

into the Unknown. With eye undimmed, and natural force unabated, he has gone, in the plenitude of his age, his fame, and his affection. How better can we take leave of him than in his own noble words, composed a few short months ago, on the death of the Duke of Clarence ?

The face of Death is toward the Sun of Life,
His shadow darkens earth : his truer name
Is " Onward," no discordance in the roll
And march of that Eternal Harmony
Whereto the worlds beat time, tho' faintly heard
Until the great Hereafter. Mourn in hope !

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ART. V.—THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY NOT A SACERDOTAL PRIESTHOOD.

PART I.

THE doctrine of a sacerdotal order carried on under Christianity draws on in its train so many perilous consequences to the faith and practice of Christians, that its revival among us at the present time cannot but awaken the most serious anxieties in the minds of all who look upon the oneness and exclusiveness of the priesthood of Christ as the very corner-stone of the New Testament, the one foundation of the faith and the hope of the disciple in every age and place. We can hardly honestly maintain such a doctrine unless we remove from the canon of scripture the Epistle to the Hebrews, which constitutes a professed and elaborate argument against the revival of it in any form. The contention of the writer of that epistle, or rather, connected discourse, is that a priesthood of succession is impossible in a case where the only possessor of the priesthood has an everlasting life, and, therefore, can have no successor; that there can be, therefore, no sacrifice beyond or in addition to that which He has made once for all, no altar but that on which He was offered, and which He Himself becomes to all who offer up spiritual sacrifices to God on the altar of His great atonement.

In the examination of this subject it is necessary to consider—

- I. The original constitution of the Church as an outward community—during the life of Christ.
- II. The nature and character of the Church as it came out from Judaism.

III. The ministerial character of the Christian ministry as contrasted with the sacerdotal order in the former Church.

I. It cannot but appear to every unprejudiced reader of the Gospel narratives that our Lord called into existence a society which had an equality throughout, every member of which had an equal and direct relation with Himself as the Head—the supreme and only Monarch of this spiritual community. The first principle of this society is the union of every believer with Christ in His Divine Person and life, separately and individually—"that they also may be one *in us*." As every disciple is thus equal with every other in origin, he cannot lose this equality when from his individual unity with the Head he passes on into a unity with the body whose members are severally united with the Head. And as Christ has not anywhere promised to be more with one believer than with another, none can claim a higher place or a greater authority in the heavenly kingdom, where the least is accounted as the greatest. The sovereignty of Christ admits of no such divisions of rank or caste, however the order of the Divine government may be framed and its offices and gifts distributed.

The "monarchy of the universe" was the grand ideal which led on Tatian to the belief in the unity of the Deity. The monarchy which Christ came to establish on earth was the corresponding feature of the great spiritual kingdom which He opened to all believers: "When Thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death, Thou didst open the kingdom of heaven to all believers." On the death and resurrection of Christ that new kingdom was founded and built up. "One is your Master, even Christ," were the words of its Founder to His new subjects; "and all ye are brethren." There is here no intermediate sovereignty. In relation to the supreme Head and to one another all Christians are equal, and form a society in perfect unity—a unity which could only exist in a body in which there was no division of caste or order in its proper sense. Our Lord appointed no vicegerent, no subordinate officer, to carry on His kingly power; no delegation of authority to enforce His supremacy. His kingdom recognised only distinctions of office and ministry, and divisions of godly labour. Every member of it was to be subject to every other in mutual ministrations and labours of love. Hence every claim of independent authority, every claim even to exercise such an authority in His name and by His delegation, involves a violation of the first principle of His reign, and the one foundation upon which it rests.

But He represented in His Divine Person not only the kingly, but the priestly or sacerdotal power. For the first time in the history of the Church the two offices became merged in one, and our Lord became the great High-Priest; the only Priest under the New Testament; the only Shepherd of the chosen flock; the only Lawgiver of the great community He had founded upon earth.

The attempt to set up a king by the former people of God was regarded by the prophet as an invasion of the Divine prerogative, inasmuch as "the Lord their God was their King." The attempt to set up an earthly kingdom, under an earthly ruler or pontiff—a title derived from heathenism—is as severely rebuked in the Divine Word as the former one was by the prophet. And though this division of the supremacy of Christ is less likely to occur among those who have cast off the unchristian yoke of the Papacy, the claim to the possession of a sacerdotal power has opened a still more insidious danger in the Church of Christ. The "gainsaying of Core" represented this rebellion in an earlier day. It was the rebellion of a tribe or caste against the dynasty of Aaron which represented Christ. We might well address the modern sacerdotalists in the words of Moses to the revolted Levites who were not content to be ministers to the high-priest in the congregation: "Seemeth it but a small thing unto you that the God of Israel hath separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to Himself, to do the service of the tabernacle of the Lord, and to stand before the congregation to minister unto them? . . . and seek ye the priesthood also?" Surely to minister to our great High-Priest ought to be a far higher privilege to the Christian than to "serve the tabernacle." It were but to repeat the sin of Korah were he to claim any portion of that priestly office which, like the kingly dignity, can bear no division, and have no proper delegation. Christ gave to all His children a ministry, and not a priesthood. The Apostle speaks in His name to all alike of the "ministry they have received of the Lord." He bids them to account the Apostles themselves only "as ministers of the Lord"; and though in many other passages he appears to separate the work and duties of this ministry, and to speak of the "ministers of the Word" as receiving a more special office under it, all who have received any spiritual gift are charged by St. Peter to minister the same one to another as good stewards of "the manifold grace of God." Though there were diversities of administration, there was no distinction in the principle or in the nature of the service. Every power which was created in the Church (and no power was created other than those spiritual powers with which Christ Himself in-

vested it) was given to the whole body and to every individual believer. Hence St. Augustine's words: "Claves datæ sunt non uni sed unitati"; and the kindred rule of the canonists: "Ecclesia per et propter Christum Petrus per et propter ecclesiam est"—both assertions founded upon the words of the Apostle: "All things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas—all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." The apostleship was thus subordinated to the Church, and in the election of Matthias this great principle was practically carried out. The immediate relation of the believer to Christ, excluding all human intervention or priestly authority, is also further proclaimed, and every member of the Church, whether Apostle or prophet, evangelist, pastor, or teacher, is merged, as it were, in Christ, in whom there is neither distinction of nation nor separation of caste, Christ being all and in all and over all. In conformity with this great principle of unity in Himself, our Lord laid out the plan of His earthly kingdom. He did not separate His disciples into distinct orders or castes, or form a kind of Levitical tribe to represent Him in His temporal absence; but He constituted His Church a vast and world-wide corporation, in which the distinctive characteristics of a sacerdotal order had no place. As a corporate and collegiate body, whose members are necessarily equal, He gave to it all the powers of the kingdom to hold in undivided participation. A shadow of this great truth is seen even in the Roman Church, in which the supreme powers of the Pontificate have destroyed His substance. For the succession from the Apostolic body is declared by the Council of Trent (Sess. XXIII. c. iv.) to vest in the whole of the Episcopate, and the idea of a personal and dynastic succession is thus entirely set aside.

The learned canonist, Dr. Stenning Böhmer, has, therefore, defined the Church as a *societas æqualis*, presenting none of those contrasts of order, caste, or privilege which civil kingdoms or states exhibit, which include every diversity of station, authority, and dignity. "It resembles," he observes, "rather the form of a college or corporation in which the members have equal rights, and whatever is done in the name of the body for its conservation and benefit is determined by all its members."

Such a constitution is involved in the very name of *church*, which (like that of *synagogue*, out of which it arose) represents a congregation, or union, of persons or bodies of men. It is further exemplified by the fact that, unlike a temporal kingdom whose subjects are limited to a particular place or nation, it unites with an equal bond all its members dispersed throughout the world. "For even if," as Vitrिंगa observes, "the right

of meeting together is denied to the faithful, and they thus cease to form a *congregation*, they do not cease to be a *church*, in virtue of the spirit and faith which unite them."¹

This distinctive character of the Christian body as a *societas equalis*—a corporation in which every one of its members holds an equal part and has an equal interest—is indicated (L.) by the declarations of our Lord Himself, when He rebuked His disciples for their contention who should be greatest among them (Luke ix. 46); by the contrast He draws between the government of the princes of the Gentiles and His own (Matt. xx. 25); by the command to minister to each other in works of humility (John xiii. 13); and the prohibition against being called rabbi, on the ground that there is but one Master—Christ—and all His disciples are brethren (Matt. xxiii. 8, 9, 10).

The same principle was asserted by the apostles during the first days of the Church's history. In the election of Matthias every disciple had an equal rank and an equal franchise. In the election of deacons (Acts vi. 2-5) the same equality was established. In the first great assembly of the Church (Acts xv. 22, 25) the work of legislation was carried on by the whole body, and the entire jurisdiction was shown to reside in the electorate, and not merely in the elected.

In the practice of the Primitive Church we find this first ideal preserved in its most practical form. In the letters and communications addressed by one church to another we see the recognition of the congregation as contrasted with the individual. The very names of presbyter and bishop represent not a ruling, but an inspecting and directing power.

Again, the dependence of both presbyters and bishops on the whole church; the right of election, of judgment and deposition which resided in the whole body; the fact that church censures and judgments were pronounced in the presence and with the consent of the whole body; and that all laws for the regulation and the discipline of the Church were passed by the whole body—all these facts and usages point directly to the original equality of all its members and the corporate nature of the Church, which Tertullian well describes as a *disciplina confœderata* (Ap., c. ii.).

But here a question may arise in regard to the institution of the apostleship, and the ministerial office which originated from it, and the inquiry suggests itself how far the perfect equality established by Christ was modified or qualified by this selection of the twelve to a special office or ministration? But the very name chosen to represent it, as well as the view

¹ "De Synagogâ," l. L., p. i., c. i.

with which the apostles themselves regarded their office, is sufficient to prove that they never suffered it to disturb the equality which was the first principle of the constitution of the spiritual kingdom.

They even describe themselves as "servants of Christ"; they claim for all whom they address the title of "saints," than which none can be higher; they associate the "bishops and deacons" with the saints at Philippi, as though they recognised only a distinction of office between those who ministered and those who were ministered to (Phil. i. 1). St. James describes himself as a "servant of God"; St. Peter as a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ. In all these expressions they evidently look back to the injunction of our Lord, which constituted all Christian ministers and servants of the one supreme Master, and to the words which described at once their close relationship and perfect equality: "All ye are brethren."

How different was the appointment of the priesthood under the former covenant, under which a single tribe was chosen and a caste created, forming the Church an unequal society and constituting a dynastic rule! In that case a distinct separation was made in the congregation. First, a tribe was set apart for priestly ministrations; then a family out of that tribe was selected to carry on a dynastic high priesthood. Surely, if as Christians we believe that this was but the typical shadow of a greater and eternal priesthood, we can hardly admit even the supposition that any proper sacerdotal order can have been constituted under the reign of Christ.

II. But the impossibility of such a revival of an order which, on the fall of Jerusalem and in the dispersion of the chosen nation, became so soon extinct, is further shown by the history of the Church in its very earliest stage.

"The apostles," as the great Neapolitan historian, Giannone, observes, "and their successors propagated the Gospel in the provinces of the East by means of the synagogues, which, after the dispersion of the Jews, were founded in most of their cities."¹ From one of these synagogues it was that St. Paul, foreseeing a coming persecution; "separated the disciples" (Acts xix. 9), and first constituted the Christian disciples a distinct congregation. Hence it appears that the Christian Church came forth, not from the temple, its visible priesthood and elaborate ritual, but from the synagogue, its government of elders and presidents, and its simple and unadorned services of praise and prayer. And from the synagogue, too, it derived both its form of government by super-

¹ "Op. de' tre Regni," l. III.

intendents and presbyters, and its original liturgy, which may be clearly traced to the prayers of the Sch'moneh-essre and to the beautiful ritual of the synagogue worship.

Where, then, can we find the foundation or the materials for a new priesthood, or for a new division of the people of God by the creation of a sacerdotal caste or order? When Christ took up His eternal priesthood, and had gone up on high, leading captivity captive and receiving gifts for men, man had no longer any outward gift or sacrifice to render Him. The sacrifice of prayer and praise, as the ancient Apologists affirm, was all that was left for man to give or for the Eternal One to receive at his hands. The sacrificial system of Judaism was at an end with the destruction of the temple. It could receive no resurrection-life under Christianity, in whose founder the sacrificial system had its completion and its end. For He "needeth not daily to offer up sacrifice . . . for this He did once when He offered up Himself" (Heb. vii. 27).

Nor has the Church itself such a need as this. For the contrast between the state of the former and the latter Church at this point is most significant and most instructive. In the one the Spirit of God was restricted to the prophets and special servants of God, to whom He revealed Himself from time to time; in the other the Spirit of God is poured out upon all flesh. In the one the priesthood is confined within the strict limits of a dynasty or a tribe; in the other all alike are enabled to become kings and priests to God, offering Him those spiritual sacrifices which alone are acceptable to and accepted by Him. In this declaration of the universal priesthood under Christianity there is nothing to disturb in any degree those differences of administration which St. Paul asserts in so many places of his writings. When the Church came out from the synagogue it bore with it those distinctions of office, and even those very titles of office which belonged to the synagogue, and which, from their practical utility, were as necessary under the Christian as under the Jewish law. As Giannone observes, in the passage already cited, "From this period the Apostolic Churches began, in regard to their external polity, to give the superintendency to one of their ministers, and to adopt the very same form which was held in the synagogue." But every name and title which was thus assumed was a name of ministration, and not an order of priesthood. A bishop (or superintendent), a president, a presbyter, a deacon, were all names of office and ministration, and have no relation to any sacerdotal authority or action. St. Paul, when he shows the division of office and duty in the Christian body, makes no mention of any sacerdotal ministry; prophecy, ministration, teaching, exhorting, giving, ruling

—all these find a place in the government of the Church; but a priestly or sacrificial office is conspicuously absent. The sacrifice of the Christian Church, up to the time of its establishment in the empire, when the influences of heathenism began to insinuate themselves into her simple faith and ritual, were purely spiritual—the offerings of prayer and praise, the only sacrifice admitted by the Apologists, and by all the early Fathers. As late as the time of St. Cyril of Alexandria this great truth remained unimpaired, and when the Emperor Julian brought against Christianity the charge that it had no altars or sacrifice, his adversary replies, not by alleging a sacrifice in the Eucharist, but by admitting that the sacrifices of Christianity were spiritual and rational. “Rejecting” (he writes) “the gross worship of the Israelites, we offer to God in a sweet savour, every kind of virtue, faith, hope, charity, righteousness, continence, obedience, incessant praises, and other virtues. For this is the purest sacrifice becoming the pure and immaterial God.”¹

He proceeds in this strain at great length, and shows that late in the fifth century the ancient doctrine of the Church survived in all its force and freshness. It is worthy of observation at this point, that the Council of Ancyra, the earliest of those whose canons have reached our day, while treating on those who have sacrificed to idols, contrasts the *θυσία* of the idolatrous service with the *προσφορά* of the Christian one—the propitiatory sacrifice with the simple offering of the fruits of the earth for the celebration of the Christian Passover, which was the primitive custom.² These, after their use in the celebration, were divided among the poor, or went to the support of the common table, and subsequently to the clergy. They were, therefore, simply a thank-offering, for which offerings in money were afterwards substituted. In vain the passage of the Hebrews, “We have an altar,” etc. (c. xii, v. 10), is alleged in defence of the sacerdotal theory. For even Aquinas interprets this altar to be either the cross of Christ or Christ Himself. “To eat of which altar,” he says, “means to receive the fruits of the passion of Christ, and to be incorporated into Him as the Head.”³ Benedict XIV. is hard put to it to discover a proper altar under Christianity. He can only produce the charge of Christ to those who bring their gift to the altar (Matt. v. 23), forgetting that that was the Jewish altar, which, when Christ became the living altar, passed away—the shadow making way for the reality.

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¹ “Con. Julian,” l. X.

² Benedict XIV., *de Missæ, Sacr., Sect. ii., c. 177.*

³ *Ibid.*, Sect. i., c. 13.