

DOCTRINES OF GRACE.

THE HOLY MINISTRY.

It may be boldly said that there is no office in human society so sacred as that of the Christian Ministry, no man on whom lies so heavy a burden as the minister of Christ. If he is to be worthy of his name, and fulfil the conditions of apostolic days, he must have been called twice by the Spirit of God—once to personal faith, once to public service—and without both calls he ought not to enter on this high duty. He also receives a double portion of grace, so much that he may overcome his own sin, and keep the law in his own life, so much that he may help his fellow-men in their spiritual conflict and win the world to his Master. It is necessary for him not only to feed upon the Word of God for his own spiritual life, but also so to understand it that he may be able to feed the souls of other men. Unto him is given the commission of Christ's Evangel, that he may declare the mercy of God; and the vindication of Christ's law, that he may beat down unrighteousness; and the charge of Christ's people, that he may keep them in the way everlasting. Upon him in especial depends the spiritual prosperity of the Church; for if he be holy and zealous, then the Church triumphs; if he be unbelieving and worldly, then the Church languishes. When the Ministry becomes careless, it is a sign that God is punishing the Church. As often as He would bless the Church, he revives the Ministry. When the Ministry is self-denying in life and spiritual in aim, then the world is vastly impressed, because it is reminded of Christ Himself; when the tone of the Ministry is frivolous and material, then the world is secretly disappointed. Whether or not the Ministry is invested with supernatural power, and whether or not the minister is intended to be separate from the

people, and to follow a habit of life to which other Christians are not called, are matters of dispute; but this is certain, that next to the preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments, he is the chief channel through which grace comes from Christ to His people, and to the outside world he stands as the representative of the Church and the type of Christian living. It therefore concerns every Christian to understand the nature and the functions of that Ministry which Christ established in the Church, and by which He supports His Body.

As has happened with other doctrines in dispute, such as that of the Atoning Sacrifice of Christ, the difference is not so much about the facts of the Ministry as about the theory. If any one should ask how many officers there were in the Ministry at the close of the apostolic period, and what were their duties, and how they were appointed, and how they were related one to another, there is not much difficulty in getting an answer, and there would not be much disagreement about the answer. We are dealing up to that point with historical facts which are distinctly stated in the apostolic writings. When we inquire into the relation between the Ministry and the Lord, and between the Ministry and the Church, into the inherent power conferred upon the Ministry, and the authority to transmit this power to the generation following, into the question whether the Ministry is a priesthood in any sense different from that in which all Christ's people are priests, or whether Christ's minister is not the pastor of human souls to whom Christ alone is Priest, then we pass into an atmosphere which is thick with controversy and charged with keen feeling. With many shades of difference between, there are two opposite theories which divide the Church, and whose conflict has been one of the calamities of Christendom. One maintains that the true minister of Christ must be ordained by a particular officer of the Church, who

alone can convey the grace of the Ministry and confer power to administer the Sacraments; that the minister so ordained is a priest with authority, to offer again, in some sense, the sacrifice of the Lord, changing the bread and wine, after some fashion, into the body and blood of the Lord; that he has power to remit or to bind sins; that through him the Christian approaches his Lord, and that the Christian cannot, without peril, pass by this minister and seek direct access to Christ. It is also held that the grace conferred upon this man at ordination is indelible, and that his power to administer Sacraments and to loose sins is not affected by his character and conduct. According to the other theory, the valid minister of Christ is one on whom has been conferred a special gift of grace for the holy Ministry, and who, in virtue of this gift already bestowed, is outwardly called to the public work of the Ministry by the people of Christ, as he has already been inwardly called by the Lord; that he should be publicly set apart for the Ministry by the laying on of hands; that this is not the act of one man, but of the whole Church; that he is the teacher, and the guide, and the servant, and the friend of the people, but not their governor; and that if he fall into sin and become a scandal in the Church, he must at once be removed from the Ministry, because he has fallen from its grace, and that through an unbelieving and unholy man we cannot ordinarily expect any blessing to come. It may be said that this controversy cannot be of any great importance, since it only concerns the theory of the Ministry; but as a matter of fact the conditions of salvation, the relation of the soul to our Lord, the efficacy of the means of grace, and the very experiences of the religious life, are profoundly affected by the question whether Christ's minister is a priest or a pastor.

According to the apostolic writings—to deal first with facts about which there can be very little difference of

opinion—there were six officers in the first age of the Church, that is between Pentecost, when the Church may be said to have been fully established, and the death of the last of the Apostles, who were its inspired and authoritative rulers. The highest officer was the Apostle, as St. Paul declares when he gives the Ministry in order of rank, “And God hath set some in the Church; first apostles.” The word Apostle has a distinct and most honourable meaning, for it signifies one sent by Christ, even as He was sent by the Father, except that while the Lord received from His Father the great commission of salvation, the Apostles received from Christ the commission to proclaim that salvation. The word is however employed both in a narrower and a larger sense. Within the Gospels it is applied to the Twelve whom Christ called from among His disciples and appointed to be the missionaries of the world; and according to St. Luke, Christ gave this name to the Twelve. “He chose twelve, whom also He named apostles.” The number was fixed by that of the tribes of Israel, and, it was felt, must be maintained; so that when Judas Iscariot fell from his place Matthias was appointed his successor. The Apostles were called “The Twelve,” and it was their reward that they should sit in the kingdom of Heaven upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel; and it is written in the Revelation of St. John that the wall of the city, which is the heavenly Jerusalem and the figure of the Church triumphant, “had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.” According to the idea of Pentecostal days, the qualification for an Apostle is that he should have had such intercourse with Christ that he could be a witness of the resurrection; and St. Paul, in claiming to be an Apostle, puts forth as the first evidence, “Have not I seen the Lord?” and again, “He was seen of me also as of one born out of due time.” It is also implied as a second condition that he should have

received his commission direct from Christ, so that after the disciples had selected two who fulfilled the former condition that they had seen the Lord after His resurrection, they left the decisive choice, as they believed, to the Lord, through the casting of the lots, and St. Paul insists that he received his commission from Christ Himself, and is very jealous indeed lest it should be supposed he had been called by the other Apostles. He is an addition to the Apostolate, and was called for a special work, and with him the number of the Apostles is complete. The Twelve, with St. Paul, last called but most widely sent, are the glorious company of the Apostles.

As might be expected from the word, it is also applied to persons outside this circle, and who indeed were not qualified to enter it, but who were distinguished servants of Christ, and were called to the larger ministry. When St. Paul is writing about the evidence for the resurrection, he declares that Christ appeared not only to Cephas and the Twelve, but also that He was seen of all the Apostles. In the Book of Acts, Barnabas, as well as Paul, is called an Apostle; and in the Epistle to the Philippians, Epaphroditus is described as "your messenger," or Apostle; while in the Epistle to the Romans, Andronicus and Junias are said to have been of note among the Apostles. James the Lord's brother, Silvanus, Titus, and many nameless persons have their place in the larger Apostolate. Distinguished divines are inclined to make no difference in kind between the thirteen and the general Apostolate, and it is quite possible that many of its members may have seen the Lord. It is another question whether they received the call direct from a risen Christ, which was given to St. Paul from an open heaven, and it seems safer to conclude that while there were more men entitled to be called Apostles than we had thought of, or whose names are even mentioned in the sacred writings, the thirteen occupied a soli-

tary place. The work of an Apostle was not to administer Sacraments, but to preach the gospel; not to preside over Churches, but to found them; not to shepherd the souls of Christ's people, but to evangelize the world. He was the missionary of the Cross, who came to a city to preach Christ, who received into the Church the first converts, who gave them the body of Christian truth, who appointed their first ministers, who visited the Churches to see how it fared with them, and who advised and directed in cases of difficulty. For him there were no bounds of work except that he must not intrude upon another Apostle's labours; for him there were no limits of duty except that he must chiefly preach the gospel. His province was the Empire, his charge all the Churches. The Apostle ceased of necessity when the last Christian died who had seen the Lord, and can only be restored if Christ were pleased again to reveal Himself from Heaven, as He did to St. Paul; and until He so calls one of His servants no one has any right, in the stricter sense of the word, to call himself an Apostle.

The second officer of the Apostolic Church is the Prophet; and the only difference between the Prophet of the New Testament Church and the Old is that the New Testament Prophet does not seem to have committed his revelations to writing, and also that he was overshadowed by the Apostles. Like the Prophet of the former day, he is one whose soul is especially open to the influence of God's Spirit, and through whom, as through a sensitive medium, the will of God can be declared. There are men in every age who have quicker ears for truth than their fellows, no doubt because they have finer souls, and the mystics may be said to be the order of prophets continued in the Christian Church. The Prophet of the Apostolic period was possible, then, because there was at that time a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit. "On My servants and on My handmaidens I will pour out in those days of My Spirit, and they shall

prophecy." When this period ceased, the order also ceased, and cannot be restored until the same baptism of the Holy Ghost be again given of which the signs will doubtless be the spiritual gifts of Apostolic days. Among the spiritual gifts St. Paul ranked prophecy very high: "Desire spiritual gifts," he wrote, "but chiefly that ye may prophesy; for he that prophesieth, speaketh unto men, to edification and exhortation and comfort."

The third order which follows upon that of Prophet is Teacher; and although the exact duties and sphere of the Teacher in the early Church are obscure, one may safely conclude that he represented our scholar, or theologian. It was for him, we suggest, to follow up the work of the Apostle who declared the facts of Christ's life and the conditions of Christ's salvation, and to reinforce the Prophet who quickened and comforted the hearts of Christians by his spiritual and heavenly exhortation. The Teacher would arrange the facts and apply the revelation, and reduce this body of truth to an orderly and convenient form, so that the people might carry it in their minds the more easily. It would also fall to him to remove the difficulties which met new converts in the gospel, and to defend the gospel from attack. While the Apostle and the Prophet, in the special sense of the words, ceased with the first century, the Teacher is a permanent officer of the Church, to whom the Church has owed more than she has ever acknowledged, and whom the Church has often been ready to persecute. As in the first days, he has no parish and no congregation, but lives where he pleases, and goes where he will; and the scholar of Christ is the servant of all Christ's people, but chiefly of his fellow-ministers; and when we consider what the Church has owed to these men—Augustine, Aquinas, Calvin, Hooker—we know she can have no greater gift until there be once more among us Apostles and Prophets.

The fourth officer in the Church—still proceeding in order of rank—is the Evangelist, and in the list given in the Epistle to the Ephesians he is placed third. Christ, St. Paul writes, gave “some Apostles, some Prophets, and some Evangelists; and there are two illustrations of the Evangelist given in the Apostolic period. One is Timothy, who seems to have been sent by the Apostles as an Apostolic delegate, appointing Church officers, and administering discipline, as well as declaring and maintaining the truth. The other is Philip, who happens to be one of the seven, but who was also an Evangelist, and as an Evangelist held a higher place than that of deacon. It was he who at the bidding of an Angel met the Ethiopian treasurer returning from Jerusalem in despair of truth, and taught him the way of God, and it was he who preached Christ to the city of Samaria. He, also, was the delegate of the Apostles; and when it was known at Jerusalem that Samaria had received the word of God, Peter and John went down and laid their hands upon the converts, and they received the Holy Ghost. Philip at least had the power of working miracles, and it may be taken for granted that the Evangelists exercised special gifts, both of power and authority, through their connexion with the Apostles. Such gifts are not continued, but the office is one which may well be permanent in the Christian Church. If God has bestowed upon any one of His ministers the distinct gift of preaching the gospel to unbelievers and winning the outside world to Christ, a gift which is different from that of exposition and edification, then it seems wise that such a man should be set aside for this office, and that he should receive a commission to go wherever the door opens, and to gather Christ’s lost sheep into the fold. The missionary is as much needed at home as the missionary is abroad, and the organization of the Christian Church will not be complete until the order of Evangelists be restored, and here

we mean the Evangelist of the type of Philip. Unto other men has been given the faculty of oversight, including arrangement and management, and it would be an excellent thing for the non-episcopal Churches to have officers who would set in order troubled affairs, examine into duty neglected by ministers and congregation, strengthen the weak parts in the Church's machinery, and by counsel and encouragement put heart into those who are losing hope. The Scots Church, which has never had any leaning to prelacy, found it useful after the Reformation to have an officer, called the superintendent, who exercised the practical, though not spiritual, powers of a bishop. This is the Evangelist after the type of Timothy.

Besides those four officers, two of whom are confined of necessity to the Apostolic period, and two may very well be permanent in the Christian Church, we find two other officers who before the close of the first century have an established position, and who remain unto this day. The chief distinction between them and the other four is that while the four belong to the Church universal, going whither they may be sent, and having as it were no parish, except the world, the fifth and sixth officers are localized and have their sphere in one congregation. One is that minister of Christ who is called sometimes an elder or presbyter, and sometimes an episcopus or bishop; and fortunately the controversy regarding the identity in rank and office of the elder and bishop in Apostolic days has been settled by the greatest English theologian of our century, and no one now questions the fact that presbyter and episcopus are to all intents and purposes synonymous. The words have, however, different origins and bear witness to the two streams which flowed into the Christian community. Episcopus was the name given to one of the chief officers in the innumerable associations for social, religious, and political purposes which existed throughout

the Roman Empire during the early centuries of Christian history. The Church was not the first society to which the Christian convert had belonged, for he may have been a member of a trades' union, or an athletic club, or a literary association, or a financial company. Society at that day was subdivided into guilds and clubs, and the Christian Church, although, as we have pointed out, something very different, would seem at first sight only another association more kindly, and more spiritual than its neighbours. When the Christians in any place had been formed into a local Church, and when an officer was required to receive the offerings of the Church and to distribute them among the poor, to show kindness to travelling Christians, and to exercise discipline among the members of the society, to be, in short, the president of this new body, what could be more natural than that he should be called the episcopus? and therefore, when St. Paul is writing to the Philippian Church, a Church that was chiefly Gentile, he addresses, not the elders, but the bishops.

Among the Jews from early days society had been based upon the family, and the rulers of the people were the elders. The elders played no little part in Old Testament history; and when the synagogue was instituted, they became its chiefs, sitting in the place of honour and representing authority in the community. The Christian Church was born within Judaism; and when it set up house for itself, the Church adopted the Jewish system of government by elders. The office was not so much created as continued, and we find the elders ruling the Church of Jerusalem, which, of course, was Jewish, just as the same men might have ruled in the synagogue. While St. Paul does not mention the presbyters in his roll of Church officers, very likely for the reason that they were local and not universal in their office, he takes care to ordain elders to take charge of Churches which he founded. He

laid upon the elders of the Church the charge of the flock over which "the Holy Ghost had made them *episcopi*." It is the elder who is to feed the sheep, and it is for the elder the sick are to send. The elders are honourably united with the Apostles and the government of the Church of Jerusalem, and the decree of the first Church council ran in the name of the Apostles and elders. While in the earlier days the offerings of charity from the Gentiles to the Jews were forwarded to the elders for distribution at Jerusalem, and while the *episcopus* would be mainly occupied with charity in the beginning of his Christian career, this officer soon threw off the charge of financial affairs and was devoted to the spiritual oversight of the people, and the elder or bishop of Apostolic days corresponds almost exactly to the minister or clergyman in charge of a parish and congregation.

Very soon, and from the force of circumstances, it was necessary that a Christian congregation should have two officers, one to attend to its spiritual affairs, and another to its temporal, and before the conversion of St. Paul the Church of Jerusalem had made this division of labour. They had selected seven men full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and having ordained them, and so declared them to be spiritual officers of Christ's Church, they committed to their charge the offerings of Christ's people. It is true that the seven were not called deacons; but things exist before their names, and there is no doubt they were the beginning of the diaconate, the order next to that of the elder, and which completes the organization of the Church in Apostolic days. It is not safe to take the seven as the type of deacons, for two of them, Stephen and Philip, were preachers and witnesses, and the position of the seven seems to have been at least equal to that of presbyters; but the work which they were called to do is that which afterwards belonged to the deacon. From the qualifications for

the two offices, as stated in the first Epistle to Timothy, it is evident that the duty of the presbyter "was more spiritual," for he must be a man apt to teach, "while the deacon is to be one" not double-tongued and not greedy of base gain, a stronger word than that used in the character of the elder. While the deacon gradually became the assistant of the presbyter in spiritual duties, he was, to begin with, the almoner of the Church. We are reminded both of the unity and humility of Christian service by his very name, which is simply servant, and is the name by which an Apostle is proud to describe himself; for from the Apostle to the deacon, and from the deacon to the most obscure person who works in Christ's house, all are the servants of the Lord.

When we pass from the facts of the holy Ministry in the Apostolic period to the authority of the Ministry in all periods, then we are among burning questions which have set men's minds on fire, and in the flames thereof charity itself has often been consumed. It is perhaps an inevitable fault of human nature that men should be jealous about their office, and that ministers of Christ holding different theories of their authority should allow the personal factor to enter into the discussion of Orders. As the word for Orders, and all the words which have to do with appointment to Christian offices, came from the province of civil government, possibly some flavour of secular ambition and strife has clung to them, and the Church, in adopting the graded system of political government, has run some danger of turning the Kingdom of Christ into a worldly state. It was not without reason that the Master insisted upon the grace of humility, and rebuked Apostles who desired to exceed their fellows in anything except in sacrifice, and that He declares that He alone was Master and that His servants were brethren. Perhaps one may be too much influenced by the appearance of things, but certainly one cannot com-

pare the hierarchy of the Church when the Church was in the height of her worldly glory—the titles and the pomp and the riches and the luxury, I will not add the unashamed vices—with the simplicity of the Ministry in the days of the Apostles, without amazement and the uneasy feeling that all this rank and show is of the world, and not of Christ.

The dispute regarding the exact authority of the holy Ministry is really twofold. First, what it is; and second, whence it came; and although the two questions are closely linked together—the question, that is, of sacerdotalism and the other question of Apostolic succession, to use the familiar terms of this controversy—it is convenient to take first the one and then the other. Was it according to the will of Christ (and is it a matter of fact) that the Christian minister be a priest, or was it not Christ's intention (and the state of things in Apostolic days) that he should be a pastor? If the matter can be settled by names, then the argument can be closed at once; for although the minister of Christ is called, as we have seen, Apostle, Prophet, Teacher, Evangelist, Elder, Overseer, Deacon, as well as Shepherd, Leader, Ruler, he is never, as an officer of the Church, called priest in the New Testament Scripture. Amid this wealth of description, designed to bring out every side of his office and the distinction between the various duties of the Ministry, one word is carefully omitted and ostentatiously refused. It was the word most commonly used to describe a minister of religion in that day, and the word used not only in heathen religions, but also in the Jewish Church—the Church from whose bosom Christianity sprang. If it should be said that it was necessary for Christianity to avoid the terminology of Judaism in order that the new religion might not be confounded with the old, then why was the local and permanent Minister of the Christian Church called an Elder, and the

Synagogue, as it were, reconstituted in the upper rooms of the young Church? Was it to make a distinction between the Synagogue, wherein there was no sacrifice except that of praise, which is ever to be continued, and the Temple, where there were the sacrifices of blood, which had been for ever abolished? Is there not a presumption that Christianity began without any sacerdotal element, and is a religion in which sacerdotalism was to have no place, when the new religion, having a choice, called her minister, not a priest after the fashion of the Temple, but an elder after the example of the Synagogue?

Things, however, exist before words, and words are then made for their description; and it may be suggested that the office of ministering priest was implied in the Christian worship, although the name had not yet been given to the officiating minister. If there be no Sacerdotium in the New Testament Scriptures, yet, if there be a Sacrificium, the other must follow, for a sacrifice demands a priest. Was there any sacrifice which the presbyter could offer, and in offering constitute himself a priest? Certainly there was a sacrifice which he was bound to offer, and that was the living sacrifice of himself as a man bought by the blood of Christ and consecrated to His service; but this was a sacrifice which all his fellow-Christians could not only offer with him, but were bound to offer, and in this sense all Christian folk are priests unto God. . . An atoning sacrifice there was none for him or any other man to offer, for Christ had offered Himself once in the end of the world, and now our one Ministering Priest has "entered into the Holy Place to make intercession for us." This sacrifice cannot be repeated, but it can be remembered, and in the remembrance of the Lord's death the whole congregation unite: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the Communion of the Blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the Communion of the Body of Christ?" There

can therefore be no ministering priest because he has no sacrifice to minister, and the word is not used because the thing does not exist.

It may also be added that the spirit of Christianity has no place for the sacerdotal idea, because that idea creates an order of men who stand between God and their fellows, and through whose ministrations the sinner can alone be accepted of God. Nowhere in the Gospels does Christ intimate that if a person desired to approach Him he must come through an Apostle. More than once He rebuked His Apostles because they came between Him and seeking souls. He was accessible to all and easy to be entreated; more accessible than His Apostles were, more gentle in His ways. There never was any religion so informal and so unofficial as Christianity, whose Lord invites all to come to Him, and declares He will cast none out who come, Who answered every prayer, and responded even to the tears of a penitent. Has Jesus, because He passed into the heavens, withdrawn Himself from human souls? has he given to inferior men that right of mediation which He sharply denied to the Apostles? Is He now remote and awful, refusing to hear any confession unless it be made first through a fellow-sinner, refusing forgiveness unless it be made through the mouth of that fellow-sinner? It may be so; but if so, the Lord is not that "same Jesus." It may be that a man now stands between the penitent and the Lord; but if so, there is a gulf which cannot be bridged between the Church of to-day and the Church of the first days.

Our second question is the origin of ministerial authority, and the question here is whether a Ministry is valid in virtue of the grace bestowed upon the minister which appears in his life and work, which also is recognised and accepted by the Church, or whether his Ministry is alone valid who has a commission received by transmission from

the original pastoral authority. No doubt there is something which appeals to the imagination in the idea of this long and august succession. That the Apostles received a deposit of grace which they pass to bishops, that one bishop passed this sacred treasure to another, on to the present day; that every man on whose head a bishop in this succession laid his hands was invested with such supernatural power that the child whom he christened in the name of the Holy Trinity became a child of God; and that every time he consecrated the elements of bread and wine they changed into the body and blood of Christ. This provision seems to give the most perfect security for the administration of the Divine grace, as, on the other hand, it separates with the utmost rigour between those who belong to the Church and those who are outside the covenant; and, indeed, so uncompromising and so automatic is the principle, that if both the officiating priest in the Sacrament and the receiving communicant be rank unbelievers, yet the one can give and the other receive the body and blood of Christ.

While on first sight this theory is imposing by its thoroughness, on closer examination it is encompassed with difficulties; and the first is this, that no such deposit of sacerdotal grace was ever made to the Apostles as Apostles, and therefore there was nothing which they could transmit to the bishops following. It is generally agreed that Christ conferred this authority, if He did at all, on the evening of Easter Day, when, the doors being shut, He appeared in the midst of His disciples, and said, "Peace be unto you." He also breathed on them, and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost"; and then follow the special words of the commission, "Whosoever sins ye remit they are remitted unto them, and whosoever sins ye retain they are retained." What may be intended by the remitting and retaining of sins is just now outside our concern. What we require to know for our purpose is

not the contents of the commission, but the persons to whom it was given. They are called in St. John's Gospel the "disciples," and in St. Luke's Gospel the company is described as the "eleven and they that were with them"; that is to say, not the Apostles only, but Cleopas and his friend who had returned from Emmaus, and a number of other disciples. Christ conferred this power not upon one class, the Ministry in the Church, but upon the whole Church; not upon a few, but upon the society; so that it is the whole body of Christians who have received this deposit, and the whole body who can transmit it to the generations following. Again, if you please, we have a priesthood, but it is the priesthood of the whole body, and no grace can be transmitted through the line of apostolical succession which cannot be fully transmitted by the whole body of the Church.

The second weakness in this theory is the uncertainty of the method by which the grace can be transmitted. If it be by the laying on of hands, then this beautiful rite had a very wide use in ancient times, and was employed not only for the ordination of a minister but the admission of an ordinary member and the readmission of a penitent, and the Pope declares that by itself the imposition of hands signifies nothing definite. If it is by the words which are used, then it is in dispute what the words ought to be, and there have been many different forms. When Cyprian describes the ordination of a bishop with great minuteness, he does not refer to the imposition of hands. According to Dr. Hatch, "all the elements of appointment to ecclesiastical offices were also the elements of appointment to civil offices," namely, "Nomination, Election, Approval, and the Declaration of Election by a competent officer. . . ." On the morning after his election the bishop is escorted to his chair by the other bishops who took part in the election, and at once enters on the active

duty of a bishop by preaching a sermon and celebrating the Eucharist. One also gathers from the directions which St. Paul gave to Titus to appoint elders in each city that the election was the same as that of a Roman magistrate, for the word employed means to elect by popular vote. It is also worthy of note that St. Paul was called to the Apostleship by Christ Himself, and insisted that his orders were of Christ and not of man ; but when he was ordained at Antioch in recognition of the grace he had received, he was ordained not by Apostles, nor yet by presbyters, but by the whole body of the Church. "Then they," that is, the Church, "held a special fast and prayed, and laid their hands upon them, and gave them leave to depart." When it was necessary to elect the seven, the Church was commanded by the Apostles to discover men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and of wisdom ; when the Church had elected the seven, as men who had the Holy Ghost, they were ordained. Timothy was ordained by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery and also by the ordination of the Apostles, but it is stated with marked emphasis that a gift had come to him by prophecy. We gather, therefore, from the history of the Apostolic period and early days that the great qualification for the ministers was the possession of the Holy Ghost ; that the Church selected for office men that were so qualified, whether a Paul, or a Stephen, or a Timothy ; that they appointed them to office as a rule by the laying on of hands, and that the validity of the office was not dependent on the form of ordination, about which to this day there is no certainty, but upon the spiritual gifts which the minister received from Christ. We therefore conclude not only that there is no special gift which the Apostolic officer can alone confer, but that if there were, there is no certain method by which he could transmit it.

Another unfortunate defect in this theory is the want of

a continued and verified line of officers to transmit the grace, if it had been given, and if there were any way of transmitting it. When the deposit is so sacred and the want for it so great, and when, indeed, without an unbroken line of trustees there can be no ministerial or sacramental grace in the Church, one could have hoped that the history of this line, upon which so much depends, would have been as distinct as the conditions of salvation. One would have expected to find a table by which the bishop of to-day could trace his descent from the Apostles—an unbroken chain with every link in its place. But what does a perplexed seeker after truth find when he turns to this genealogy? That an Anglican bishop traces his succession to the Roman Church, and the Roman Church informs us promptly and with emphasis that he is simply an unordained and unconsecrated layman; that a bishop of the Holy Orthodox Church of the East has true Orders by the admission of the Roman See, but yet the Eastern and Western Churches are separate; that the Roman Church cannot by the widest stretch of historical charity connect itself by a continuous line of bishops with the Apostles; that there is a blank space between the Apostles and the first historical Bishop of Rome; that there is a grave uncertainty when the historical episcopate was created; that there is no evidence of the ordination of a bishop by the Apostles; that the identification of the Evangelist Timothy and James of Jerusalem with bishops is only a plausible suggestion; that the early episcopate differed very much, as a matter of fact, and by general consent, from the episcopate in later days; that some of the early Churches, whose position in the Church Catholic cannot be denied, had, so far as appears, no bishops, and that the bishop was elected by the presbyters—to quote the words of St. Jerome, “Just as an army elects a general, or as deacons appoint one of themselves whom they know

to be diligent and call him an archdeacon." Amid this wilderness of uncertainty and controversy and speculation and inconsistency, the path of the succession can often be traced with difficulty, and is sometimes lost, and it is surely too great a burden upon reason to insist that a Christian must believe that along this wandering and broken way can alone come the sure blessing of the Divine grace. For this is not like the glory of the highway of the Prophet, wherein the wayfaring man, even though he be a fool, shall not err.

While one is bound to point out the patent difficulty of this theory, it does not follow that he is indifferent to the value of the episcopate or the service which the bishop had rendered to the unity of the Christian Church. Although the episcopate may not be found during the Apostolic period, and although it may not have been created by inspired authority, of which, I submit, there is no evidence, there were excellent reasons for its establishment. For one thing, every body of officers, from the Board of a Company up to the rulers in Christ's Church, must have a president, and it is not desirable that he be too frequently changed. If he be a wise man, and able to rule with knowledge and with grace, it is better that he be continued in his office, and that the Church in that particular place should have a strong head. When persecutions came and some one was needed to hearten the Church, it was natural that a man of courage and faith should come to the front, and that the power should be concentrated in his hands. When heresies sprang up, and there was danger that the truth of God should be lost, it was well that it should have a responsible guardian. As the number of presbyters increased and the duties of the office multiplied, it was desirable that there should be an overseer to take charge of them as they took charge of the people. The organization of the Church, as the witness to the Lord and the defender of the faith, and

the shepherd of souls, culminated in the office of bishop. Without the episcopate in the days of persecution and confusion, when society was falling to pieces on every side, and the Church was the only hope of stability, it may be urged with great force that the visible unity of the Church could not have been preserved, and her disruption would have been a disaster of the first magnitude both to religion and to society. It ought also to be frankly admitted that it is a good thing for the Church to have men of recognised authority and wide experience, to whom her ministers can go for spiritual and practical advice, and who shall be in truth their father in God. It is an historical fact that the Churches under episcopal government have had a more profound conviction of the duty of unity, and have been less open to the storms of individualistic self-will, than the non-episcopal communions, and the way in which a handful of non-episcopal Christians, being thwarted in some scheme of their own fancy, will threaten to break up the Church of their faith and baptism is to my mind one of the strongest arguments for some form of episcopal government.

Whether government by presbyters or by bishops be more expedient for the good of a Christian Church, is an open question, and very likely a compromise between the two systems would be best; but it is another question altogether, whether it is the will of Christ that the supreme government of the Church should be so invested in bishops that any other system of government be judged an act of disobedience to the Lord, and the persons under its charge be placed outside the promised blessing. This is a daring position to take up in face of a divided Christendom, and there can be no other final settlement of the matter in dispute than an appeal to the facts of religion. It is really futile since the Reformation for any single Church to claim the monopoly of the grace of orders or of the sacraments.

Does the Church of Rome, which upon the theory of Apostolic succession has the surest Orders, foster a piety more intelligent and spiritual than the Church of England? Have the Wesleyan Methodists of England and the Calvinistic Methodists of Wales done less for religion according to their province than the Anglican Church? Has the Kirk of Scotland been less faithful to her nation or made less of her children than the ancient Church to whose heritage she succeeded? Has the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper been less efficacious for comfort and holy living when administered by a presbyter, ordained by fellow-presbyters, than by a priest on whom a bishop in full communion with Rome has laid his hands? When one asks those questions, and many more of the same kind might be asked, he is not to be understood as disparaging any body of Christ's people, for he rejoices to recognise the grace of God in all schools and in all sections of the Church—in St. Augustine and in Clement of Alexandria, in Tauler and in Thomas à Kempis, in Philip Melancthon and in Francis Xavier, in Bishop Andrews and John Bunyan, in Pusey and in Spurgeon—he is not seeking to unchurch any of Christ's disciples, or to limit the grace of the Lord, but he is rather trying to magnify that idea of the Church Catholic which will include within its visible bounds every true disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that Apostolic idea of the holy Ministry, as old as St. Paul's ordination at Antioch, which will recognise as a valid minister of Christ every one who, having been called of God, and manifestly prepared by the Holy Spirit, shall therefore be called of Christ's people and ordained by them to the preaching of the word and the administration of the sacraments.

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