

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_churchman\\_os.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php)

## ART. V.—APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION.

## PART II.

IF it be alleged that a transmission of Apostolic succession can only be effected through a duly consecrated Bishop, then every minister of the Gospel of the several classes of Nonconformists is cut off from the advantages supposed to be derived from the acquisition of "Apostolic succession." And here I would remind such claimants that the Church of Rome, at the Trent Council, after angry discussions, the sittings in consequence being suspended ten times, ultimately declared, by a majority of twenty-seven votes out of a hundred and eighty-one Bishops present, that there was no *divine right* in Bishops, but that they derived their authority solely from the Pope, and therefore a human institution. Dr. Littledale, in the same tract before referred to on this subject, observes that dissenting ministers "do not undertake to offer *the sacrifice* of the Lord's Body and Blood, nor to bind and loose sins of men;" and that those ministers are "virtually trespassers;" that a sacerdotal character is wholly wanting in them, and that, therefore, the administration of the sacraments by them is wholly void. If, then, an uninterrupted pedigree from the Apostles, in addition to the precise *form* or ceremony, be essential, the chances are fearfully against those who assert the claim of Apostolic succession in their own persons; and, in fact, we assert that no Apostolic succession can be proved to exist. Those who make the claim as applied to themselves, based on *personal* succession and *forms*, in addition to *doctrinal* requirements, should be prepared to produce their credentials. And here it may be also observed that priests of the Roman Church declare that the ministers of religion of any other communion than their own, are not "priests" at all, but simply laymen, having no authority to administer Sacraments.<sup>1</sup>

Our first objection is that "Apostolic succession" on any other basis than the acceptance of Apostolic doctrine, as derived from the teaching of the Apostles, cannot be sustained by the authority of Scripture, the written teaching of the Apostles; and no one ought to be required to accept any doctrine or theory which has not the clear warranty of the sacred Scriptures to support it. If this view of the question be correct, then the entire priesthood of the Roman Church is hopelessly excluded, since they are required, under oath by

<sup>1</sup> See tracts issued by the Catholic Truth Society, "Are the Anglican Clergy Massing Priests?" No. 51; and "Are they Priests?" by Father Breen, O.S.B.

their creed, passing by the title of "the creed of Pope Pius IV.," first published in 1564, to admit that there is no salvation unless all the articles of that creed are unreservedly accepted; added to which we have the doctrines of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, first imposed by the Roman Church as an article of faith in the year 1854, and the supremacy and infallibility of the Pope in faith and morals, as defined by the Vactican Council of 1870, both of which now form part of Rome's amended creed. Neither of these articles are Apostolic doctrines; they have no authority either from Scripture or Tradition.

If the creed of Pope Pius IV. (to say nothing of the additions) be the Catholic faith, out of which there is no salvation, there was no visible Church professing it for fifteen hundred years. There was no authorized priesthood to teach such a faith.

As to the proposition of an uninterrupted and unbroken succession in the priesthood, sealed by certain formularies and ceremonies, it would be an impossible task for those who rely on such a prescriptive right, to produce their proofs. No single person can vouch for such an uninterrupted continuity. The claim can go no further than bare assertion. If such an important element is necessary in the claim to Apostolic succession (and be it remembered that they assert that all graces are conferred alone through the Sacraments, and that duly ordained priests can alone dispense the same), surely salvation ought not to be made dependent on such an uncertain hypothesis unless made clear by proofs.

But the difficulties of our "Apostolical successionist" by no means end here. Taking for example the ancient British Church, of which the Church of England is a "continuity," it is an admitted fact that Christianity was planted in this country, if not by one of the Apostles, by Apostolic missionaries (and not by the Church of Rome), and our Church was independent of Rome as well in her devotions as in the appointment of her Bishops, or ordination of the clergy. Bede tells us, on his arrival here, in the close of the sixth century, he met in conference seven British Bishops and many learned men, and we have no information as to the particular *forms* adopted on the consecration of these Bishops or ordination of "priests." I am not aware that Apostolic succession, in the view now taken of that theory, was in any way recognised amongst us. From the seventh century, by degrees, and by encroachments of the Roman appointed bishops and priests, our Church system became absorbed to a great extent in the Papacy. The majority of our bishops subsequently held their office and obtained their consecration from the Pope of Rome,

and our priests, in their ordination, from these bishops, until the reign of Edward VI. Apostolic succession, therefore, must have come through that corrupt line. All the bishops during the reign of Henry VIII., except Fisher of Rochester, nevertheless abjured the authority and supremacy of the Bishop of Rome, and took the oath of allegiance to the King in matters ecclesiastical as well as civil. They did the same in Ireland without an exception, retaining, however, the Roman system of religion as then professed, but rejecting the one great essential, as now claimed by the Roman creed, viz., supremacy of the Pope and his right to appoint and consecrate bishops; and they were not charged with being schismatics.

Mary deposed all the reforming bishops appointed by Edward. Under Elizabeth, the then Marian - appointed bishops refused to consecrate Parker; but he was validly consecrated by Barlow, one of Mary's deposed bishops, by Bishops Hodgkins and Storey. But this consecration, to this day, is maintained by Romanists to be invalid, and in consequence the "continuity" forfeited. Now this must be a sore point with those amongst us who still claim Apostolic succession, for they can only do so, in their view of the theory, through the Church of Rome. This link, they state, was broken. But the Church of England as reformed still continued, though, according to Roman theories, the so-called Apostolic succession was wholly lost.

It was six years after the Reformation under Elizabeth, viz., 1564, that Rome published her new creed, and thereby established a new community of Christians; since, that creed declares that out of this new formula of faith there is no salvation; whereas up to that date all that was required of a convert was the acceptance of the ancient Nicene Creed.

But our ritualistic "priests" deny this theory of succession of Apostolic doctrine, though many of them, as we have seen, declare that "they are really one with the Church of Rome, in faith, orders, and sacraments," and sigh for a reunion with Rome, when they know full well that this can only be effected by a complete acceptance of Rome's novel creed of 1564, as amended in 1870. Still, they declare that the order of personal succession was not broken. If so, they are dependent on the regularity of the consecration of Roman bishops, and the validity of the orders of Roman priests. If the title through which they claim is invalid, or even doubtful, then must also the claim of Apostolic succession follow suit.

I must repeat here the rule laid down by the Trent Catechism: "In the Sacraments of the new law the *form* is so *definite* that *any*, even a casual, deviation from it renders the

Sacrament null.”<sup>1</sup> “Orders” were first declared by the Church of Rome to be a Sacrament in the year 1439 by the Council of Florence. The same council decreed that in order to constitute a valid Sacrament there must be the *intention* of the officiating bishop or priest to do what the Church intends by the administration of a Sacrament. Wanting such *intention* an ordination would be invalid, and *that* priest could never be consecrated as a valid bishop. This fatal requisition was confirmed by the Council of Trent, after violent opposition. Caterino, Bishop of Minori, pointed out the extreme danger of such a theory. He suggested the case of a priest being “an unbeliever, a hypocrite, who in baptism, absolution, and consecration of the elements, had no intention of doing what the Church does; “we must say,” he adds, “all the children were damned, the penitents not absolved.” He then asserted: “If any said these cases were rare, would to God that in this corrupt age there were no cause to think that they are very frequent.”<sup>2</sup>

Cardinal Bellarmine, the prince of Roman controversial writers, seems to have appreciated the difficulty when he recorded the objection:—

No one can be certain, by the certainty of faith, that he receives a true sacrament, since a sacrament cannot be celebrated without the minister's intention, and no one can see the intention of another.<sup>3</sup>

Andreas Viga, another illustrious divine of the Roman Church, lays down the following:—

It cannot be through faith assured to anyone that he has received the least sacrament, and this is as certain from faith as it is manifest that we are living. For except through the medium of direct revelation, there is no way by which either evidently or through certain faith we can know the intention of him who ministers.<sup>4</sup>

Many other Roman authorities to a like effect might be quoted. The priest who officiates depends on the validity of the consecration by the bishop at whose hands he receives his “orders.” The same Cardinal Bellarmine does not hesitate to record the further objection:—

If we consider in bishops their power of ordination and jurisdiction we have no more than a moral certainty that they are true bishops.<sup>5</sup>

On their own showing, then, orders and succession are, to say the least of it, very doubtful; and as Anglican orders for a series of years were derived through the Roman Church, our

<sup>1</sup> Donovan's “Translation,” p. 259; Dublin, 1829.

<sup>2</sup> “Hist. de Concil de Trent, écrite en Italien par Paul Surpi, traduit par Courayer,” tom. i., lib. ii., pp. 432, 433; Amst., 1751.

<sup>3</sup> Bellar., “De Justificatione,” lib. iii., cap. viii., col. 846, tom. iv.; Paris, 1608.

<sup>4</sup> Opuscula., “De Justificatione,” lib. ix., c. 17; Compl., 1564.

<sup>5</sup> “De Eccl. Milit.,” lib. iii., c. x., tom. ii., col. 139; Paris, 1608.

Apostolic successionists cannot claim for their succession more than can the Roman priesthood.

"Orders" in the Roman Church, as we have seen, were first declared to be a Sacrament by the Council of Florence, 1439; but Dominic Soto, a very learned Romanist, asserted, according to the testimony of Bellarmine, that "Episcopal ordination is not truly and properly a Sacrament."<sup>1</sup> If that be so, our ritualists have a door to effect an escape. But what of the other Sacraments? The repugnant feature of Rome's sacramental and sacerdotal system we find clearly laid down.

In the sixth chapter of the 14th Session of the Trent Council we read:—

The synod also teaches that even priests, who are *bound in mortal sin*, exercise, as the members of Christ, the power of remitting sins by the power of the Holy Ghost conveyed to them in ordination; and that those err in their opinion who contend that *wicked priests* have not this power.

The twelfth canon passed at the 7th Session on transubstantiation declares:—

If any shall say that a minister *in mortal sin* cannot perform or confer a sacrament, provided he observe all the essentials which appertain to the performing or conferring a sacrament, let him be accursed.

Thus placing forms and ceremonies of greater moment than the *faith* and *moral character* of the officiating priest! This theory was endorsed by Peter Dens. He said:—

Every priest can validly consecrate, should he even be wicked, degraded, or excommunicated.<sup>2</sup>

Again, in "The Handbook of the Christian Religion for the Use of the Advanced and the Educated Laity," by the Rev. W. Wilmers, S.J., edited by the Rev. I. Conway, S.J., 2nd edit., p. 311, we read:—

For the valid administration of a sacrament neither sanctity, nor virtue, nor even faith, is necessary on the part of the minister. The Donatists in the fourth century required positive worthiness; and certain Asiatic and African bishops in the third century required at least *faith*; but both these opinions were condemned by the Church as heretical, and justly, for man does not administer the sacraments of his own power, but by the power of Christ, whose instrument he is; but he becomes the instrument of Christ by the sole *intention* to do what the Church does.

If *faith* is not necessary, how can the priest have a right and pure intention?<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bellar., "Disput.," tom. iii., p. 718; Paris, 1721.

<sup>2</sup> "Theolog.," tom. v., No. 28; "De Ministro," p. 293; Dublin, 1832.

<sup>3</sup> Here we may be reminded of our twenty-sixth article. But there are many marked differences between the two systems. We acknowledge but two sacraments instituted by our Lord, Baptism and the Lord's supper. The former is administered to infants, and in an emergency administered by a lay member, and the recipient incapable of any outward sensibility;

It must be remembered that these laws were devised and enacted exclusively by priests. There must have existed good grounds for devising such a scheme, and they were thoroughly persuaded of the urgent necessity of giving validity to their sacerdotal acts, knowing full well the corruption and vile character of some, at least, of their priests. In what other way can we account for the necessity of such exceptional enactments?

Cardinal Bellarmine thus describes Roman priests, whose vices led to the Reformation:—

For my part, I am of opinion that the sophisms, heresies, defections of so many people and kingdoms from the true faith—in a word, all the calamities, wars, tumults, seditions of these most unhappy times, have had their rise from no other causes than these: that the pastors and the other priests of the Lord sought Christ, not for Christ's sake, but that they might eat of the loaves. For some years before the Lutheran and Calvinistic heresy arose, there was hardly any—as those who lived then bear witness—there was, I say, almost no severity in the ecclesiastical courts, no discipline in morals, no instruction in sacred literature, nor reverence in Divine things; there was almost, in fine, no religion. That highly honourable condition of the clergy and the sacred order had come to nought; the priests were a laughing-stock to every worthless knave; they were despised by the people, and laboured under deep and lasting infamy.<sup>1</sup>

God forbid that we should claim succession through such a priesthood!

There is yet another vital flaw in the claim to “succession.” To repeat the rule laid down in the Trent Catechism: “In every Sacrament of the new law the *form* is so definite that even a casual deviation from it renders the Sacrament null.” It is said the same of the *matter* of the Sacrament: “These are the parts which belong to the nature and substance of the Sacrament, and of which every sacrament is necessarily composed.”<sup>2</sup>

---

and at mature age, after due examination, takes upon himself the vows made for him in his baptism. In the second case the recipient has been urgently exhorted not to approach the table unless fit to receive the sacred ceremony, “and by faith *rightly receive*.” The grace, therefore, is solely dependent on the recipient. Whereas the Church of Rome has instituted seven sacraments as absolutely necessary to salvation, particularly *absolution* for all those who have sinned after baptism, which they call a “second justification.” And in all these the priest professes to act in a *judicial* character and not as *minister*, but gives his decision as a judge, and can have no inward knowledge of the sincerity of the recipient; and though he professes to act as a judge, the effect is made to depend on the due performance of *forms* and *ceremonies*, and the *intention* of the priest, over which the recipient has no control; and grace is made dependent on these.

<sup>1</sup> Concio, 28; “De Evang. quomque panam,” Opp., tom. v., col. 296; Colon., 1617.

<sup>2</sup> Donovan's “Translation,” pp. 145, 146; Dublin, 1829.

Now both the *form* and *matter* in the Roman Church have been altered.

Morinus, the learned Roman ritualist, tells us that the ancient form of consecrating bishops was by laying-on of hands, and the gift of the Holy Ghost—"Receive ye the Holy Ghost," etc.; but it was some time after that this form was used in the Ordination of Priests. In the year 1438, by a decree of the Council of Florence, both *form* and *matter* were altered, and therefore a new order of priesthood was created. They declared that the *matter* of this Sacrament should be the delivery of the cup with wine and water in it, and a paten with a host lying on it; and that the *form*, or ordination act, should in future be: "Receive thou the power to offer sacrifices to God and to celebrate masses, both for the living and the dead, in the name of the Lord;"<sup>1</sup> but there is not a word as to laying-on of hands. This was probably from the fact that Romanists now assert that the twelve were ordained priests when Christ said, "Do this," having given them the bread and wine, and there was no laying-on of hands. And as to the *form* and *matter* established by the Council of Florence and now rendered absolutely essential, Peter Dens tells us, in his text-book, as to this *form* and *matter* :—

Neither Scripture nor tradition make any mention of these ceremonies (*i.e.*, the delivery of the cup and paten and form of words), nor is the use of them found at this day among the Greeks, nor was it even among the Latins for the first ten ages of the Church.<sup>2</sup>

And Morinus said he could find no manuscript more than 400 years (he entered the Oratory A.D. 1618; died 1659) which mentioned the imposition of hands with the words, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost," etc., in the Ordination of Priests; and with reference to the present form and matter, the delivery of the vessels, and the words "Receive ye the power to offer," etc., he adduces unanswerable arguments to prove that these are non-essential in "orders," since neither the primitive Church, nor the Eastern Churches, nor the Roman rituals, nor the writers on the Roman offices, ever mention them till within (then) 700 years, there being no decree of councils or popes found to support them until the Council of Florence, 1438.<sup>3</sup>

It is plain, therefore, that "orders" having no such recognised *form* or *matter* for so many centuries could not have been recognised as a Sacrament.

<sup>1</sup> Decret Unimis Concil. Florent, "Lab. et Coss.," tom. xviii., col. 550; Venet., 1728.

<sup>2</sup> "Theolog.," tom. iv., *de Ordine*, see pp. 46, 57; Dublin, 1832.

<sup>3</sup> "Comment. de Sacrament. Eccles. Secundum Antiquos et Recentione," fol.; Antwerp, 1695, pp. 102, 106.



From 1439 to 1552 this Roman form was adopted in England. In 1552, under Edward VI., the form of ordination was altered. In Pickering's edition of the "Black-letter Book" the *form* is thus given: "Receive the Holy Ghost, whose synnes thou dost forgive, they are forgiven, and whose synnes thou dost retain they are retained, and be thou a faithful dispenser of the Word of God. In the name," etc. But there is no mention of laying-on of hands. This form was again altered in 1662 to: "Receive thou the Holy Ghost for the office and work of a priest in the Church of God, now committed to thee *by the imposition of our hands.* Whose sins," etc., as before.

If, then, "Apostolic succession" is made to *depend* on *forms* and *ceremonies*, which it evidently is, the whole fabric of a regular succession of a priesthood crumbles to pieces with its Sacramental sacerdotal system.

But here we must not overlook an episode in our Church connected with this claim of Apostolic succession. We know that during the reign of Mary such of our reforming bishops who had not been deposed, or otherwise secured their safety by flight, were ruthlessly burnt at the stake as heretics. The result was, that when Elizabeth came to the throne the Church was in an anomalous position. Those of the Roman appointed bishops who refused to take the oath of allegiance were deposed; others were to be consecrated in the orthodox form in their stead. The deposed Marian bishops refused to officiate. Here arose a serious difficulty, and Romanists even at the present day assert that the succession was broken, and that therefore the Anglicanists claiming such succession, as they must do, through the Church of Rome, ceased to be Apostolic in their succession, and that, therefore, all subsequent Anglican ordinations or consecrations were thereby rendered invalid. In proof of this, they state that the first "Protestant" Archbishop, Parker, in this "new Establishment," "as by law established," was never properly consecrated. And they invented the Nag's Head fable, where an informal ceremony at that public-house was, as alleged, performed by unconsecrated Bishops. It is on the truth or falsehood of these assertions that the momentous question of "Apostolic succession" in the Anglican Church is made to depend—the test of a true or false Church. If the consecration of the Elizabethan bishops was invalid, then all subsequent ordinations of priests follow suit. Suppose the tale to be true. What then? Are we to believe that out of the Roman Church there can be no ministry of God's Word, no Sacraments, no Church, no salvation? Is it to be supposed that the great and merciful God would place our salvation so as to be dependent

on the truth or falsehood of such a circumstance brought about by the arbitrary and cruel acts of Queen Mary and her Popish advisers? that the merciful atonement of our Blessed Lord ceased to take effect on all Anglicans because Matthew Parker was not, as alleged, legally consecrated, after a peculiar form and fashion invented by man, and which was never declared by Christ or His Apostles to be essential? So wedded are Romanists and High Churchmen to this theory of Apostolic succession, that a host of Romish writers, on the one side, have written volumes to prove not only the truth of the Nag's Head fable, but also of Parker's alleged invalid consecration; while an equal number of champions of the High Church school have written an equal number of volumes to prove it to be "a weak invention of the enemy"; but neither party is convinced by the arguments of the other. The Nag's Head fable becomes important only as illustrating the theory, contended for by these two parties, that the essence or principle does consist in the supposed fact of an uninterrupted or unbroken personal succession (even though it comes through a tainted current), as being transmitted from hand to hand from the time of the Apostles to the present time, through a succession of duly consecrated bishops, and both making the supposed fact the article of a standing or fallen Church. If the tale be true, and Parker's consecration invalid, then our Anglican Church, according to Ritualistic notions, ceases to be a Church; her "priesthood" is an empty title; her Sacraments null and void, since they claim their pedigree through the Roman Church. But as we cannot bring ourselves to a serious contemplation of the supposed frightful consequences of such a state of things, and as the facts have been properly investigated, we believe that Matthew Parker was duly consecrated by recognised duly consecrated bishops, and that the claim of antiquity and precedent was followed.

If any consolation, this is easy of proof. Pope Julius III. addressed a brief to Cardinal Pole, dated March 8, 1554, desiring him to absolve and reconcile the bishops and priests made in Edward VI.'s time, but not directing him to re-ordain them, though they had received no sort of commission to sacrifice. The Council of Trent was asked by Pius IV. to declare the Elizabethan bishops unlawful, but the Council expressly refused to do so. It was admitted at the Council of Trent that Anglican bishops "had due vocation, election, consecration, and mission," and only needed the recognition of the Pope to be acknowledged as true bishops in the Roman sense. The Irish bishop, Fitzmaurice of Aghadoe, discussed the question at the Trent Council, asserting that the recognition of

the Pope constituted the only distinction between Roman and Anglican orders, and this was universally accepted.<sup>1</sup>

To come to a later date. The subject of the validity of Anglican orders was completely cleared up, for what that examination was worth. The objection was set aside by the production of our records, when the French divines, in 1718, sought to effect a union of the Anglican and Gallican Churches. Twice before this question of "orders" came before the doctors of Sorbonne in Paris, as recorded by Courayer, and on both occasions the validity of Anglican orders was recognised. Even Bossuet admitted that the ordination of Anglican bishops and priests was as valid as that of their own.<sup>2</sup>

And Dr. Lingard, the historian and Roman priest, referring to the appointment of bishops under Queen Elizabeth, admits that—

The consecration (of Parker) was performed, though with a little variation, according to the ritual of Edward VI. Two of the consecrators, Barlow and Hodgkins, had been ordained bishops according to the Roman Pontifical (quoting Wilkins, iv. 193); of this consecration there can be no doubt. Perhaps in the interval between the refusal of the Catholic prelates and the performance of the ceremony some meeting may have taken place at the Nag's Head, which gave rise to the story. ("Hist. of England," vol. viii., p. 500. London, 1823.)

The Nag's Head incident Lingard pronounced to be a "fable."

Dr. Dollinger—and perhaps modern Rome has produced no more learned man—at Bonn in 1875 said:—

The fact that Parker was consecrated by four rightly-consecrated bishops, *rite et legitime*, with imposition of hands and the necessary words, is so well attested that if one were to doubt the fact, one could with the same right doubt one hundred thousand facts. . . . The fact is as well established as a fact can be required to be. Bossuet has acknowledged the validity of Parker's consecration, and no critical historian can dispute it. The Orders of the Roman Church could be disputed with more appearance of reason. (Report of the Conference at Bonn, 1875, p. 96. London, 1876.)

The main objection now relied on is that the documentary proof of Barlow's consecration is not forthcoming. Though missing, we have plenty of confirmatory evidence of the fact. He sat in the House of Lords as Bishop in Queen Mary's reign, and the objection was only raised forty-seven years after his death, and eighty years after his consecration. If we applied the same requisition to Roman bishops, how few could be substantiated! The documentary proofs of the consecration of

<sup>1</sup> *Quæ sententia omnibus placere maximè visa est* ("Le Plat. Mon. Concil. Trid.," tom. v., p. 578).

<sup>2</sup> See Courayer, "Défence de la Dissertation," c. iv. (Bruxelles, 1726), Pièces Justificatives.

more than twenty bishops during the reigns of Henry VII. and Henry VIII., including two archbishops of York, are equally wanting, and no objection has been taken to their consecration.

All this is no doubt very consoling to the claimants of a *personal* Apostolic succession, but all these forms and ceremonies were of human invention; and are our "priests" in any more secure position by claiming parentage through the Church of Rome? What does it really signify in the sight of God one way or the other? The objection raised to Parker's consecration brings to mind a similar difficulty in the election of a Pope. We are told by Cardinal Baronius in his "Annals,"<sup>1</sup> on the election of Pelagius I., himself at the time a layman, he "could find no bishop at Rome to consecrate him, and it was necessary that a *priest* of Ostium—a thing which had never occurred before—should discharge that office instead of a bishop, according to the orders of Pelagius himself." Parker's alleged irregular election is a dangerous precedent for a Romanist to quote.

Let us now consult a higher and infallible tribunal, the sacred Scriptures.

Christ appointed twelve Apostles to carry out and perpetuate His teaching; there was no form or ceremony in their appointment, but His last injunction to them was, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. And these signs shall follow them that believe. In My name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly poison, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover" (Matt. xvi. 15-20). And we are told that they "went forth preaching everywhere, and confirming the Word with signs." We would ask our "Apostolic successionists" whether they practise and inherit these Apostolic powers? As to doctrine, they were "to observe whatsoever Christ had commanded them," and on their fulfilling that command, He promised His presence, "even unto the end of the world" (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20). And we find that they "continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine," and they "sold their possessions, and gave them to all men as every man had need." But the office of preaching and teaching was not confined to the Apostles; the same commission was given to "the seventy" (Luke x.), all laymen; and superhuman powers were given to them; and to these laymen our Lord

<sup>1</sup> A.D. 498, tom. iv., p. 582, Antwerp, 1601.

<sup>2</sup> We have proofs of several cases of priests being poisoned while partaking of the Sacrament consecrated by themselves.

said: "He that heareth you, heareth Me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth Me." And "He gave them power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you." So that these exceptional privileges were not confined to the Apostles. These would-be successionists can practise none of the Apostolical gifts, while they retain to themselves exclusively an Apostolic succession. To what do they succeed which any other minister of the Gospel cannot equally practise and teach?

They call attention to the power given "to bind and loose" (Matt. xviii. 18). By examining the context it will clearly appear that this had no reference whatever to the forgiveness of sins in Sacramental absolution. Our Lord in addressing the disciples delivered a *moral* lesson; and note, "He called a little child and set him in the midst of them;" therefore we may fairly presume there were women and children present whom He was addressing. This lesson reads as follows:—

Moreover, if thy brother shall *trespass* against thee, go and tell him his *fault* between thee and him alone; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the Church (*ἐκκλησία*, literally assembly); but if he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, *there am I in the midst of them* (Matt. xviii. 15, 20).

The context explains fully the intention of our Lord, as relating to *personal offences only*. The word "Church" (*ἐκκλησία*) can only mean the *assembly*, and not "priests." That Peter himself so understood the teaching of our Lord is evident from the inquiry which immediately followed: "Lord, how often shall my brother *sin against me*, and I forgive him? till seven times?" Jesus said unto him, "I say not unto thee until seven times: but until seventy times seven."

I would ask our Apostolic successionists whether they adopt this course when they undertake to "bind and loose"? Do they not rather take their penitent into a confessional-box and there *secretly* hear the confession and give absolution, but do not "tell it unto the Church"?

The word *ἐκκλησία* is three times rendered "assembly" in the Roman Catholic translation (Challoner Wiseman edition, 1847), Acts xix. 32, 39, 40, and an "assembly" which was confused.

The text Matt. xviii. 18 is invariably quoted in conjunction with the text from St. John's Gospel xx. 22, 23.

"He" (Christ) "breathed on them" (the disciples) "and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whosoever sins ye remit they are remitted unto them, and whosoever sins ye retain they are retained."

If the passages are parallel, as Bellarmine maintained, then the commission was restricted to personal offences; and nowhere do we find that the Apostles or disciples undertook to remit sins. It is evident that others beside the "eleven" were present on this occasion (see Luke xxiv. 33). Cleopas found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them; who, equally with the Apostles, received the same breath of the Spirit, and the Holy Ghost. But it may well be questioned whether any power of "binding and loosing," as understood by the Church of Rome, was then conferred upon the Apostles and disciples. The account given by St. Luke (xxiv. 47) of our Saviour's words states: "That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name." Adopting this explanation, we can well understand that those who accepted the preaching of the Gospel by the Apostles would obtain the "remission of their sins," while to those who rejected it, their sins were "retained." This, too, seems to have been the interpretation placed by the Apostles upon our Lord's words, for we do not find an instance of any Apostle pronouncing an "absolution," or remitting the sins of any individual. On the contrary, we read, Acts iii. 19, that Peter himself preached to the Jews, "Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord." He did not say, "Confess to me and I will give you absolution," as it would have been his bounden duty to do, if he had received any such power from our Lord. It is a fact to be noted that Matthew xxviii., Mark xvi., and Luke xiv. refer to this interview, but do not even mention the important incident and words related by St. John. But we do read that Christ upbraided them; also commissioned them to go and teach all nations what he had commanded them (Matthew), that they should attest their mission by performance of miracles and signs (Mark); and they received the blessing of the Lord (Luke). If such an exceptional power had been conferred on them as now asserted, could they have failed to record it?

We read in St. Matthew's Gospel (x. 8) Christ had conferred on His Apostles powers to heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, to raise the dead. Freely he had given them these powers, and He enjoined them freely to exercise them. It is a remarkable fact that throughout the New Testament we do not find one

instance of the Apostles, or the disciples, or "the seventy" forgiving sins, but we do find it recorded that the Apostles and the seventy performed other miracles. How is it, I ask, that our "Apostolic successionists" do not attempt the latter process, heal the sick, etc., while they profess to give their absolutions from sin? The solution of this question is easy, for if they attempted the latter their imposture would be revealed, while they profess to give absolution from sins and no one is the wiser as to the result! In not one of the instances cited is any intimation given that the promises should extend to the successors of the Apostles. Whereas these modern theorists place an equal power in the "hands" of a bishop as the breath of Christ shedding on His disciples the gift of the Holy Spirit, whatever that may have conveyed.

We are often reminded in controversy by Romanists that Christ entrusted to St. Peter the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and "*Whosoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven*" (Matt. xvi. 19). Here was a personal gift given to St. Peter, and not extended to any of his so-called successors. This is the view taken by Tertullian, of the second century, rebuking the Bishop of Rome when he undertook to whitewash an adulterer;<sup>1</sup> while others of the Fathers say what was said to Peter was said to all the Apostles. And we find it nowhere recorded that Peter availed himself of these figurative implements, which are now claimed by every Pope, bishop and priest of the Roman Church—a claim founded on the assertion that Peter was first Bishop of Rome, and that the Popes are his lawful successors, not only as Bishops of Rome, but also endowed with all the prerogatives and powers alleged to have been vested in Peter. Whereas there is not a tittle of evidence that Peter was ever Bishop of Rome; and many have raised strong doubts whether he ever was at Rome. But that is another branch of the controversy.<sup>2</sup>

Further, it will be observed that Christ has here adopted the same form of words as on the occasion recorded by St. Matthew (xviii.) above referred to, addressed to the whole assembly, when Peter was present. The whole of the Petrine claim is based on the text of Matt. xvi., as clearly set forth in the decrees of the Vatican Council of 1870. But, what is also remarkable, neither Mark, Luke, nor John, in their Gospels, in the most distant manner refer to the gift of the keys or of

<sup>1</sup> "De Pudic.," c. xxv., pp. 767, 768, edit. Rhenan.

<sup>2</sup> For proofs see my "Chair of Peter," in reply to Mr. Allnutt's "Cathedra Petri," Protestant Alliance, Strand, W.C. Price sixpence.

founding Christ's Church on Peter. Surely they could not have conceived the notion that the Church was founded on Peter, and that exceptional powers were vested in him which he never assumed, much less that those powers were to descend on his so-called successors, the Popes of Rome now claiming the exclusive privilege of being such successors.

They now tell us that the "twelve" were appointed priests, when at "the Last Supper" Christ said to them, "Do this in remembrance of Me" (Luke xxii. 19). Now, it is again remarkable that these words, so important in the establishment of a priesthood, are not recorded by the other three Evangelists. Eastius, a learned Roman Catholic divine, does not assign such interpretation of Christ's words; he said: "It does not appear at all solid, nor agreeable to ancient interpreters." And he adds, "*Hoc facite*: 'Do this,' belongs to the common people eating and drinking of this Sacrament, and that St. Paul refers to them."<sup>1</sup>

Presuming, however, that the "twelve" were constituted as "priests," but not in the modern Roman sense, "sacrificing priests" (for no such institution is recognised in the New Testament), there is another important fact which we must record: Judas had committed suicide. The eleven deemed it necessary to appoint a successor in the ministry, the first recorded act of Apostolic succession, "to take part of this ministry and apostleship." There were two candidates, Barnabas and Matthias. The election was made by lot, and the lot fell on Matthias" (Acts i. 26). And "they continued in Apostolic doctrine." The next form we find in Acts vi. 2, when Stephen was chosen deacon by the twelve, with some others, with prayer and laying-on of hands; the disciples multiplied "*and were obedient to the faith.*"

With all these facts before us we conclude that the claim to Apostolic succession by virtue of the "priestly" office is a myth. Whatever may be the wisdom of historical forms of government, and the duty of national communion, they have the true Apostolic succession who "hold the Apostolic faith in unity of spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life," whether lay or clerical, Churchmen or Nonconformists.

I conclude with the words of Archdeacon Farrar in his sermon on Hebrews vii. :—

True Apostolic succession is the blessed continuity of Christian goodness.

C. H. COLLETTE.

<sup>1</sup> In lib. iv., Sent. tom. iv., p. 105. Paris, 1638.

ERRATA.—In last No., p. 40, for "incubere famæ" read "incumbere famæ"; and in note 3, p. 42, for "Hertæ" read "Halæ."