

earth (i.e. "the subject") that is spontaneous. Perhaps, however, the sentence does really teach not only that the development to the very end is the work of the Church, but also that this development must be gradual and progressive. Yet, as Goebell remarks, we would, in that case, expect a $\delta\epsilon$ to be added after $\pi\rho\omega\tau\omicron\nu$ in order that we might read "The earth beareth fruit of itself, first however, the blade, then the ear, then (and not till then) the full corn in the ear." It is, in fact, the earth's spontaneousness that is emphasized as the position of $\alpha\iota\tau\omicron\mu\alpha\tau\eta$ at the beginning of the sentence abundantly shows (and that such spontaneousness may be ascribed to the earth, even the classical writers show when they apply this epithet to "the spontaneous bringing forth of the earth in the golden age.") (*Vide* Trench).

The teaching of the whole, then, is that while the personal work of the Lord is necessary at the beginning and the end, the development of the Church to the very end is the task of believers, apart from this immediate agency.

The application of the principle to the case of the individual is easy to make, and may be found well stated by Goebell in an excellent work on the parables, to which I cannot fully express my indebtedness. In a looser sense the sower may probably be taken to be the ordinary preacher, inasmuch as he is the representative of the Great Preacher and then the common interpretation, according to which the parable teaches the powerlessness of the preacher in the development of the Word once impressed upon the hearer, will follow.

Interpreted as above, this parable falls naturally into the place which it occupies in Mark. From that of the sower we learn that the reception, given to the Word of the Kingdom, depends upon the moral condition of the hearer; from this, that its development is the work of believers; from that of the mustard seed, that the success of believers in this work is to be very great.

The interpretation also shows well how beautifully the parable is constructed. According to none of the current interpretations does it deserve the reproach of Strauss, that it is "a thing without hands and feet," but some of them do seem to make it limp so badly that it can scarcely be said to be as "fitly framed together" as e.g. the parable of the sower or of the prodigal son, or, indeed, as any other of the parables of Jesus.

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