5. Christ prays for Himself, for His glorification, or, as He says in vv. 1 and 5: "Glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son may glorify Thee" (v. 1). "And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own self, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was" (v. 5).

II. Vv. 6—19. Christ prays for His disciples, for their preservation in, and their consecration to, the high task intrusted

to them. It is, "Keep them" (v. 11), and, "Sanctify them" (v. 17), which form the burden of this part of the prayer. This section might properly be subdivided into an introduction (vv. 6—8), the prayer proper (vv. 9—17), and the conclusion (vv. 18. 19).

III. Vv. 20—26. Christ prays for the future disciples, those who shall believe on Him through the apostles' word. He prays that they may be united in the one true faith, and finally behold and share His heavenly glory. Tischendorf has a splendid heading, when he sums up the contents of this chapter thus: "Christi precatio sacerdotalis pro re sua, pro apostolis omnibusque suis."

It is the main part of this last section which we are to examine more closely in this paper. Let me, at the outset, by way of parenthesis, declare that, while I have had access to a number of commentaries and expository works bearing directly on this thesis, I have, for various reasons, chosen to follow Godet and Luthardt most closely. I shall, perhaps, refer to them quite frequently, perhaps from time to time quote them directly. With this explanation, I may be pardoned for not mentioning their names at each reference or quotation.

V. 20. *Ὁὐ περι τούτων δὲ ἐρωτῶ μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ περι τῶν πιστευόντων δια τοῦ λόγου αὐτῶν εἰς ἐμέ.* (So Tischendorf.)

Jesus has prayed for Himself, that the Father would glorify Him with the glory He had with Him before the world was. He has prayed for His disciples, and here it is very evidently the Eleven who are comprehended in His petitions; for we must believe that Judas has already gone forth to accomplish his devilish deed. He prays for their preservation and their consecration. And now He, with His *Ὁὐ περι τούτων δὲ ἐρωτῶ μόνον*, as it were, suddenly seems to remember those many others whose High Priest He is to be, and so He proceeds with this new and last section of His intercessory prayer: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which believe on Me through their word." It is, as Godet

says: "Jesus has commended to God the *Author* and the *instruments* of the work of salvation; He now prays on behalf of the *object* of this work, the body of believers."

Tischendorf begins the verse with *ὁὐ περι τούτων*. Other MSS read: Neither for, but not for, but not concerning. *Περι*, used with genitive with such verbs as *ἔρωτάω*, verbs of speaking, teaching, writing, denotes that around which an act or state revolves, equivalent to the Latin *de* or *circa*. *Ἐρωτάω* (Hebrew *שָׁאַל*), ask, *i. e.*, request, entreat; beg, beseech, with the formula *τινά περι τινός*, — pray. "Neither pray I for these only, for their best, their best interests," *ἀλλὰ καὶ περι τῶν πιστευόντων διὰ τοῦ λόγου αὐτῶν εἰς ἐμέ*, "but also for those who believe on Me through their word," literally, "but also for the believing ones on Me," etc. Tischendorf certainly seems to be right in choosing with most MSS the present *πιστευόντων*, those who believe, instead of the future *πιστευσόντων*, those who shall believe, of Textus Receptus and a few other MSS. (This against Luther.) *Πιστευόντων*, present participle, denoting "the believing ones" (very emphatic), or "those who believe." "Christ pictures to Himself all believers, speaking absolutely. He sees them in spirit, these believers of all times and places, and by His prayer He unites them in one body, and transports them, in some sense, to glory." All that Christ has prayed for for His disciples holds good also for the future believers.

Διὰ τοῦ λόγου αὐτῶν εἰς ἐμέ, with these words Christ describes the intermediate agency which produces the faith on or in Him (*εἰς ἐμέ*), "those who through their word, *i. e.*, the word of the apostles, believe on Me." But this "word," *λόγος*, not *μαρτυρία*, is really the same word to which the apostles were referred, namely, the Word of Truth (v. 17), that Word of saving truth, which alone can regenerate the world and make believers, true believers, in Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Savior of the world. All future believers, the believers of all times and places, are therefore placed in the same category as the apostles. The difference is, that, while the apostles

became believers through Christ's Word directly (cf. vv. 6—8), all other believers whom Christ here has in mind become believers through the apostles' word, which, of course, in turn, is really nothing but Christ's Word. "The Word is the foundation also of the belief of these as of the disciples. Belief comes at all ages through the Word; for Christ gave it to the disciples, and these give it as their word to the following generations. It is the apostolic word which mediates the belief of the Church of all succeeding ages. No other word is to be added to it." (Luthardt.) And thus a capital part in the life of the Church is assigned to the apostolic teaching. "Jesus recognizes, in the future, no faith capable of uniting man to God, and preparing him for glory, except that which is produced and nourished by the word of the Eleven." This "word" (*λόγος*) embraces the Epistles as well as the Gospels. "Men cannot really come to faith in Christ (*εἰς ἑμέ*) at any time except through this intermediate agency." It is as Gesz says: "All belief in the Church is dependent upon the word of the *apostles*, the oral as well as the written word; since the death of the apostles the latter, namely, the written word, must take preference over the oral in significance or importance. Just as He, in v. 17, bears witness that the truth is in the Word, and that, in vv. 6—8, by the Word the Eleven had become what they were, so in v. 20 He makes the Word, namely, the apostolic repetition and exposition of the Word spoken by the Father through Christ, to be the seed from which faith must sprout forth."

It seems necessary to pause here for a moment to make some conclusions, to decide at once to whom Christ here refers, who are included in His prayer, what the limitations are that we must place on it; for the succeeding verses depend so much on, and are so absolutely related to, this verse that, unless we define the *τῶν πιστευόντων* of this verse more closely, we shall soon be floundering aimlessly about in the mire of unsolvable difficulties.

Let us notice that these *τῶν πιστευόντων* are really placed

in the same class as the apostles as regards their faith and, as we shall see later, the reaching of the goal of their faith. The apostles believed in Christ's Word, and this Word was God's Word, v. 6. "I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest Me; and they have received them, and they have known surely that I came out from Thee; and they have believed that Thou didst send Me," v. 8. Therefore, "Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me; and they have kept Thy Word," v. 6. (This does not include Judas, that son of perdition, v. 12.) They were to be one as the Father and Son were one, v. 11. They were to be "kept" and "sanctified," vv. 11, 17. And this "keeping" and "sanctifying" *really included or presupposed their glorification*, as the whole context shows.

Now here we find many of the same terms used in connection with these *τῶν πιστευόντων* that were used concerning the apostles. They are believers, "the believing ones" (very emphatic), in the apostles' word, which, again, was Christ's Word, whose Word is God's Word. Christ gives these His glory, v. 22; they are to be kept in union with Him and the Father (the whole context, particularly vv. 21—23); they were given Him by the Father, v. 24, in a similar sense as the apostles were given Him, vv. 6, 9; *they are to be with Him where He is, and share His glory with Him*, v. 24. The inevitable conclusion that we must reach is, that Christ's prayer here embraces only the true believers, the true Christians, the invisible Church, the congregation of saints, which truth we confess in the Third Article of our Christian faith in the words: "I believe the Holy Christian Church, the communion of saints." This sets the proper limitations on this prayer, and saves us much confusion concerning Christ's petitions in the following verses. That this is the proper premise for what follows seems clear to me, and if we keep it constantly in mind during our discussion of the succeeding verses, we shall be saved much unnecessary trouble and many uncalled-for hypotheses.

V. 21. ἵνα πάντες ἐν ὧσιν, καθὼς σύ, πατήρ, ἐν ἐμοὶ κἀγὼ ἐν σοί, ἵνα καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐν ἡμῖν ὧσιν, ἵνα ὁ κόσμος πιστεύῃ ὅτι σύ με ἀπέστειλας. (So Tischendorf.)

With the proper premise established, it is not so difficult to understand the scope of this and the following verses, although we are ready to agree that this verse particularly is the *cruce* of the whole prayer to the expositor.

The verse begins with a ἵνα, ἵνα πάντες ἐν ὧσιν, referring back to the ἐρωτῶ of v. 20, and thus virtually presenting the object of the petition under the form of an *end* to be attained by this very prayer. ἵνα is a final conjunction, denoting purpose and end. It is translated: to the intent that, to the end that, in order that. Thayer tells us that "it is generally followed by the optative or subjunctive moods. In later Greek, however, and especially with the Hellenistic writers, the final force of the particle ἵνα is more or less weakened, so that it is frequently used where the earlier Greek writers employed the infinitive, yet so that the leading and the dependent sentence each has its own subject. The first extant instance of this use occurs in the Amphictyonic Decree: πρεσβεῦσαι πρὸς Φιλιππον καὶ ἀξιούσιν ἵνα βοηθήσῃ, but it increased greatly in subsequent times. Accordingly, ἵνα stands with the subjunctive in such a way that it denotes the *purport* (or object) rather than the *purpose* of the action expressed by the preceding verb." This occurs, among other verbs, after those of *saying* (commanding, asking, exhorting), and so after the verb of our passage, ἐρωτῶ, to ask, to beseech. It is interesting to note this, because it helps us to a proper understanding of this dependent clause.

The end to be attained, or the thing asked for, is, therefore, ἵνα πάντες ἐν ὧσιν, "that they all may be one." The πάντες, of course, refers back to the τῶν πιστευόντων of v. 20, and by adding this to make the clause complete, we would read, "That all the believing ones may be one." The πάντες ἐν are placed side by side for emphasis, "all one." "He desires not only the nearest disciples (v. 11), but also all believers,

to be united in the unity of belief upon the basis of the one Word." (Luthardt.)

It is the sad mistake of our day to take advantage of this clause in such a way as to make it appear that Christ here prays for the union of the visible Church, and it is a common occurrence to hear men quote this clause, separating it not only from the preceding premise, but as well from the succeeding explanatory statement. Even though we should agree with Godet in having the first clause of v. 21 be formed only of the words, "That all may be one," making this indicate the general idea, still we should have to conclude, as he does, that the clause, "As Thou, Father," etc., depends on the following *that*, by an inversion similar to that of chap. 13, 34. Luthardt places the two clauses (the two *ἕνα*) parallel to each other. In any case, it is the futile effort of ill-advised commentators to attempt to *separate* this clause from the setting which it finds in the explanatory statement which follows: *καθὼς σὺ, πατήρ, ἐν ἐμοὶ καὶ ἐν σοί.* As Godet says: "The question is not only, as is often supposed, of the union of Christians among themselves, but, above all, of the union which is the basis of this, that of the body of believers with Christ and, through Him, with God Himself. This sublime unity it is which Jesus, in what follows, contrasts with that of the world."

In the explanatory clause beginning with *καθὼς*, Jesus shows the nature of that unity which He desires for all the *τῶν πιστευόντων*. It is to be a unity (*καθὼς*), according as, just as, even as Thou, Father, art in Me and I in Thee, etc. "Ut omnes unum sint, sicut Tu, Pater, in Me, et Ego in Te, ut et ipsi in Nobis unum sint, ut credat mundus, quia Tu Me misisti." It is to be a unity *like*, or *partaking of* (*καθὼς*—sicut) the nature of, that of the Father and the Son. It is a unity, therefore, of the most elevated order. The very reference to the unity existing between Father and Son shows it to be a unity of a hidden character, a spiritual unity. And what are the characteristics of the unity existing between the

Father and the Son? The evangelist St. John quotes Jesus as describing this unity thus (10, 38): "The Father is in Me, and I in Him," *ὅτι ἐν ἐμοὶ ὁ πατήρ καὶ ἐν τῷ πατρὶ*; and again (14, 10, 11), where Jesus speaks thus of this unity to Philip: "Believest thou not that I am in the Father and the Father in Me? The words that I speak unto you I speak not of Myself; but the Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me; or else believe Me for the very works' sake." It is, in the first place, a perfect unity of natures. The Father and the Son are one. The nature of the one is identical with that of the other. There exists, furthermore, a perfect mutual understanding between them, so that the one never desires or does anything except in conformity with the wish and doing of the other. There is never any disharmony between them; their every move is in absolute harmony each with the other. The relation existing between them is based on an absolutely flawless divine love, which over against the world is made manifest in the love of Christ. The will of the one is identical with the will of the other, etc., *ad infinitum*.

"*Ἴνα καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐν ἡμῖν ὦσιν*. Here comes the second "that" (*ἵνα*), which really, in a way, supplements the first *ἵνα*, in such a way namely, that Christ asks that this unity existing between the Father and the Son may become manifest also in the believers. Yngvar Brun, in his commentary, translates it thus: "That they may form a unity just as firm and living as the fellowship (or communion) between Father and Son." "The desired unity is to correspond to the type of unity, to the manner in which God and Christ are each in the other. Thus also shall the believers be, and live in God and Christ." (Luthardt.) "As the Father lives in the Son and the Son in the Father, so the Son lives in the believers, and, by living in them, he unites them closely one with another." (Godet.) "The Father and Son are to be the element in which the believers live and move, 'unio mystica,' mystical union, as we read in John 15, 5: 'I am the Vine, ye are the branches.

He that abideth in Me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without Me ye can do nothing'; and again, 1 John 1, 3: 'Truly, our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ'; and again, 1 John 4, 13: 'Hereby know we that we dwell in Him and He in us, because He hath given us His Spirit.' Hence, in so far as the former unity is not to be without the latter, it goes beyond the significance of an example. Believers are in God and Christ, not merely as to will and disposition, but as to their actual being, yet without ceasing to be the persons which they are, namely, creaturelike and sinful. In that they thus are in God and Christ, are they 'all one' (*πάντες ἓν*).” (Luthardt.)

Textus Receptus has the word *ἓν*, “one,” also in this second clause. Tischendorf, with the authority of several MSS, has stricken it. Being so very similar to the following *ἐν ἡμῖν*, we can readily see how it could have disappeared from the text of some MSS. Though, by retaining it, with Textus Receptus, the sentence becomes more emphatic, still the sense is by no means weakened by dropping it. Whether we say, “That they also may be one in Us,” or, “That they may be in Us,” makes no material difference.

ἵνα ὁ κόσμος πιστεύῃ ὅτι σὺ με ἀπέστειλας. Here we have the third “that” (*ἵνα*), which is subordinate to the two preceding ones, and indicates the final purpose of them. Luthardt seems to have most nearly caught the meaning of Christ's words here, when he says by way of explaining them: “The design of this unity is, ‘that the world may believe.’ We see, the Word in its actual realization in the Church is that which overcomes the world. For that which the world perceives in the Church is to bring it to belief, to belief on the Son of God: *ὅτι σὺ με ἀπέστειλας* (that Thou hast sent Me). The Church, in which the Word of Truth has become a reality, is nothing but a testimony of Christ, who, as the contents of the Word, thus comes to a wrought-out appearance in the Church. Jesus started out from the separating of His own followers from the world; but now that the glance has extended

itself over the whole, the world comes further into consideration only as yet to be won. The Church comes into consideration in a twofold relation, as a gathering of all believers (*πάντες ἔν*), and as a gathering institution in respect to the unbelieving world." And, certainly, it was this spiritual unity of faith, the union with Christ, their Redeemer, that made the first Christians such a powerful sermon to the world; it was their faith, not any outward organic union (because an outward organic union hardly existed at the time; at any rate, the Church did not appear to the world, nor had the congregations united into an organized society or synod), that made the world recognize the Christ, the object of their faith, as the One sent by the Father. And so the statement of history bears out this prayer of Christ: "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church," and the blood of the martyrs is, after all, nothing but the manifestation to the world of the faith that dwells in the believer's heart. (*To be concluded.*)