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

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expositor-series-1.php

THE MINISTERIAL PRIESTHOOD.

WE have considered the general priesthood of believers under the New Testament dispensation; and, though there may be a difference of opinion with regard to some of the details which have been connected with the Church's priestly function in this world, it is satisfactory to be able to think that no difference worth speaking of exists as to the main principle involved. It is admitted by those who take what may be called the highest view of the ministerial priesthood, that a personal priesthood belongs to every member of the Body of Christ. It is not less admitted by such as take the lowest view of the ministerial position that the Church considered as a whole is priestly. We may have to complain that practically neither party does full justice to what is implied in its admissions. In its anxiety to preserve the idea of the priesthood of one particular portion of the Church the first may have limited too much the scope, or may have almost wholly lost sight of the duties and privileges, of the universal priesthood. In its dread of a repetition of the disastrous consequences which have flowed from an undue exaltation of one portion of the priesthood the second may have in no small degree helped to eliminate altogether the idea of priesthood from the Church, and may have led to its being confined, as it undoubtedly is confined, by many to the person of the risen and ascended Lord. Notwithstanding this last exceptional divergence, however, which rather in practice than in theory disturbs the general agreement, we may without hesitation assume the existence of a belief that the idea of priesthood, of priestly work and priestly privi-

lege, has a place in the Church on earth. Few contest the fact that there is a personal or universal priesthood of Christian men.

Over and above this however, it is often contended that there is a "Ministerial Priesthood," resting upon an entirely distinct foundation, and clothed with powers in which the Church in general has no share. The language used upon the point is no doubt somewhat obscure and ambiguous. But the meaning seems to be that, by the appointment of the great Head of the Church, and in conformity with the nature of all His actings, there is in the Church a special class clothed with a priesthood different from that of the Christian laity, and entitled to exercise certain important functions to which the priesthood of the latter, in its own nature, does not extend. The members of this class are supposed to be, on the one hand, the only bearers of the Divine gifts to men; while, on the other hand, the gifts of men are through them presented and made acceptable to God. They thus constitute a class of mediators, of intermediate links between God and man, a ladder, as it were, by which man ascends to God and God descends to man. "A priest is one who, not by any merit or virtue or power of his own, but by the will of God, has been made a necessary link in the chain-work of the Divine purposes. Himself as ineffectual as the words he speaks, and the inanimate creatures he may employ in his ministrations, he has nevertheless received, no necessary superiority indeed over his fellow men, but an attribute of grace, distinct from them, though given for their sakes, by virtue of which they are brought into such relationship with God, that through this instrumentality they obtain the promised blessings of the covenant under which they live."¹ Again, the same writer, speaking of "the priesthood of the individual Christian" and of "the Ministerial Priesthood," says: "Both

¹ Carter, *On the Priesthood*, p. 99.

priesthoods flow directly from Christ. . . . In Himself He laid the foundation of a twofold priesthood. Every individual Christian shares through Him the power of offering up acceptable service in his own person by virtue of the former; the Christian minister shares through Him the additional power of offering for, and communicating gifts to, his brethren by virtue of the latter.”¹

In turning our attention to the questions involved in these statements by one who can be spoken of in no other terms than those of respect and admiration, it is above all things necessary to determine as clearly as possible the precise point into which we are to inquire. That point is not whether priestly character and functions belong in a certain sense to the ministers of Christ. All who admit the priestliness of the lay members of the Church must admit, at least to the same extent, the priestliness of her ministers. The latter may or may not gain by taking upon them the responsibilities of office, but they certainly do not lose by doing so. Hardly any, however, deny that the Church as a whole is priestly. Presbyterians, in particular, often thought to occupy what, for want of a better expression, may be called the lowest ground on this question, admit the priestliness of the Church as a whole without the slightest qualification or reserve. To such an extent is this the case, that one who may claim to be heard upon the point has lately spoken of “the truth and grandeur of the Reformation doctrine, that all believers are priests with right of approach to God through faith,” has said in express terms that “the one principle of the Reformation is *the priesthood of all believers*” (at the same time emphasising the latter words), and has maintained that in this great principle is to be found the explanation of both the *formal* and the *material* principles of the Reformation.² In these

¹ *Ut supra*, p. 149.

² Prof. Lindsay, in his *Bible Handbook on the Reformation*, pp. 147, 185-187.

circumstances it would be simply unreasonable and absurd to hesitate for a moment in claiming it as a belief distinctly held in all the greater Churches of the Reformation, that a Ministerial Priesthood, at least in a certain sense, does exist in the Church of Christ.

Again, the point before us is not whether Christ has appointed a Ministry in His Church; or whether, having done so, He will confer on it special grace for the performance of its duties. There are certainly those who deny both these statements; but they are few in number, and, even were they more numerous than they are, to discuss their opinions in this paper would lead us into a field of thought wholly different from that with which we have at present specially to do. The Presbyterian Church, instead of denying, admits both in the fullest manner. "Unto this catholick visible Church," says the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, "Christ hath given the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God, for the gathering and perfecting of the saints in this life, to the end of the world, and doth by His own presence and Spirit, according to His promise, make them effectual thereunto" (chap. xxv. § 3). Speaking of the "only two sacraments ordained by Christ our Lord in the gospel," it adds, "neither of which may be dispensed by any but by a minister of the word, lawfully ordained" (chap. xxvii. § 4). The *Larger Catechism*—a document drawn up by the same assembly of divines, approved of by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland as "a rich treasure for increasing knowledge among the people of God,"¹ containing a much fuller exposition of the doctrines of the Church than the *Shorter Catechism* in general use, and in every way to be preferred to it—extends this limitation to preaching as well as to the sacraments. In Q. 158 it asks, "*By whom is the word of God to be preached?*" And the answer is, "The word of

¹ *Act of Assembly, July 2nd, 1648; Sess. 10.*

God is to be preached only by such as are sufficiently gifted, and also duly approved and called to that office," *i.e.* to the office of preaching.

The *Form of Presbyterian Church Government*, a treatise of paramount authority in Presbyterian Churches, is not less precise than the documents already quoted. After laying down in the preface the proposition that Jesus Christ, whose exaltation and reign at the right hand of the Father it describes, "gave officers necessary for the edification of His Church and perfecting of His saints," it goes on, in the body of the treatise, to point out what these officers are. Among them are "the ordinary and perpetual, as pastors, teachers, and other Church governors, and deacons." The duty of the pastor is next pointed out. It belongs to his office to pray for and with his flock, to read the Scriptures publicly, to preach, to catechise, to dispense other Divine mysteries, to administer the sacraments, to bless the people from God, and to take care of the poor. The words used in connexion with the pastoral "blessing" spoken of, which has come in too many instances to be regarded as a mere form of prayer, may with propriety be given. They are as follows: "To bless the people from God, Numbers vi. 23, 24, 25, 26: *compared with* Revelation xiv. 5 (where the same blessings, and persons from whom they come, are expressly mentioned), Isaiah lxvi. 21, where, under the name of Priests and Levites to be continued under the gospel, are meant evangelical pastors, who therefore are by office to bless the people." Such are the authoritative statements of the Presbyterian Church, and there can be no doubt as to their meaning. They recognise in the fullest manner the institution of the Ministry as a Divine Order in the Church, and they distinctly intimate the belief that to that Order the grace necessary for the "effectual" discharge of its important duties will be granted.

The statements thus made might easily be supplemented, did our space permit, by extracts from the great writers everywhere acknowledged by Presbyterians as institutional exponents of their views. It is unnecessary, however, to spend time in giving these. What has been said is sufficient to justify the statement that the inquiry into the Ministerial Priesthood, in the form in which it demands consideration in this paper, must be wholly separated from any discussion as to the appointment of a divinely called and ordained Ministry.

Once more, in dealing with the point immediately before us, we are independent of the question of Apostolical Succession. That doctrine, as we understand it, consists in this: that inasmuch as the Church of Christ is not merely a multitude of individuals congregated together for the purpose of promoting their separate religious welfare, but is an organized whole, so in its divinely corporate character it has received from its Divine Head a Divine plan for its continued existence and guidance, to the faithful carrying out of which supernatural grace is promised, and through which that grace may be most confidently looked for. Part of that plan is the maintenance of the Ministry throughout all ages of the Church's history. To secure this, it is held that Christ, not only appointed His apostles to go everywhere preaching the word and founding churches, but that He instructed them to ordain others in their place, to be the teachers and guides of the Christian communities thus formed, when they themselves, in the execution of their mission, were compelled to carry the message of salvation to other cities or to distant lands. These successors of the apostles, again, were to ordain others in due time to occupy their position; and their successors were, age after age, to do the same, each succession not only transmitting the office, but also obtaining for those placed in it, through the performance of certain divinely appointed acts, the grace

needed for its functions. The question whether the right to confer the succession was entrusted to bishops or to presbyters has obviously no connexion whatever with the essence of the doctrine.

If this then be the meaning of Apostolical Succession, it in no degree affects the course of our inquiry as to a Ministerial Priesthood. The Presbyterian Church, if we may yet again refer to a communion so powerful both in Britain and America, has no interest in denying the doctrine. The times when her principles were most thoroughly understood and most ably defended were precisely those when the doctrine was most insisted on by her best writers. That many rejected it may be true. That even those who accepted it did so with much latitude of interpretation and great allowance for what might be done in exceptional circumstances, may be also true. But three circumstances may be mentioned which certainly show that the doctrine had a strong hold of the Presbyterian Church.

1. There is the manner in which the argument with the Independents was conducted. About the time of the Westminster Assembly it was urged with great persistency and keenness against Presbyterians, that, if the doctrine of Apostolical Succession were well-founded, they had no ministry. They acknowledged Rome to be antichrist and Babylon : therefore, to use the words of the time, they had to show that their ministers, coming to them by succession through Rome, were not "locusts from the bottomless pit, priests of Baal, and limbs of antichrist."¹ The task they might easily feel to be a hard one; and certainly their simplest plan would have been to cut the knot, to abandon the doctrine of the Succession, and to urge that they had

¹ Comp. the great work, *The Divine Right of the Gospel Ministry*, chap. iii., where the question is fully discussed. The heading of the chapter is, "Wherein the Grand Objection asserting the Loss of the Ministry under Antichrist is answered."

their ministerial commission direct from Christ. Probably that would be the answer now. But it was not so then. The reply rather was, that the corruption of one part of the Romish Church did not imply the corruption of the whole; that even in her there had always been a faithful remnant; that truth was truth wherever found; that the books of the Bible had been "wonderfully preserved in the mystical Babylon"; and that in point of fact their ministry, instead of deserving the opprobrious epithets applied to it, had by its labours and martyrdoms proved itself. Whether the arguments are good or bad is not the question. They were used, and the length to which they were drawn out shows how material to the defence of the Presbyterian position they were considered to be.

2. There is the old practice of the Cameronians as described in the following words:

"After the martyrdom of Cargill they were without a minister, and there was no minister in Scotland whom they could acknowledge. But, instead of ordaining at their own hands, they sent Renwick to Holland, to get theological training from Dutch professors, and orderly instalment in the sacred office from Dutch presbyters; and from the middle of 1681 to the end of 1683 they had neither preaching nor sacraments. Shields mentions that Renwick, in the first year of his wonderful ministry, kept note of five hundred baptisms performed by him, and at that number 'lost count.' At the Revolution they were again pastorless—Shields and Binning having gone into the Established Church,—and they did as before. Instead of making a minister, they waited on till sixteen or seventeen years afterwards God, in His providence, sent them Mr. McMillan, extruded from the Church for sympathy with Cameronian principles. And, further, as one presbyter could not ordain, they still waited and prayed for about thirty years more, when the seceder Nairn became a convert to their views; and, holding his deposition invalid, *clave errante*, at the end of half a century they were enabled to form themselves into a complete Presbyterian Church."¹

The Cameronians may not be either the highest or the

¹ From a paper in the *Catholic Presbyterian* for Dec., 1881, p. 440.

sweetest type of Presbyterianism, but they were faithful representatives of some of its early principles.

3. There is the ritual in use among Presbyterians at the ordination of a minister down to the present day. No such ordination is valid without "the laying on of the hands of the presbytery." It is utterly useless to plead that this is simply a decent and touching arrangement handed down from the fathers. Even though it were now no more than this, it would witness to a time when it was more. Unless too, it be more, it would be the duty of the Church to abandon it. She has no right to keep up forms simply because they may be devout or touching. She deals with realities; and not a form observed, not a rite practised, by her can be defended except on the ground that it expresses or confers a reality. Not one of her rites either is, or dare be, meaningless. The Church could not pass a more terrible sentence of condemnation upon herself than by saying that any one part of her services was simply a compliance with an ancient, but now unmeaning, custom. Every time therefore that the brethren lay their hands upon a young brother's head at his ordination, and set him apart to the Ministry with prayer and blessing, they proclaim to all witnesses, and that whether they themselves believe it or not, that they are conveying to others the Apostolical Succession which they have themselves received from others. To readers south of the Tweed it may be of interest to be told that in the Presbyterian Churches none but *ordained* ministers may lay on hands. Elders, though constituent members of presbytery, may not do so. The reason is obvious, and the practice confirms what has been said.

Thus deeply imbedded in Presbyterianism is the doctrine of Apostolical Succession, and the fact that it is so shows that in any discussion between Episcopalians and Presbyterians as to the existence of a Ministerial Priesthood,

that doctrine may be left untouched. So far as it is concerned, both parties occupy common ground.

Having thus limited the field of inquiry, there need be little difficulty in determining the precise question into which we have to look. The passages quoted from Canon Carter at the beginning of this paper seem to imply more than the three points just noticed,—that the ministers of the gospel share the general priesthood of all Christian men; that they constitute by Divine appointment a special Order in the Church; and that it is the Divine plan that they shall be admitted into that Order, and in part at least qualified for its duties, by means of a sacred ceremonial performed by those who were in like manner admitted and qualified by their predecessors, in a regular succession from our Lord and His apostles. These passages seem to imply that there are in the Christian Church two lines of grace flowing “directly” from the Head of the Church,—the one to the lay members of the Church, the other to the Ministry; and that these two lines are perfectly distinct and separate. It is not enough, upon the view thus indicated, to think of a transference from the whole Body to a part of the Body of the practical exercise of powers inherent in the former. There is a distinction in kind as well as in application, so as to preclude the thought that even in principle the lay members of the Church stand to Christ in the same relation as the Ministry, and that their privileges and duties are only concentrated in the Ministry for the sake of a more orderly attainment of ends in which all have an equal interest. Is it really so? One or two particular passages of Scripture demand attention from this point of view.

In John xx. 21–23 we read of the appearance of our Lord to His disciples on the evening of the day of His resurrection. Then “Jesus therefore said to them again, Peace be unto you: as the Father hath sent Me, even so

send I you. And when He had said this He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Spirit: whose soever sins ye forgive, they are forgiven unto them; whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained." That ministerial privileges of the highest order are here bestowed no one can for an instant doubt. The question is, Were they conferred upon the apostles alone, and that too in their capacity as first links in the ministerial chain? The question can only be answered in the negative. Referring to what is admitted to be the same occasion, St. Luke says distinctly, that the two disciples to whom the Lord had appeared on their way to Emmaus found, when they returned to Jerusalem, "the eleven gathered together, *and them that were with them*" (chap. xxiv. 33). The apostles therefore were not alone with Jesus at the time when His commission was given and His grace bestowed. Besides this, it may be noticed that St. John himself seems carefully to distinguish between "the disciples" (vers. 18, 19, 20), and "the twelve" (ver. 24); nor in his narrative is there the slightest intimation that he would, in ver. 20, limit the meaning of the former term, or that any of them had left the company before the act of ver. 22 was done, or the words of ver. 23 were spoken. To the Church as a whole both the act and the words belong.¹

Again, in James v. 16, we read, "Confess therefore your sins one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed." It is true that the words "one to another," are interpreted by many, for example by Döllinger,² as referring simply to the priests called in to anoint the sick man and pray for him. But Döllinger, while making the assertion offers no proof of its correctness; and the arguments either used by Elwin, or quoted by him from others, are so in-

¹ Comp. Luthardt and Westcott *in loc.*

² *First Age of the Church*, p. 325. Comp. Elwin, on *Confession and Absolution*, p. 340.

conclusive even to himself, that he can only sum up his statement with the words, "*Whatever more general meanings may be included under St. James's exhortation, that is the most appropriate to the context and the phraseology, which makes it an admonition to the clergy to exercise a ministry to which was attached the privilege of officially 'covering sins.'*"¹ We are not concerned to deny that, as a matter of order, it may be well that confession should be made to the Ministry rather than to lay members of the Church. What we contend for is, that the words "one to another" cannot be limited to the former, and that they can only mean that there rests in the whole Church, and not simply in a part of it, the blessing to be gained by confession and prayer.² In connexion with this text may be also noticed the use of the word "Church" in Matthew xviii. 15-17: "And if thy brother sin against thee, go, show him his fault between thee and him alone: if he hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he hear thee not, take with thee one or two more, that at the mouth of two witnesses or three every word may be established. And if he refuse them, tell it unto the Church (or congregation): and if he refuse to hear the Church also, let him be unto thee as the Gentile and the publican." In this passage it is impossible to understand, with Döllinger,³ by the word Church or congregation the "officers of the Church." The Church or congregation is spoken of as a whole; nor is there any inconsistency between this and the fact

¹ Page 351.

² It may be well to notice that this is the opinion of the late Bishop Moberly. "This is the meaning of that precept of St. James, 'Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed.' For in the Body of Christ in general there is a power of healing different from that which is in each separate member of that Body, and able to supplement and fill up its deficiencies" (*Administration of the Holy Spirit*, p. 222). To this statement may be added the following important words by the same writer: "We believe that in absolution it is the Church's peace that is given" (p. 50).

³ *Ut supra*.

that, for the sake of a "regular course or ordered administration," the duty to be discharged might afterwards be transferred to the Church's officers.

The most important passage in connexion with this subject is however the account given us in Acts ii. of the events of the day of Pentecost. Did the tongues of fire there spoken of descend only upon the heads of the twelve, or upon the heads of all the brethren who were now "together in one place"? Moberly is uncertain how to answer. "I wish therefore," he says, "to be understood, not as denying that the number of those on whom the tongues rested exceeded twelve—though I confess that I doubt it—but as meaning that on twelve, and twelve only, they rested in such sort as to make them the patriarchs of the family of Christ, the channels of the communication of the graces of the Holy Spirit, in His orderly and covenanted methods, to the sons of men."¹ This is simply the voice of uncertainty upon the point we have in view.

An able writer in the *Church Quarterly Review* has recently taken stronger ground,² and has urged that there are distinct traces in the passage showing that it refers to the twelve alone. (1) All who spoke, and these were unquestionably the same "all" as are said in ver. 4 to have been filled with the Holy Spirit, were "Galileans" (ver. 7). But the expression was natural in the circumstances. The larger number even of the brethren were without doubt from Galilee. (2) St. Peter and the eleven are in ver. 14 mentioned in immediate connexion with the event. But this very circumstance seems rather to lead to the conclusion that the "all" of the previous verses of the chapter embraced a wider number than the apostolic twelve. If the twelve have been the only persons spoken of throughout, why make special mention of them now? On the other

¹ *Ut supra*, p. 39.

² *Church Quarterly Review*, Jan., 1887, p. 373.

hand, it was in the highest degree natural that, when St. Peter stepped forward with the evident intention of addressing the people (as implied in the word *σταθείς*, comp. v. 20, xvii. 22, xxvii. 21), the eleven rather than all the brethren should have stood forth with him. (3) The word *ἅπαντες* in the early chapters of Acts normally denotes the apostles only (comp. iv. 31, 32; v. 12, 13). But the *πάντες* in chap. ii. 1 are clearly distinguished from the twelve alluded to in chap. i. 26; and, allowing that the same word in chap. i. 14 appears to apply only to the apostles, there is yet a transition at ver. 15 to the whole number of the disciples. This also accounts for the limitation in ver. 26. Had "all" been the normal term for the apostles, we might have expected to read, "and he was numbered with them all." In chap. iv. 33 also the *πάντες* can only be understood of "the multitude of them that believed," mentioned in ver. 32, while the *ἅπαντες* of ver. 31 must include the *τοὺς ἰδίους* of ver. 23, and this expression it is at least unnatural to limit to the twelve. Comp. also the words "as many" and "any one" in vers. 34, 35, neither of which expressions can be confined to the apostles, although they are certainly the "all" of ver. 33. If similar remarks may not be applied to chap. v. 12, it is not because *πάντες* is there used in any technical sense, but because the apostles had been spoken of immediately before, because the whole narrative appears to be occupied with them, and because "the rest" referred to, as distinct from the apostles on the one hand, and "the people" on the other, are most probably to be understood of the general members of the Christian community. The unlikelihood of the suggested limitation of the word "all" is further strengthened by the fact that in chap. ii. 17 the apostle describes the outpouring of the Spirit *which had just taken place* as a fulfilment of the prophecy of Joel, "Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy," and that in all the

early chapters of Acts it is the condition of the Church as a whole to which we are introduced. Her duties, her privileges, the grace bestowed upon her, and the striking results produced by her means, not, except in the case of Matthias, the institution of a Ministry or an account of what was done by it, are the topics with which the sacred writer deals.¹

We conclude, from all that has been said, that no two original lines of grace are spoken of in the New Testament, one for the Ministry, another for the Church at large; or, if a different mode of expressing the conclusion be preferred, that we do not read of one line of grace flowing to the Church through the Ministry. The Church is in direct and immediate communication with her exalted Head, and she receives the Spirit directly and immediately from Him, and not by means of any intervening Order, such as that of the covenant which had vanished away.

This conclusion is in no small degree confirmed by a circumstance so well known that we may be excused enlarging on it, that the Christian minister, often as he is brought before us in the New Testament, is not once spoken of as a priest. Attempts have indeed been made to escape the force of this remarkable fact, but they cannot be said to have been successful. It is true that "it was manifestly not the design of God to precipitate the separation between Judaism and Christianity, to throw scorn on the ancient faith, or to bring out too prominently at first all the dis-

¹ As this paper is becoming too long, the writer would call attention very briefly in a note to a consideration in connexion with the subject which, so far as he knows, has not been hitherto adduced. In Acts x. we read of the calling of the Gentile Church, and ver. 44 of that chapter shows that the Holy Spirit was given *directly*, and not through the laying on of St. Peter's hands, to Cornelius and "all them which heard the word." Does not this at least make it likely that, in Acts ii., where the assembled disciples were probably all Jews, the Holy Spirit would be given to them in the same way; that is, *directly*, and not through the instrumentality of the twelve? Comp. also for the effect ver. 46 with Acts ii. 4.

tinctions which were in due season to unfold themselves out of the old institutions.”¹ But if the idea of the Ministerial Priesthood, in a form distinct from that of the Church generally, was, as on the supposition of which we are dealing it must have been, the central idea of the Christian Church, there was peculiar need to show that it continued to exist. This was done with the idea of “sacrifice.” Sacrifice was as distinguishing a feature of Judaism as priesthood. Yet, so far from avoiding the word “sacrifice,” the sacred writers constantly employ it, only putting its now higher meaning into the term. The true way therefore, at once to preserve the connexion between the two dispensations, and at the same time to elevate the latter, would have been to preserve the term “priest” for the minister, pointing out, while doing this, the nobler nature of the functions he was henceforward to discharge. The same course was followed with the word “temple,” or rather with the word *ναός*. St. Paul did not drop that word. He applied it rather in the most emphatic manner to Christians, only leading them to see how much deeper and more spiritual than formerly its meaning was.

Again, it is true that the power of old associations connected with a particular term may lead to the disuse of that term in order that we may more easily rise to higher thoughts. But in such a case there is no intention to re-introduce the term at a subsequent period. To do this would reawaken its old associations, and the benefit expected from its discontinuance would be lost. Strangely enough, the effort has been made to illustrate this abandonment of an old word, while at the same time ideas embodied in it were retained and expanded, by St. Paul’s use of the word “sabbath.”² That word, rejected as a name for the Lord’s day in all the earlier centuries of Christianity, certainly rose to life again after the Reformation. Will

¹ Carter, *ut supra*, p. 121.

² *Ibid*, p. 123.

any intelligent man deny that its revival and reintroduction with such a meaning could never have been contemplated by St. Paul; or that, when revived, it brought back, to the serious injury of the Church's life, ideas which it had been the great effort of the apostle to overthrow? Upon this point it is not necessary to say more. The conclusion formerly drawn is very greatly strengthened by the circumstance that the Christian minister is never differentiated from the Christian laity by the statement that he is in particular a priest, or that he possesses a priesthood in its own nature of another kind than theirs.

In the light of what has been said two questions naturally arise and require an answer. First, Is there then such a thing as a Ministerial Priesthood? And, secondly, If there be such a thing, what is its relation to the general or universal priesthood? The first of these questions may be disposed of in a very few words.

If there is a Ministry at all, there is also a Ministerial Priesthood; and we have already seen that the question as to the existence of a divinely appointed Ministry is one with which we have here nothing to do. In conformity with the great law everywhere observable, and for ever confirmed by the Incarnation, the inward is served by the outward, and the body is not one member, but many. "God hath set some in the Church, first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, divers kinds of tongues" (1 Cor. xii. 28). The members of the spiritual, as of the human, body are necessary to its welfare; and as God has assigned its own proper place to each member of the latter, so in the former He has assigned to the office-bearers of His Church their own separate position. He "is not a God of confusion, but of peace; as in all the Churches of the saints" (1 Cor. xiv. 33). He has a plan,

and in that plan He has appointed a Ministry; on that Ministry He has imposed certain duties; to it He has promised special grace for the discharge of these duties: and that plan it becomes us to honour. Only by honouring it, although grace may be given in other ways, have we a covenant right to expect it in its fulness, and a covenant encouragement to plead for it. But it is a matter of order, of divinely appointed order indeed, yet not of special and independent privilege, that the Ministry shall exist as the organ of the priestly Church. It must therefore, in the nature of the case, be priestly. Nor is there any reason why this order should not in the main follow the lines of the ancient economy, or why those should not be found in it who correspond to the Priests and Levites of the earlier dispensation. Rather is it natural to expect that this shall be to a large extent the case. God is the same; human nature is the same; and the end of religion is the same, now as then. But our Priests and Levites, if we have them, are not the successors of those who once bore these names. Their appointment is directly due to the great Head of the Church, from whom all Christian institutions, as well as all Christian influences, gifts, and graces, exclusively proceed. Thus placed in office the ministers of the Church take their general priesthood with them. As redeemed men they cannot cease to be "priests unto our God and Father." Priesthood is the fundamental conception of their relation to God; and, as it must regulate the discharge of every duty of the Christian life, so it must regulate the discharge of the new duties that they have taken in hand. The difference between their old and their new position does not lie in the word "Priesthood," it lies in the word "Ministerial."

We are thus brought to the answer to the second question above proposed, as to the relation between the Ministerial Priesthood and the Church. For the members of the body,

to which the apostle, in words recently quoted, compares all to whom special duties are assigned within it, possess no pre-eminence over the body. They are subordinate to it. They are instruments to promote its life. In discharging their several functions, they are only returning to the body the favours which, through it, have been first bestowed upon themselves. This is the view taken in the main, though with unnecessary limitation and hesitation, by Bishop Moberly in his second Bampton Lecture on *The Administration of the Holy Spirit*.¹ He takes the case of the survivors of the crew of the *Bounty* cast upon Pitcairn's Island; and, referring to the power of the natural body to reimburse the loss of one faculty by fresh power added to others, he does not doubt that "the life that is in all the members may suffice in some degree to supply something that in particular places is wanting"; only urging at the same time, what will hardly be denied by any one, that "the locally or partially interrupted succession should be restored as soon and as completely as possible," and adding that "all the lay people together can neither be nor make a priest." Why this hesitation? Why this "in some degree"? And why the last quoted sentence? Probably it springs from the bishop's leaning to the idea of a double line of grace. Let us take what seems to be the juster view, that all grace flows to the members of the Body through the Body, and we need have no hesitation in saying that, when God in His providence interrupts the succession, it may be, so far as His blessing is concerned and until circumstances change, fully and perfectly restored, and that all the

¹ Such also appears to be the opinion of Gore in his recent work on *The Ministry of the Christian Church*. That work has come into the hands of the present writer, only at the instant when his already finished paper is on the point of being sent to the printer. So far as he has had time to examine it, it seems to him that, written not only with great ability but admirable temper, it ought to prove a true *irenicum* between Episcopalians and Presbyterians on the important subject with which it deals.

ordinances of the Church might prove on that lonely island as rich in blessing as they had ever proved when administered by those about whose succession from the apostles there could be no dispute. The Church of Christ was there in the two or three gathered together in their Lord's name. He was in the midst of them to bless them, and when, according to the Divine plan, carried out in the only way in which it was possible to carry it out, the collective powers of the priestly Church were transferred for exercise to one of their number, that one was, for the time and in the circumstances, as truly clothed with a Ministerial Priesthood as though it had been said to him in solemn assembly, with the laying on of the hands of the regular Succession, "Receive thou the Holy Ghost."

By the view now taken alone does it seem possible to reconcile the two wholly different classes of texts with regard to the Ministry which meet us in the New Testament. On the one hand, we find St. Paul often speaking in the strongest terms of the independence of that position occupied towards the people by himself and those appointed to "the care of the Churches." "Let a man so account of us," he says, "as of ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. . . . But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment" (1 Cor. iv. 1-3). While to Timothy he cries, "Reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching"; and to Titus, "These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no man despise thee" (2 Tim. iv. 2; Tit. ii. 15). These disciples were not the servants of the people. They had not their commission from them. They were not answerable to them. They did not wield the powers of the Church *only* by delegation from the Church. It was God's call that they had obeyed, His work that they did, His grace that made them successful. On the other hand, we find the same apostle speaking not less, probably

even more, frequently of his own and his fellow ministers' work as a work done in the service of the Church. "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake"; "Not that we have lordship over your faith, but are helpers of your joy"; "All things are yours: whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas" (2 Cor. iv. 5, i. 24; 1 Cor. iii. 22). And it is undeniable that, if we search the New Testament epistles for the leading conception which they present of the Christian minister in his relation to the Church, it is that of a *διάκονος*, and that his work is that of a *διακονία*.

Both these attitudes then are at once explicable, when we think of the Christian minister as by Divine appointment concentrating in himself for the sake of order the priestly functions of the Church, but at the same time ministering to the Church no more than she already possesses, himself receiving through the Body the life which enables him to serve the Body. In this respect there appears to be a distinct difference between the position of the official Jewish priesthood and the Ministerial Priesthood of the Christian Church. The course of the former is not the same as that of the latter. Under one important aspect it is rather the very opposite. The Levitical priesthood was external to the general priesthood of Israel, protected it, looked towards it, deepened the thought of it, when the very idea of priesthood might otherwise have perished. The Christian official priesthood is wrapped up in the general priesthood of the Church, is protected by it, works from it, has its own position strengthened by what is wider and more powerful than itself. Abandon the idea of the priestly Church, and the idea of the priestly Ministry at once goes with it. It is through the Church that the grace of Christ works in the souls of both ministers and people. Destroy the channel by which the grace is conveyed, and the flow of the life-giving waters must cease. Hence the order of the apostle's words

to the Corinthians, "Yea and I would that ye did reign, that we also might reign with you" (1 Cor. iv. 8).

What has been said of the Ministerial Priesthood ought to make it clear that a belief in it is not calculated to foster a spirit of sacerdotal assumption in the Ministry. Rather is the belief fitted to deepen the humility of ministers, and that in exact proportion to the degree in which they are impressed by its most characteristic aspects. If, as we saw in a former paper, the chief meaning and end of the Church in her priestly character is the service of man, how much more must this be the meaning and end of the work of those in whom the functions of the Church are concentrated in order that they may be discharged with greater efficiency and power! The path of service is not the path of pride. The feeling of the minister that the right to bestow the blessings he dispenses comes to him through those very persons to whom he dispenses them must tend, not less powerfully than anything else that can be named, to keep him lowly in mind. Not only does he obtain all that he is or bestows *from* God: he obtains it all *through* those whom he is called to serve. "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." That was true humility and lowliness; and woe betide the minister who does not feel that so to give his life a ransom is the chief obligation resting upon him in his Ministerial Priesthood!

One word more, and we have done. Every effort ought to be made to obliterate the distinction between the ministers and lay members of the Church in respect to the essence of their common priesthood. Hence it always seems to us a matter of regret that the word "priest" should be applied so exclusively as it is to the former. Many reasons may no doubt be assigned for this application of the term to them. But every one knows the power of words over thought, and when that power tends ob-

viously to convey false impressions, some effort ought to be made to counteract it. In the Service Book prepared by Archbishop Laud for use in Scotland, the word "presbyter" was, at least in the communion service, always substituted for the word "priest," and the communion office of the Scotch Episcopal Church retains the change to this day. The true expression for the minister's position is, not that he is in an especial sense "the priest," but that he is "the servant of the priesthood"; and, in one way or another, this ought to find better expression than it does in the language in common use. When it does, it will both help to raise the people to a higher sense of their privileges, and to put down that tendency to presumption in the Ministry against which, so deeply is it rooted in human nature, we cannot too carefully guard.

W. MILLIGAN.

A MÆDIÆVAL ILLUSTRATION OF THE DOCUMENTARY THEORY OF THE ORIGIN OF THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS.

THE question of the origin and mode of composition of our synoptic gospels is admittedly one of the most perplexing in the whole sphere of New Testament criticism. How are we to account for the striking resemblances, and no less striking differences, which exist between them?

The theory that the former are due to the use of some common document or documents is one which has been vigorously maintained, and still more vigorously attacked. The supporters of the theory have often injured their own cause by attempting to define with a precision not justified