

the God of Abraham. We know that the Amorites did worship 'El.<sup>1</sup> There would be no question of syncretism and assimilation on the part of Abraham such as modern scholars often suggest. Significant in this respect is the fact that when God called Abraham (Gen. 12) He did not explain who He was, nor did Abraham inquire, as did Moses at a later date. The whole narrative proceeds as though Abraham already knew and recognised God. 'El was the God of Abraham's ancestors, even though they had worshipped other gods besides 'El (cf. Jos. 24:2, 14). Melchisedech's position may therefore have been analogous to that of Abraham before the latter's vocation.

Unless some direct evidence is brought to light on this figure of the Old Testament, he must remain shrouded in mystery, even though he must, at the same time, rank as one of the greatest figures in the Old Testament because of the role he was elected to play as type of the Supreme High Priest and King: 'consider how great this man is, to whom also the patriarch Abraham gave tithes.'

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THE KEYS OF GOD'S HOUSEHOLD

O God, with your judgment endow the king,  
and with your justice, the king's son.  
He shall govern your people with justice,  
and your afflicted ones with judgment. (Ps. 71:1-2)

The narrative of Christ's choosing Peter as the Rock of his Church (Matt. 16:13-20) belongs to the larger section (13:53-18:35) which outlines the form of the Church as the beginning of the everlasting kingdom of the heavens. In fact the account fits into the narrative part of this section (13:53-17:27), of which Jesus' transfiguration as the Christ and giver of the new law is the climax. Christ entrusts his messianic authority over the people of God to Simon whom he has called 'Peter.' The familiar narrative, which Matthew places in the district of Caesarea Philippi, tells us both that Jesus received Peter's profession that he is the Christ the Son of God and that he made the apostle, already promised the title 'Peter' (John 1:42), the rock in the foundation of his Church. And Peter is not only made the Rock, but he also receives 'the keys of the kingdom of heaven.' Peter, singled

<sup>1</sup> J. Starcky, *Cahiers Sioniens*, June 1951, p. 28

out to rule in Christ's name and charged with the care of God's household, is given the Christian stewardship from 'the Son of the living God.'

We read in the Old Testament that when Eliakim was given authority the keys were given to him. God promises the authority, 'I will place on his shoulder the key of the house of David; he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut and none shall open' (Is. 22:22). This type receives its fullness in the new covenant, for the risen Christ proclaims, 'I am before all, I am at the end of all, and I live. I, who underwent death, am alive to endless ages, and I hold the keys of death and hell' (Apoc. 1:17-18).

Jesus' words to Peter, 'I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven,' refer, therefore, to this power which Jesus possesses as the master of the kingdom and the Lord of all. Christ is the conqueror of sin and death; he is the liberator who frees mankind from hell, because he is the well-loved Son in whose hands the Father has placed everything (John 3:35). After he had risen he told his disciples, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me' (Matt. 28:18). To Peter he delegated not only the power 'to bind and to loose,' that is, full authority in all matters necessary for the well-being of the Christian commonwealth, but also the responsibility of acting in his name, for what is done on earth is so done in heaven.

Peter governs the community of Christ's redeemed, since he is the Rock of God's people and the keeper of the Lord's keys. When Jesus ascended to his Father, he left to Peter the power of the keys which he had won (Apoc. 1:18; 3:7). He built upon Peter the Church first founded on the rock that is Christ (1 Cor. 10:4), and he gave to Peter the sheep which he saved in love (John 21:15-18).

The power which Jesus has comes from the actuality of his messiahship; he inherits this authority because of his Old Testament lineage. Within the framework of the Gospels, Jesus' words and signs are notes which reveal him as the messiah, promised in the Old Testament. His mission is one of fulfilment as well as one of re-creation; his mission, moreover, appeals to prophecies and types, in the light of his reconciling work. All authority in heaven and on earth has been put in his hands, because he receives the authority given by God to the messianic line. Within this line the Christ inherited and brought to new glory the power entrusted to the tribe of Juda and its crowned hero, David.

The oracles attributed to the patriarch Jacob in the poem of Gen. 49 come from an era when the tribe of Juda had special prominence in Israel's history. The final form of the poem was made no later than David's reign, but many of its elements date from an earlier period.

At any rate, Jacob's sons in the poem stand for the tribes which later bore their names.

Juda is pictured as the primate and the power among the tribes of Israel, and this destiny of Juda is built upon the promise which God gave the chosen people ; it is, in fact, a further specification of the great blessing God gave to Abraham, ' In you shall all the nations of the earth be blessed ' (Gen. 12:3). This blessing narrows the fundamental promise of victory proclaimed in the *protoevangelion* for mankind's salvation against the enemy Satan (Gen. 3:15). The favour conferred on Abraham was continued, and in the narrative of Isaac's sacrifice the promise of blessing is repeated (Gen. 22:18). Next the promise is laid upon Isaac, ' I will fulfil the oath which I swore to your father Abraham ; . . . in your descendants all the nations of the earth shall be blessed ' (Gen. 26:3-4). Later God's constant care was for Jacob, whom He would not forsake till the promise of blessing be fulfilled (Gen. 28:14-15), till the promise be given to the line of Jacob's son Juda.

A lion's whelp is Juda ;  
 he crouches and crouches as a lion, and who will disturb him ?  
 The sceptre shall not depart from Juda,  
 nor the staff from between his feet,  
 Until he comes to whom it belongs.  
 To him shall be the obedience of the nations (Gen. 49:9-10).

Accordingly the tribe of Juda possesses the authority and the might, and the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob has chosen Juda as the regal family of the messianic power. The royal sceptre passed to the tribe of Juda when David, ' the son of an Ephrathite of Bethlehem in Juda ' (1 Sam. 17:12), was anointed king by Samuel (1 Sam. 16:13) ; later ' the men of Juda came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Juda ' (2 Sam. 2:4) ; and finally the tribe of Juda ruled in the person of David when all the elders of Israel ' anointed David king over Israel ' (2 Sam. 5:3). David ruled with the sceptre and the staff of Juda.

Through Nathan God promised David that the messiah would be his heir (2 Sam. 7:1f.). When David wanted to build a house for the Lord, it was God who gave David an everlasting house for salvation. ' And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure for ever before me ; your throne shall be established for ever ' (v. 16). The promise made David's line permanent on the throne of Israel ; it also made the messiah the son of David, for David's blood would rule for ever through the chosen descendant (Is. 7:14 ; Mic. 5:1-2 ; Acts 2:30).

Moreover, the author of Ps. 88 in his prayer to God praises the divine steadfastness regarding David and his sealed kingship.

I will not violate my covenant ;  
 the promise of my lips I will not alter.  
 Once, by my holiness, have I sworn ;  
 I will not be false to David.  
 His posterity shall continue for ever,  
 and his throne shall be like the sun before me (vv. 35-7).

David was the Lord's servant whose rule as 'shepherd of the people Israel' (2 Sam. 5:2) was a foreshadowing of the eternal rule of 'the prince of shepherds' (1 Pet. 5:4), the Lord Jesus. David as the great king of God's flock was more than a type of the messiah, because Jesus is descended in the blood line of the Davidic house. So important is this lineage for Jesus' messiahship that Matthew opens, 'A record of the origin of Jesus Christ, the son of David.' Also, the Christ is 'the son of Abraham,' the heir in whom all the nations of the earth are blessed according to God's oath to Abraham. David is descended from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob through Juda, and Christ, in turn, is of the tribe of Juda from David. Jesus is the messiah who sits on 'the throne of his father David, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob eternally ; his kingdom shall never have an end' (Luke 1:32-3). On Christ the Father has laid the sceptre of Juda in the new Israel and the crown of David in the eternal Jerusalem.

The Lord Jesus is the king-messiah of God ; he has received an everlasting throne with authority over the community of the redeemed which, because of Christ's work, is the new Israel, 'a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a consecrated nation, God's own people' (1 Pet. 2:9 ; Exod. 19:5-6). He is David's royal son, the king 'who is all holiness and truth ; who bears the key of David, so that none may shut when he opens, none open when he shuts' (Apoc. 3:7). He has inherited Davidic power ; he is God's king of the messianic promise. As God's king he has set Peter as viceroy over God's household with the Davidic key of authority to govern, by admitting or excluding, by binding or loosing in the sacred name of the risen Jesus whose name is the full power of heaven on earth, the holiness of Jesus the Lord (Phil. 2:9-11 ; Is. 45:23).

The dominion symbolised by the keys of Christ entrusted to Peter embraces the full commission to teach, rule and sanctify, which Jesus gave to his Church, the fulfilment of the kingdom of Israel. When Jesus laid the keys of this new kingdom in Peter's dedicated hands, he established the Church strong in heavenly power to do all that leads

the mystical body from the kingdom on earth to the heavenly Jerusalem, 'God's tabernacle pitched among men' (Apoc. 21:3).

The overwhelming conviction of the Church throughout its Spirit-filled history is that when the body of Christ acts so does its head, for God has re-created mankind in the Spirit as 'all one person in Jesus Christ' (Gal. 3:28). The works of the Church done by the Christian assembly on earth have the power of Christ, since the Church has the Davidic keys of Jesus; heaven is its guaranteed possession so that all acts of Christ's community take effect both before the Father and in the souls of men. The Church acts through the authority of the one Christ who 'has entered heaven itself, where he now appears in God's sight on our behalf' (Heb. 9:24).

Though Peter alone is the keeper of the keys and consequently the vicar of Christ, the incarnate Word so left in the Church the full power of the keys that it has total competence to bind and to loose in the name of the one king, prophet and priest. This Church, the mystery of Christ, has the messianic keys by which it rules, teaches and sanctifies as the royal house of God, the prophetic college of Christ, and the priestly temple of the Spirit. This authority is given in the Spirit of peace, because the mission of reconciliation with which Jesus entered the world is now given to the Church (John 20:19-23). Just as Jesus was the great apostle of the Father, 'the one sent' by God, so now the Church is Christ's legate sharing in the apostolic mission of reconciliation for the world. This mission was placed in the Church to be exercised through the public and apostolic ministry for the good of Christian religion and of the Catholic commonwealth.

The keys give the Church the same mission with regard to reconciling mankind to God precisely because the Church is the body through which the glorified Christ acts to bring about daily reconciliation. The body of Christ works not only to reconcile those who are spiritually dead to its head or separated from his members, but also to strengthen the bond of love between Christ and his members, all of whom are attacked by the enemy of peace, the gates of hell. The mission of reconciliation is uppermost among the works of the Church, because its head is mediator of the new and saving covenant which unites all in Christ to the Father. The Church has the Davidic keys of Christ for the profit of the redeemed world, but also for the strong life of the household of faith by uniting member to member and body to head in love.

Christ, by making Peter the keeper of the keys, so brings power to the whole Church that it shares in the messianic power of the new and eternal David. The Church inherits the pre-eminence of Juda and the royalty of David for the divine purpose of sharing the love of

## BOOK REVIEWS

Christ and the peace of God. This regal authority is a testament of love left by Christ to his Church and to all mankind ; the Davidic power of the Lord's household proclaims the holiness of God and of His Gospel. Jesus, the son of David, gave that supreme power to the Church that it might be Christ's kingdom, strong by the might of the lion of Juda.

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## BOOK REVIEWS

James Killgallon and Gerard Weber, *Christ in Us*. Instructions in the Catholic Faith. Sheed and Ward, London and New York 1959. pp. 302. 6s.

The seventh of the *Canterbury Books* was previously published in the United States of America under the title *Life in Christ*, and it is a book of instructions on the Catholic Faith for adults, written in the traditional catechism form of question and answer, but in such a way as to avoid the excessively stereotyped formulas which are usually associated with catechisms. The book is divided into five parts : the gift of life, Christ the life, the Church the Body of Christ, growth in the divine life and the commandments of God. The question of the order in which the truths of Faith are to be presented is of great moment to modern catechists, and this book begins with Jesus Christ ; and since, on the human side, the first consideration is happiness, then the first question reads : ' Does Jesus Christ promise happiness to those who love him ? ' After five questions on this theme the authors pass, perhaps too abruptly, to the study of God, the Father of Jesus Christ and of all men. Then they return to Jesus Christ, the giver of the new life. This latter section seems oddly placed, since after it we return to God the creator of the world and of man, the fall, and the preparation for the redeemer, before we reach once more a consideration of Jesus Christ the God-man. Here we consider our Lord's birth and his role as the supreme teacher before we arrive at a study of the redemption. Surely the redemption should come first, since it is in the light of our Lord's redeeming death and resurrection that the Scriptures invite us to consider him more closely ? The Church as the Body of Christ is given a long and satisfying treatment, and it is perhaps here more than anywhere that the difference of the modern presentation is realised.