

ARTICLE IV.

THE SCRIPTURAL FOUNDATION FOR CHRISTIAN
UNITY.¹

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ONE morning in the Litchfield parsonage, the voice of Lyman Beecher was heard calling up the stairway: "Say, boys, what is the matter up there?" Thomas answered: "Father! Henry says God couldn't make two hills without a valley between them." Henry's contention was sound. It simply means that God has fixed laws for the construction and government of His universe, and that it is, therefore, an orderly, reasonable, and reliable creation. Of course, this does not mean that for every manifestation of divine power the law is known; but, rather, that the line of action is according to law, and with human progress will be discovered and explained. And this is not all there is to this fundamental matter. A law of matter or spirit discovered to-day, explains the movement of life in its zone of operation during all time and eternity. The scientific man stakes his soul and reputation on this truth.

Because law accurately marks the line of action which God takes to express His thought and emotion, the New Testament doctrine at once comes into clear view, that in the Incarnation He was purposely obedient to the laws of human condition and achievement. The intent and object of the Satanic assault in the wilderness was to persuade Our Lord

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to remove from this position; when defeat came to the tempter he found himself face to face with a moral world of law possessed of orderly strength and durability. Christ often said that the Redemption of the world required that He fulfil all the demands of spiritual law. This was the way of victory for Him over the powers of death and hell. It is the only way of progress and victory, always and everywhere. Bacon puts it this way: "By obedience to the laws of nature and grace, we reap their reward."

Our Lord told the disciples, as they were able to understand, that His gospel was for all the peoples of the world. The complete statement is the Great Commission. This postulated in His mind an organ of expression, for thought and emotion never do work until focalized and extended by organization. This is the way men are reached and society is influenced. Again, His serious concern was that His followers should be perfected in the character originated and sustained by grace. This meant that they were to be under the reign of the law of love, and therefore must live in a mutually helpful relation. This called for organization. From the first of the public ministry, He announced that He would found and organize a Divine Society. There was the clear statement of this intention in the words commending St. Peter for saying that He was "the Christ, the Son of the Living God," manifested in Incarnation for the Redemption of the world. Then He adds: "Upon this rock [or fact] I will build my Church: and the gates of hell [all organized opposition] shall not prevail against it." In addition to making clear His purpose to found and organize the Divine Society, these words make just as clear the foundation truth on which this organization rests and the object for which it exists. The fact is that "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt

among us," and that when this truth of the Incarnate God is preached and believed, it results in the salvation of the individual and the social body. People may come together in an organization for religious ends with this truth left out; such a body is a religious association. Neither in the Gospels, the Acts, nor the Epistles is there any direct or remote suggestion that the work of founding the Divine Society was left to the Apostles or any one else.

Indeed, Our Lord speaks of the Divine Society as existing in the early part of His ministry. He enjoins that difficulties between members in the last resort be referred to Her for settlement. This affirms that the Divine Society was in existence to deal with such matters; and certainly any other view emasculates His words of all sense and practical application. The first members were the Apostles. St. Paul makes it clear in 1 Cor. xv. 5, 6, that before the crucifixion this number had increased. The application of this passage to the matter in hand is explained by the fact that in his Epistles he speaks of those in the divine fellowship as *brethren*. He defines them as *saints*, but he uses the other word to designate those who had accepted the common salvation. Speaking of the post-resurrection appearances of Our Lord, he says: "He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve. After that, he was seen of above five hundred *brethren* at once." The Divine Society was in the embryo state; and, like every other embryo, contained all the potencies of all subsequent growth. After the Pentecostal illumination, the involved principles began to unfold in the work of extension. This is the way with all associated progress. The Fathers of the Constitution stated, in that document, principles of whose unfolding they had no idea at all; but all subsequent national growth has been directed by them.

A detailed examination of the Acts and the Epistles would give additional evidence on what has been said. As regards the Acts it will help to clearness to call attention to the fact that in all of the Pentecostal record, there is not found the slightest suggestion that the Divine Society came into existence at that time. It is simply inconceivable that the accurate and painstaking Luke would have omitted all mention of such a momentous event. As the case stands, he does affirm the existence of the Divine Society, because he says that those being saved were added daily to her.

A society, whether of divine or human origin, to do work must have officers. To this requirement Our Lord was obedient. The first order of the Christian ministry was directly and personally originated by Him. The sacred record preserves this great transaction in these definite words: "And he goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto him whom he would: and they came unto him. And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach" (St. Mark iii. 13-14). This matter of receiving and exercising authority in the office of sacred things was a most serious concern to the Apostolic men. They were Hebrews in education and sympathy. They understood the terrible divine punishment which came on Korah and Abiram for having attempted to take, in and of themselves, the authority of the Aaronic priesthood. In various ways Our Lord both recognized and sanctioned its sacred and necessary functions. Every error that is now in the world has always been in it doing business. In the early crude state of the Apostles they concluded that they were the source of authority; but Our Lord said to them: "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit" (St. John xv. 16). Years after

the Divine Society had spread as far as the Euphrates, the author of Hebrews voices the common conviction that "no man taketh this honor unto himself." St. Paul was charged by Judaizing believers with having inducted himself into the Christian ministry. He acknowledged the seriousness of the accusation, which certainly conveys his thought and feeling on the matter. In reply he affirms, in the clearest and most solemn way, that he was a minister and Apostle of the gospel of the resurrection, not by the will and authority of man, but by that of Jesus Christ. It may be said that he does not give any official record of his ordination, and therefore, . . . and so on. There is no official record in England of the birth of Queen Victoria, but it is tolerably evident that she was born once upon a time. Of that which he did during his three years' seclusion in Arabia, or what was done for him, we do not know anything at all. But we do know that on his return he went up to Jerusalem to visit St. Peter, and he also became acquainted with St. James, the Lord's brother. The influence of the Hebrew tradition was strong with these two Apostles. It was particularly so with St. James, and it is a clear moral certainty, that, had St. Paul's induction into the Christian ministry been invalid, they would not have received him. Nothing of the kind took place. As subsequent events showed, they, with other Apostles, commended him to the churches, and rejoiced in his abundantly successful labors in preaching the gospel to the Gentiles.

This first order of the Christian ministry was perpetuated by itself. The choosing and appointing of a successor to Judas, the *betrayed*, was done by the Apostles, and there is not the first scrap of evidence that others had anything to do with it. The Apostles ordained the men to the other two sacred offices — Deacons and Presbyters. The diaconate

comes last, but in the sacred record is mentioned first. The setting apart of the seven men as deacons was done by the Apostles in the presence of the congregation. The Apostles said: "Look ye out, brethren, from among you seven men of good report, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business." They were chosen and "set before the Apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them." There does not seem to be any clear statement of when the office of Presbyter came into existence. Certain it is that it came, and that the Apostles ordained men to it. They did this as Overseers or Bishops of the Divine Society. On a missionary journey through Asia Minor, St. Paul and St. Barnabas "ordained them Elders in every Church" (Acts xiv. 23). Evidently both the churches and the Apostles considered this act needful for the completion of the religious organization, and that the latter, as Bishops, were the authorized persons to do the ordaining. After Titus had been consecrated Bishop, St. Paul appointed him to the diocese of Crete to "set in order the things that were [are] wanting, *and appoint elders in every city*" (Titus i. 5). The fifteenth chapter of the Acts makes it just as clear as language can that St. James the Less was Bishop of Jerusalem, and, as such, presided at the council held there. The evidence of the Epistles and the Revelation is to the same effect; so that the sacred record makes it clear that in the Apostolic days the ministry of the Divine Society was threefold—Bishops, Presbyters, and Deacons.

The object of this presentation is not to deal largely with the evidence furnished by the leaders of the Divine Society in the Primitive days. The first third of the second century is very close to the Apostolic period. Irenæus of Lyons (136–202) gives the following evidence: "We can enumer-

ate those who were constituted [consecrated] Bishops by the Apostles and the successors of those Bishops to our own time." A little later (150–226) Tertullian summarizes the evidence thus: "As the Church in Smyrna relates Polycarp to have been constituted [consecrated] there by John, as the Church of Rome affirms Clement to have been ordained by Peter, so in like manner the rest of the churches exhibit the records of those whom they have for Bishops, constituted [consecrated] by the Apostles and conveyors of the Apostolic seed to them." To the same definite effect is the evidence of Eusebius, who says, Ignatius was made Bishop of Antioch in 69, having been consecrated by the Apostles.

Any one desiring can have the abundant evidence that this ministry of the New Testament has come to the present day unimpaired in all of the branches of the Apostolic and Catholic Church—the Greek, the Roman, and the Anglican, the Episcopal in the United States. A word of apology would seem to be required on the position of these religious bodies claiming Apostolic succession through what is called the Presbyter-Bishop line. They teach their claims diligently in their literature. To begin with, the term is of recent origin, there being no trace of it in Christian literature till the sixteenth century. It is true that one Coluthus, a presbyter of the diocese of Alexandria, about 324 took upon himself to make other presbyters out of laymen. He was promptly excommunicated, and his candidates were pronounced laymen. It certainly is not an unfair expectation that, in such a serious matter, the general Christian public has the full right to claim that those religious bodies holding and teaching the Presbyter-Bishop explanation of the Christian ministry shall both morally believe it and honestly practise it. It is purely what business men call "good faith." Now, it is a fact well known

and understood that the Congregational teaching and practice is that every body of believers may and should choose and ordain their ministers. These people have never claimed Apostolic succession, and care very little about it. In all of their generations, they have stood staunchly and honestly by their profession. It is just as well known that all the time Congregational ministers are passing into the active service of those religious bodies holding the Presbyter-Bishop theory, and it would seem morally needful, at least, that they be ordained according to its prescribed rules. This is never done, and it is useless to examine religious or any other claims disingenuously made.

Baptism is the initiatory sacrament into the Divine Society. Quite the clearest statement of its spiritual meaning is St. John iii. 1-22. This was made by the Apostle after years of reflection on the teaching of Our Lord concerning it; and, moreover, it sets forth this teaching as it had been received and practised by the Divine Society for more than two generations. Baptism is the outward and visible sign and oath that all of the privileges and obligations of revealed grace are joyfully assumed and will be discharged up to the measure of ability and opportunity. It is, therefore, that in the New Testament the forgiveness of sins is coupled with obedience. This is psychologically true, for certainly there is no room in the soul for the divine approbation until the one great decision has been made and expressed, to be the faithful servant and soldier of Our Lord. In all that He ever said there is no hint, much less positive teaching, that there can be an approved and accepted life outside of incorporation into Him through the Divine Society. The psychological laws involved hold sway in all of the associated relations of men. Sentiment does not make the alien an American citizen;

taking the great oath of allegiance to the Constitution does. Sentiment does not establish the home; taking the marriage vows and the plighting of troth does. Admiration of Our Lord's wonderful words of love does not bring to the soul the liberty and strength of His touch; the irrevocable obedience of the soul expressed and declared as He has appointed, does.

" Now these are the Laws of the Jungle,
And many and mighty are they;
But the head and the hoof of the Law,
And the haunch and the hump, is—OBEY."

One direct object of the Divine Society was the unification of men of every race and clime in a common brotherhood. Another object was their education in the gracious and victorious life. Now, one of the two-sided psychological experiences of men in all associated relations is that they can and do unite on facts, and that they do separate on opinion, or the explanation of the facts. The world was full to superfluity of religious opinion or theology when the Apostles began to extend the gospel of a crucified and risen Saviour. The Jewish teachers had stacks of theology; the Greek philosophers, like their present-day successors, were expert in evolving from their social and religious consciousness a new religion every twenty-four hours. The men of the *cross* followed the true method of the educator teaching successfully chemistry, geology, or any other science, which is to present the facts of the science as the originating source of the desired intellectual unfolding. They preached the redemptive facts of the Incarnate God, and forthwith there came into vigorous life a mighty conviction of brotherhood of all sorts and conditions of men, for mutual, moral benefit and the spiritual conquest of the world. St. Luke, in his record of the

Pentecostal period, speaks of these facts as the Apostles' doctrine, and that in them "the disciples continued steadfastly" (Acts ii. 42). St. Paul affirms them as "the form of sound words" (2 Tim. i. 13). These men wrote in Greek, and used doctrine instead of creed. Some Roman disciples at a later date gave them literary expression, and accordingly used the word "creed." This creed of the Apostles is the New Testament foundation of belief for the unification of God's people. These redemptive facts are "the faith which was once delivered to the saints" (Jude 3), and "other foundation hath no man laid than which is laid" by the Incarnate God. It is up through the facts of nature that we pass to the Power, not ourselves, who rides upon the storm to govern it, and energizes the stars in their courses. It is by means of these redemptive facts that we come in connection with the presence and life of the stooping, sacrificing, and delivering Heart of Love at the center of the universe, by whom are all things, and for whom are all things. (So persistent and wide-spread had been the representation that the Thirty-nine Articles constitute the creed of the Episcopal Church, that it may be said here with propriety, that she never has had, does not now have, and never will have any other creed than the Apostles'. The Nicene Creed is an explanatory enlargement of the New Testament "form of sound words.")

A great psychological law in education is the touch and communication of spiritual energy from one soul to another. This law operates just as vitally and constructively in the spiritual education of personality as in all other soul growth and achievement. Our Lord cordially recognized it and commented upon it. He was to pass out of and be above the physical limitations of Incarnation; but, all the same, He would come to His people, so that, by continued giving of

Himself to them, they would be successfully energized in the conquering of truth for character-building, and the subjection of the world to the obedience of the *cross*. And this brings up the whole subject of personality communicating with personality. How does soul touch soul and impart itself, as men go their various walks in life, as they help and hinder, as they achieve and rest, in social condition?

The individual spirit reaches and communicates with the outside world by means of the physical brain and senses. One spirit touches and communicates with another spirit by means of some physical copula.

"The baby new to earth and sky"

communicates with grown-ups with no other language than a cry, and that cry is a physical thing. The cordial handshake symbolizes friendship. The soldier on the field of battle, on looking up at the colors, has his patriotism aroused, and he is sustained by a renewed sense of the interests of home and nationality. A letter and the post service are the physical means used by the mother to communicate to her absent boy her interested love and her confidence. And so on to the end of spirit touching and communicating with spirit, under the reign of a fixed and invariable law. Very early in the Divine Society this law, as it has to do with the Lord's Supper, was called "the sacramental principle." But—

"What's in a name? that which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet,"—

and this ever-present psychological law, by whatever name it may be called, would be the same. It is the nature and character of the law which give force and meaning to the name. And, then, there is the law of the appropriateness in the symbols of the soul touch and communion. The artist would never think of attempting to express the ethical ideas of faith,

hope, and charity by the figures of three strong and burly men. Plighted and loyal love is fittingly symbolized by a precious stone, or some such thing. When the Roman Senate sent a sword to Carthage, the purpose of the Senate was made clear. The mercy-seat in the Holy Place of the Hebrew tabernacle was overlaid with pure gold. It was at the mercy-seat that Almighty God made known His presence; so that there could have been a no more fitting symbolizing of His attitude towards sin, and man's need of forgiveness. These principles of expression are a part of the constitution of human nature.

And so, what did Our Lord do in the presence of this psychological condition to assure the perpetual inflow of Himself into His faithful people? For the cardinal New Testament doctrine is that of God and man in a living state of communion. His people must feed upon Him for soul growth and guidance in the ways of truth and service. When Incarnate, He conveyed Himself by voice, look, touch, and wonderful words of spoken truth — all physical *media*. Now that He is in glory, spiritual touch and communion with believers must be in obedience to the sacramental principle, and other physical symbols are required. And not only so, the symbols must be such as to meet all involved expectation. Now the spiritual meaning of bread to the devout Hebrew was character, and the blood meant the life. The sacred record shows the use made of these by Our Lord in instituting the Christian Passover. For, "In the night in which he was betrayed," He set apart and consecrated bread and wine as the physical things to connect and convey to all believing souls, His spiritual Body and Blood; in other words, His Character and Life; that is, Himself. It is distinctly noticeable that, after each blessing or consecration, He enjoins: "Do this in remembrance

of me." A single question brings out the very heart and sacrificial nature of the Lord's Supper. Who is Me? Jesus the Son of God, "the same yesterday, to-day, and forever more." St. John makes this fundamental truth clear when he says of the Crucified One, He was and is "the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world." The Word was made flesh, and was manifested in and through earthly conditions, for the express end of establishing forever, in human thought and emotion, the fact that Love is sacrificial. As He has done, so He does now, and ever will do world without end. Therefore, as oft as ye do this, do it in full knowledge of the fact that, in identically the same spirit of merciful approach and forgiveness, the glorified Lord will inflow Himself into repentant and believing souls. They will feed on Him, and be filled with all heavenly benediction.

This is the Apostolic and Primitive teaching of the Lord's Supper. It is expressly stated and taught in St. John vi. 48-63 and 1 Cor. xi. 23-27. It is, indeed, the Holy Communion. At an early date it was called "the Eucharistic Sacrifice," which, by interpretation, means, "the Sacrifice of Thanksgiving." It was offered every Lord's Day; and now, where parish needs require, the sacrifice is offered every day in the year. It is the very center and originating heart of human and divine reconciliation.¹

¹For fifteen hundred years this was the teaching of the Divine Society. The fierce attack of the sixteenth century on Apostolic doctrine opened the way for the religious speculation of the Greek philosophers to become prominent. The chief one was the pagan definition of sacrifice. In no way at all did this embody and set forth the idea of personal and spiritual communion with the imagined god. The essence of the act was offering that which it was supposed the god needed, to be kept good-natured and in his proper place. On the other hand, when Abraham builded an altar, it was for divine worship or communion through the *media*

The final fact everywhere conspicuous in the sacred record is that the Divine Society of the New Testament was a brotherhood—a democracy—"the family of God." Her ministry was for the teaching of revealed grace and the enforcement, with the authority of its divine origin, of the law of mercy and reconciliation. Such she remained until her calamitous incorporation by Constantine into the Roman imperial system of government. Such she was in England until the Norman Conquest. Then in various ways began the enforcement on the Anglican Communion of the imperialized ecclesiasticism of Papal Rome. From this she has suffered grievously and keenly feels that she suffers now. In this country the Anglican Communion exists, known as Episcopal, and is a "Free Church in a Free State."

Men in all associated relations are governed by law. Scientists have made it quite clear that the law of reversion to type holds inexorable sway in every corner of this physical world. It is just as operative in social and religious things. This law in religious thought and practice has been operating effectively within the memory of living people. It is not very long ago that the Puritan brother would have it that his place of worship was "a meeting-house," and not a church; to-day it is the latter, and offense is sometimes taken over the use of the former term. The chief feasts and fasts of the Apostolic body were rejected as "pagan survivals"; now they are quite generally accepted because of expressing great facts and principles of the animal offered. In other words, sacrifice meant communion with Almighty God. This is and ever has been the Christian doctrine of sacrifice. The Lord's Supper is the sacrifice of the ever-approaching and glorified Lord and the repentant believer in communion; both touch in the heavenly fellowship. The fact of its being a sacrifice is the originating source of the priestly function of the Apostolic ministry; for certainly a sacrifice postulates a sacrifice.

ciples of divine grace. The Primitive and Eastern theology embedded in the Book of Common Prayer was once contraband; to-day there is a distinct and steady return to it. Not very long ago it was stoutly said and taught that Our Lord did not found the Divine Society, nor did He ordain a ministry, nor establish the sacrament of grace. Impartial scholarship has compelled the recognition of all these points of fundamental importance. However, the old negation comes up in the affirmation that the historical continuity was lost somewhere in the troubled times of the Middle Ages. Again this is a matter of historical evidence, and there is an abundance to establish and preserve forever the principle of continuity. Because of the intense and aggressive individualism of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the vote of the congregation was affirmed the source of creedal and ecclesiastical authority. It should never be forgotten that those men wrought honestly according to their conclusions. What is more, all of the compelling forces involved were not their creation, — very far from it. But now comes, far and away, the highest Puritan authority on the Apostolic and Primitive periods,¹ who shows that it was not so in Palestine and the regions round about in those early and formative days. He says that the Greek words used in describing the government of local Christian bodies prohibits any such conclusion. It is not so very long ago that it was confidently taught that Christianity was introduced into Britain by Augustine. The great German and English writers on Jurisprudence, with no other object than that of stating the sources of the great Common Law, make it clear that the Divine Society was in Britain long before the Roman mission, that she formed the English Nation, and furnished the social-political principles of Anglo-Saxon civilization. Christian people cordially be-

¹ Sir W. M. Ramsay, *Pictures of the Apostolic Church*, p. 169.

believing in Our Lord as the Incarnate God, and, without mental or moral reservation, accepting His redemptive work, are in league with one of the great laws governing all things, whether seen or unseen. Stop its operation? As well try to stop the sun shining, or the rivers running in their courses to the sea.