

THE APOSTOLIC MINISTRY IN THE SCOTTISH CHURCH.

LECTURE I.

IN the remarkable "Deed of Trust" by which the late Mr James Baird of Auchmedden devoted half a million of his wealth to the service of the Church of Scotland, it is provided that a certain portion of that munificent gift shall be set aside to found and endow the "Baird Lectureship." The lecturer, appointed by the trustees on this foundation, is to be, in their opinion, "a man of piety, ability, and learning," "approved and reputed sound in all the essentials of Christian truth," as these are understood by them; and he is to deliver "a course of not less than six lectures on any subject of Theology, Christian Evidences, Chris-

tian Work, Christian Missions, Church Government, and Church Organisations, or on such subject relative thereto as the trustees shall fix in concert with the lecturer." The responsibility of my appearing here as the possessor of the qualifications specified in Mr Baird's deed rests, I feel, not with me but with the trustees. My part as lecturer is simply to perform the task they have intrusted to me as well as I can. The subject I have chosen for treatment has—perhaps more than any of those with which my reverend and learned predecessors have dealt—relation to several of the topics suggested in the deed. It cannot be considered apart from reference to the Church's theology. Its very roots are bound up with Christian missions and Christian work. The questions of Church government and Church organisation recur at every notable crisis in its history. This is one of its recommendations; but further, in selecting this subject, my choice was not altogether uninfluenced by my recollection of the warm patriotism and zealous churchmanship of the founder of the "Baird Trust," and the conviction that the tribute due by me to his memory could not be more fitly paid than by connecting, as closely as I could, the discharge of the duty assigned to me by his trustees, with an exposition of the nature and history of the ministry of that

national branch of the Catholic Church to which he owed his religious training, and of which he was a most loyal and generous member.

I use the term "national branch of the Catholic Church" advisedly, because it, and it alone, properly describes the Church of Scotland. A national Church may lack the note of catholicity, in which case it is but a sect occupying a national position. A branch of the Catholic Church may exist amongst a people without any public sanction or establishment, in which case it lacks the note of nationality.

The Armenian Church, ancient and faithful, and in these days a grievously persecuted Church of martyrs and confessors, is an instance of the one kind, because by its holding to the monophysite doctrine it stands aloof from the orthodox and catholic creed. The various orthodox Churches, Presbyterian and Episcopal, in the United States of America, are an instance of the other, because none of them possesses a historical relation to the nation as a whole, or obtains its legal recognition. In Scotland the Church is at once catholic and national—that is to say, it is orthodox in doctrine, according to the catholic standards of orthodoxy; it is apostolic in its constitution; it has never separated itself from the Catholic Church of Christ, although at the Reformation of the sixteenth cen-

ture it severed its connection with the corrupt communion which was governed by Rome, and which arrogated to itself the sole right to that noble title; and it has always represented the faith of the great body of the Scottish people, been established by their will, protected by their laws, and acknowledged as the Church of the nation by their Government.

What is the Apostolic Ministry? To that question I reply, A ministry exercised in the spirit and after the example of the first planters of Christianity, and transmitted from them to us in an orderly and recognisable succession. This definition will not satisfy those who maintain that the essential note of an apostolic ministry is to be found, not in its character but in its organisation; and that no ministry deserves the name which is not part and parcel of the threefold order of bishops, priests, and deacons. We in the Scottish Church, with the Reformed Church throughout the world, do not recognise the necessity of this triad. Had it been indispensable to the proper life and functions of the Church, our Lord could hardly have left His followers to discover this for themselves; and He certainly never prescribed it to them. The evangelists, had He done so, would not have forgotten to record it. We do not find it laid down anywhere in the Scriptures. It is not even re-

ferred to in any one of the Œcumenical creeds, and is in no sense a part of the true faith of a Christian.

The value and efficacy of a ministry cannot depend on its form and method, so much as on its character and spirit. The letter killeth, the spirit giveth life. The succession, which binds the life of the Church age after age into one unbroken unity, is not that of the members of an ecclesiastical order, but of those who, in virtue of their spiritual oneness with the Father, have been in their day and generation the "friends of God." It is by the members of this sacred guild that the life of the world is preserved from corruption. They are "the salt of the earth"; and they are gathered into the one fellowship, like those that shall enter into the new Jerusalem, from east and west and north and south—out of every region, every rank, every race, every communion of them that believe. These are they who form the "royal priesthood" of the Church of God; and they exercise their priestly function, "not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life." To their ministry no ordination can admit; from it no excommunication can debar.

While this is so, and while the priestly character of all Christians is a vital principle never to be forgotten, the ministry, in its more exact

and technical sense, means the office and service of those members of the Church who have been appointed to preach the Word, to celebrate the sacraments, to administer the discipline, and to conduct the government, of the Christian community. The first Scots' Confession (of 1560) and the Anglican Articles (of 1562) agree in their declaration of the necessity of this ministry to the orderly and healthful life of the Church, and in their definition of its character. It is the ministry of men lawfully called by the congregations to which they minister, and duly appointed in virtue of their proved fitness for the office.¹ This idea of a call to office in the Church, given on the ground of due ability to fill it, and sanctioned by a competent authority, is one that presented itself to the minds of churchmen at the very outset of the apostolic history. The small company of disciples in Jerusalem, after our Lord's

¹ "That sacraments be rightly ministrate, we judge two things are requisite: the one, that they be ministrate by lawful ministers, whom we affirm to be only they that are appointed to the preaching of the Word, into whose mouth God hath put some sermon of exhortation, they being men lawfully chosen thereto by some church."—Scots' Confession of Faith, article 22.

"It is not lawful for any man to take upon him the office of public preaching, or ministering the Sacraments in the Congregation, before he be lawfully called, and sent to execute the same. And those we ought to judge lawfully called and sent, which be chosen and called to this work by men who have public authority given unto them in the Congregation, to call and send Ministers into the Lord's vineyard."—Anglican Articles, article 23.

ascension, decided that the blank in the apostolate, caused by the traitor's death, must be filled up. Two men were chosen as qualified for the vacant place, and after solemn prayer it was agreed that he on whom the lot should fall should be appointed, with the result that Matthias "was numbered with the eleven apostles." A little later, when the first note of discord was heard in the squabbling between the Hellenist Jews and those of Palestine about their widows' share of the common alms, the same idea directed the measures adopted to adjust the difference. The apostles bade "the brethren" to look out from among themselves seven men pious and wise, who could be trusted to administer the charities of the Church. Seven such men were selected; and, again after solemn prayer, they were set apart to the new office of deacon. But it is to be noted that this appointment does not seem to have hampered their freedom of speech or fettered their zeal in witnessing for Christ among the people. Ere long "the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake" so stirred the hatred of the Jewish religionists against Stephen that he was stoned to death. Philip also, as we know, in a short time left Jerusalem to preach the Word in Samaria; and finally, some twenty years after, we find him at Cæsarea, known there not as the deacon, but

as "the evangelist." He had not felt himself to be bound to only one function or office in the Church. It is evident that the Christian ministry, in its first developments, was a service full of spiritual liberty and elastic adaptability to the needs and circumstances of the community of disciples, as those developed themselves.

By-and-by we hear at Jerusalem of certain members of the Church, called elders, sitting in council with the apostles, and taking the lead in the congregation. We hear nothing of the time or manner of their election or appointment. The need of them was felt—and they appear. We hear, at Antioch, of others who are called "prophets and teachers," and who also are evidently men of eminent weight and influence; but how they came by these names, or whether these designated an office to which they were chosen, as Matthias or Stephen had been chosen, we are not told. We have some light as to their character—they were men who devoted themselves to the service of God with prayer and fasting; we have none as to the formal steps, if any, in virtue of which they held their high place among their brethren. The realities of the indwelling Spirit, of the inspired and inspiring speech, of the life of self-sacrifice and divine communion, not the formalities of ordination to office, or the niceties of carefully adjusted functions, were the

things of first concern to the founders of the Church, and the writers of the New Testament.

Not even S. Paul—founder of many churches as he was—ever condescends to deal with these technical and external matters. He describes minutely the character of a good bishop or overseer; of a good deacon (and even of a good deacon's wife); but he says not a word as to their election, or as to any form or ceremony which was the passport to their duties. He refers to "elders" also, but in terms too indefinite to throw any clear light on the nature or tenure of their office, if in any degree it was not identical with that of bishops. The only title, besides that of apostle, which he applies to himself is preacher¹ and teacher; and his sense of the pre-eminent importance of the preacher's duty is shown by his exhortation to Timothy to make full proof of his ministry by "doing the work of an evangelist."² His instructions to Titus³ leave no doubt that he did not see any difference between an elder and a bishop (the one title indicating the rank, the other the duties, of the functionary);⁴ while, in his enumeration of the ministers whom the Lord had given to His Church, he names neither preacher, nor elder, nor bishop, but apostles,

¹ 1 Tim. ii. 7; 2 Tim. i. 11.

² 2 Tim. iv. 5.

³ Titus i. 5, 7.

⁴ Neander, *Planting of Christianity*, book i. chap. v.

prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers.¹ All this tends to prove how little store the great founder of the Gentile churches set by outward ordinance and order, in comparison with inner grace, ability, and character; and how free and flexible in his idea was the constitution of the Church. The names which, as time went on, became subjects of keen controversy and were applied with rigid accuracy, are used in his epistles with what ecclesiastical precisians must regard as a dangerous looseness.

The same laxity is conspicuous in the other apostolic writings. S. Paul uses the terms elder and bishop as interchangeable. He calls Timothy a minister of Jesus Christ and an evangelist, and himself a preacher, a teacher, a minister, an apostle. Philip the "deacon" is also Philip the "evangelist." S. Peter describes himself as an apostle, and an elder, and a bond-servant of Jesus Christ. S. John calls himself simply an elder. S. James and S. Jude call themselves bond-servants.² In the Apocalypse the minister is called the angel. Nowhere does any apostle assert a claim to peculiar dignity or rank. Nowhere is the Christian ministry reserved for a

¹ Ephes. iv. 11.

² Δούλος. The term *διάκονος* is rendered minister—*i. e.*, ministering servant—in twenty-six out of the thirty times in which it occurs in the New Testament; in the other four it is used in the official sense of deacon.

special class. Within the Church all are brethren; and the names of apostle and prophet, of pastor and teacher, of elder and evangelist, of minister and deacon, mark but the varieties of function within the one brotherhood. "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are diversities of ministrations, and the same Lord. And there are diversities of workings, but the same God, who worketh all things in all."¹ I ask you to note these characteristics of the ministry in the apostolic times: its variety of function; its freedom in exercise; its unconventional nomenclature; its fulness of the Spirit, the freshness and vigour of its life.

And I must ask you also to note another memorable characteristic—the popular and social, as opposed to the sacerdotal and official, nature of the development of the Church's organisation. We see this in all its early stages. In the appointment of Matthias, and in the election of the deacons, the matter in hand is referred to the judgment of the whole Church. At a later date, when the Church at Antioch consulted the Church at Jerusalem as to the reception of the Gentiles whom Paul and Barnabas had evangelised, "the apostles and elders and brethren assembled with one accord" to consider the question; and the decision come to

¹ 1 Cor. xii. 4-6, R.V.

ran in their name. For the Church is not an order, nor an office, but a society; and the assent of all the members was held to be necessary to give validity to the counsel even of the apostles. The mind of the Church, as a whole, must be expressed freely and fully on questions affecting its welfare and measures regulating its development. That development was not prescribed; it was spontaneous. The institutions of the Church grew to meet the needs of the Church. If the Church be "the body of Christ," and the promise that His Spirit should be with it always holds good, then the Church must be always at liberty to adapt its institutions and functions to the requirements of its members. Its institutions and functions are the garments of a living body, and not the cerements of a mummy. In all the affairs of the Church—doctrinal, liturgical, practical, and disciplinary—this principle is applicable; and, unless it be applied, the life of the Church, at that point or in that department where it is set at naught, loses its healthy freedom and expansive power.

It is the right of the Christian commonwealth as a whole to employ its own spiritual wisdom, its own reasonable choice, in its methods of fulfilling its mission as the witness for the truth of Christ's Gospel—the righteousness of His law, the unity of His body. Freedom of thought and

action is the sign of the presence of the Spirit. The Church is a family—a society—living a natural and not a mechanical life (if I may use the term), and, like everything that lives, changing from within in obedience to the movements of the inner life. These movements are ever and anon prompted by changes in the Church's external relations; but they proceed, not under the pressure of outward necessity, but under the influence of the free spirit's judgment of what that necessity requires. Circumstances change; and to meet them the visible life and organisation of the Church change also,—the very freedom which effects the change proving her to be the living Bride of Christ, who yet abides amid all mutations essentially the same, because the inner life through which she is united to her Lord is, like Himself, for ever unchangeable. It is the Church's true wisdom to discern what is permanent and what is temporary, and to believe—and act on the belief—that hers is the spiritual liberty as much as it was the brethren's under Peter and James at Jerusalem, or at Antioch under Barnabas and Paul, which entitles her to alter, to modify, to abolish, to originate—wherever her Christian reason, earnestly bent upon her Master's work and the varying problems of life around her, tells her there is, in any part of her organisation, a system to be remodelled, a

redundancy to be pruned down, a deficiency to be made good. "So the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love." The consciousness of this spiritual liberty as the inherent possession of the whole Church, the bond of union and the warrant of life in the Christian family, is one of the most distinct apostolic "notes," which we shall recognise at many a point in the history we are about to trace.

The ministry, as we see it in the Church of the apostles, did not retain its simple apostolic character. Ere long the deacon disappears in his original capacity of the Church's almoner, and reappears as a subordinate, inferior to the elder, and forbidden to exercise the elder's functions. The elder becomes the priest, and the priest ripens into the bishop. The whole idea of the Church undergoes a transmutation, through the revival, in the Christian society, of the superstitions of Paganism and Judaism, and the consequent obscuration of the central truth of the universal priesthood of Christ's disciples.

It is necessary that we should observe and understand the nature of this development, and the revolution it wrought in the constitution of the Church. It was a sacerdotal development.

By sacerdotal I mean the principle that religion demands the existence of a specially commissioned and consecrated order, without which its functions are invalid and irregular. That there is a basis for the sacerdotal theory, both in Paganism and Judaism, no one can deny; but we deny that there is a basis for it in Christianity as taught by Christ. The sacerdotalism of the Jewish system was, like much else in that system, part and parcel of those "beggarly elements" from which it was the object of Jesus of Nazareth to deliver the religion of the Jew. The Jewish priesthood was one of the "shadows of good things to come," whose substance was Christ. When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part is done away. A sacrificing priesthood lost all its meaning when the one sacrifice, of which its offerings were but types and adumbrations, had been made, and made once for all—when the material emblem had been superseded by the spiritual reality. The spiritual reality loses all *its* meaning if we maintain that the material emblem, though under a changed form, must still be perpetuated.

The universal priesthood of believers becomes a fiction, if one class or order of believers is recognised as possessing a priesthood of a higher value, not in virtue of a fuller spirituality, but of a formal appointment. The Christian priesthood, if the

claims of this class were true, would lapse from its apostolical position: it would no longer be held and exercised by the power of the eternal life, but only, like the pagan or the Levitical, by the "law of a carnal commandment." Once admit the sacerdotal claim—by whomsoever advanced—and you admit that the grace of God ceases to be free, and the fellowship of the Christian Church is not a spiritual communion. The one is limited to a material agency, and the other is fettered by mechanical conditions. You bind yourself to the essentially profane principle that without the formal priesthood you cannot have the Catholic Church, and that outside the Catholic Church there is no salvation, save of that disputable kind which may consort with what are impiously and insolently styled the "uncovenanted mercies of God." Wherever the pretensions of sacerdotalism are accepted, the result is certain. Its full development may be delayed, but it is inevitable. It is the revolt of reason against religion.

No doubt the sacerdotal theory can boast of the support of great minds—of a certain type of greatness,—of a Cyprian in the early Church, of a Newman in these latter days; but it can never be otherwise than repugnant to minds in which the rational and spiritual elements are dominant. To believe that the infinite and eternal God—the

Creator of the universe—the Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ—is a precise formalist, who insists on being approached and worshipped only along a certain highway of sacerdotal mediation; who has established on the earth, as the visible counterpart of His invisible kingdom, a select communion in which—to take only familiar national examples—Cardinal Beaton and Archbishop Sharp were true members, and Thomas Chalmers and John Tulloch were inadmissible outcasts,—is an outrage on common-sense. It is this fact that makes the modern revival of sacerdotalism of such evil omen. It is a revival of a semi-pagan, semi-Jewish superstition to which the minds of the mass of men will not bow. If religion be presented to them in this guise, they will renounce it. They will either turn to absolute rejection and unbelief, or they will, under the imperious pressure of that spiritual need which superstition and atheism alike fail to satisfy, work out for themselves a greater revolution in the creeds, formulas, and organisation of the Churches, than was effected at the Reformation.

Now the area within which we trace the growth of sacerdotalism most plainly is the eldership. The elder was a name familiar in the Jewish synagogue; and the Christian congregation was, in its beginning, little else than a reproduction

of the Jewish synagogue. Indeed S. James uses the very word to designate the Christian assembly.¹ The appointment of elders in the Christian congregations was thus a perfectly natural step in their organisation, and so much a matter of course that in the New Testament we find no explanation of their presence in the Church of Jerusalem; and nothing as regarded their place in the Pauline churches beyond the bare statement that S. Paul "ordained" them wherever he had founded a congregation. The elders in the Jewish economy did not constitute an order or caste. The elder worked at his trade, as did the apostle. There was no demarcation between the secular and the ecclesiastical life.

But the elder had another name. S. Paul enjoins Titus to ordain or appoint elders in every city, and adds, in explanation of the kind of man who should be so appointed, "a *bishop* must be blameless as the steward of God"; and in writing to Timothy he gives Timothy a charge concerning "bishops and deacons," naming these two as the only orders in the Church. He sends for the "elders" of the congregation at Ephesus, and when they come to him he addresses them as the "bishops" or overseers of the flock. All candid interpreters of the apostolic history now admit, with Bishop Lightfoot and Dr Hatch, that

¹ S. James, ii. 2.

the bishop and the elder of the New Testament are one and the same person and office-bearer.

The first indication that meets us of the corporate action of the elders of a church or of neighbouring churches, and their formation into a body discharging a common function, is in S. Paul's first letter to Timothy, where he cautions him not to neglect the gift that was given to him "by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery," or eldership; from which we gather that Timothy's appointment to his office at Ephesus was accompanied by the preaching of the Word, and the imposition of the hands of the elders of the congregation, or possibly of more than one congregation. The statement affords an early glimpse of the united action of the rulers of the Church, and also gives us the first hint of the circumstances in which the episcopate, as a distinct order, took its origin.

In any body of men associated together for any purpose some must take the lead. Even where equality is most sought after and prized, there will be a *primus inter pares*. The most democratic republic has its president; the most Presbyterian presbytery has its moderator. To account for the emergence of the episcopate from the presbyterate, we do not need to invoke any divine command or to invent any apostolic sanction. Neither the one nor the other exists in the

New Testament. The only sanction possessed by Episcopacy is to be found in the universal tendencies of human nature; and it is one sufficiently respectable to satisfy the self-esteem of even the most ambitious prelate of the most sacerdotal communion in Christendom. There is in the New Testament no trace of distinction, either of office or of ordination, between the man who is called "elder" and the man who is called "bishop." How, then, came the distinction, which is now undoubted, to arise? It arose, I believe, through the natural development which, in case of personal or official parity, gradually confers a primacy, in virtue of certain personal qualities or certain official advantages. Such was the personal primacy, among the apostles themselves, accorded to the bold personality of Peter; such was the official primacy accorded to the local eminence of James, as minister of the Mother Church at Jerusalem. Among the elders of a congregation the ablest would come to the front. Among the elders of a city the leading elder of the largest congregation would begin to hold the foremost place.

Dr Hatch,¹ who devoted to the whole question of the presbyterate and the episcopate in the early Church the most recent and most exhaustive investigation, was inclined to make a

¹ Organisation of the Early Christian Churches, Lect. iv.

more radical distinction between the functions of the "presbyter" and those of the "episcopos," than, I think, the facts of the case altogether warrant. He points out, very properly, that in the Jewish economy the elder discharged a double duty. Wherever there was an organised Jewish community — whether in Palestine or among the Gentiles—there existed, along with the synagogue, a local court, which was called the "Synedrion." The synedrion held its meetings in the building used by the synagogue for its religious services; and when the synagogue met for its own special purposes, the elders who formed the local court occupied those "chief seats" which our Lord describes the Pharisees as coveting. The synagogue met on the Sabbath; the synedrion on two other days of the week, for the ordinary purposes of government and administration. And the function of the elders was mainly and peculiarly to govern and administer, not to teach, or to conduct public worship. It is in this relation to the synedrion, rather than in their relation to the synagogue, that Dr Hatch thinks he discovers the origin of the place and function of the elders in the Christian communities which arose within the pale of Judaism. And it is to the office of chairman, or, as we should say, "convener," of this administrative body or court, that he traces the germ of the episcopate.

In all such bodies, especially in large communities, there would be a necessity for a centralised administration, and for, at least, a chairman of the governing body. But I apprehend that this necessity was not so potent a factor in the development of the episcopate as the natural recognition accorded, in all communities whose constitution is as yet unwritten, to those among their members who, by force of character or proof of ability, vindicate a right to the leadership. The office of bishop emerged from the eldership, not so much as a perpetuation of the old system of presidency in the Jewish synedrion, or the Gentile municipal council, as a natural selection of what was fittest for the government of the early churches. What is of importance for us to note is, that it was a mere development; that there is no trace of any divine institution of it, or of any apostolical authority for it; and that while we find the diaconate and the presbyterate fully developed during the age of the apostles, the episcopate, apart from the presbyterate, cannot be traced within that age. It is also to be remembered that, alike in the origination of the diaconate, the presbyterate, and the episcopate, the leading idea was plainly the effective administration of the Church and its works of beneficence and evangelistic enterprises—its organisation and government, in short, and not the

assertion of its general unity, or the preservation of purity of doctrine. It is not until the date of the Epistles of Clement that we find the president of the Christian community regarded in the light of the custodian of the rule of faith; and not till a yet later time that the theory grew into general, though not universal, acceptance, that the bishop, no longer regarded as *primus inter pares* and the chairman of the college of presbyters, was to be venerated as the successor of the apostles, the depository of the supreme power of the Church, and the embodiment of the unity of its doctrine and its discipline, standing out as a member of an order, distinct from and higher than either the diaconate or the presbyterate.

Between the year 70 and the year 120 A.D., darkness broods over the process by which the Church was gradually developing its forms of worship, of government, of discipline, of belief. Up to the beginning of that period the Church was (popularly speaking) Presbyterian. At the close of that period we recognise Episcopacy in a somewhat unpretentious shape and with little dogmatic self-assertion about it, yet recognisable as the healthy and promising infant, whose infancy was in due time to be succeeded by the bloated maturity of the diocesan prelacy of the middle ages. The earliest indication of it is in Justin Martyr's mention of the "president," or presiding

elder, who took the lead in the communion service, at his day—about the middle of the second century, or a little before it. This president conducts the service, and pronounces the thanksgiving over the elements, after which the bread and the wine (mixed with water) are distributed to the communicants by the deacons, and a portion is carried to those who are absent. But in Justin's time this presiding elder was simply what the name implied. He had not appropriated the other title, which by-and-by was to signify not merely the performer of a special duty, but the holder of a special rank. This was the Greek title of *episcopos* or overseer, occasionally used in the New Testament, as we have seen, and familiar to Greek-speaking people, as denoting the principal official of the social guilds or fraternities which were common among the Greeks and Romans. It was naturally fitted to the office of president of the Christian congregation, and has stuck to it by the law of survival.

The minister of a Presbyterian congregation is just as much an *episcopos* as any member of the Roman hierarchy, in the original sense of the term. He is the president, the administrator, the representative of the congregation; and the primitive bishop was no more. He is chosen by the congregation, and set apart to his office by his fellow-presbyters, as was the primitive bishop.

There is no conflict between the Presbyterian minister and the primitive bishop, as to office or order. It is with the later *prelate* that we come into collision, when he asserts his superior rank to the presbyter's, and declares himself to be the only true successor of the apostles. These claims soon began to announce themselves. In the institution of the eldership there was a certain infusion of the aristocratic principle—that is, the principle of the government of the ἀριστοι (the true principle of government, when the real ἀριστοι are set to govern); and, as Neander says, “an aristocratic constitution will ever find it easy, by various gradual changes, to pass into the monarchical.” A popular self-governing community, without mature experience of autonomy, is ready to fall in with a gradation of rank and division of administration, which saves itself trouble and seems to guarantee effective management of its affairs. Hence the emergence of the presbyterate—first in the synagogue, then in the Church—from the general congregation. Hence in a great degree the facility with which the episcopate emerged from the presbyterate. Hence the expansion of the claims of the episcopate to apostolic descent and monarchical power—the claim to form an order in itself, invested with prerogative and authority peculiarly its own.

The expansion of these claims was gradual,

but steadily progressive. There is no trace of them in the *Didaché*, or in Justin, though by their time the sacramental celebration had come, as we have seen, to be conducted by the president of the brethren—the bishop in embryo. Even when we find the triple grade of orders fully recognised, as we do in the Ignatian Epistles (which, whether authentic or spurious, mark a distinct advance in the Episcopal direction), there is no approach to prelatic pretension. The Episcopacy is congregational, not diocesan. “One altar, one bishop,” is the maxim. Every fully organised congregation had its bishop—that is to say, had a minister whose place and office were now recognised as above the elder’s, and without whom no sacrament could be administered or congregational meeting properly constituted. Even as late as the year 398 the Synod of Carthage enacted, relatively to that rite of ordination which was afterwards held to belong peculiarly to the bishop, that at the ordination of a presbyter all the presbyters, along with the bishop, shall lay their hands on the candidate’s head. But all this time the sacerdotal sense of official pre-eminence and the love of that pre-eminence had been taking firmer hold of the Episcopal mind. The distinction between the elder and the bishop, which had, at first and for long, been merely one of degree; became one of

kind. The presbyters, though many, came to be regarded as essentially distinct from the bishop, who was one; and who was held to constitute an order in his individuality, as they did in their plurality. He claimed, in fact, to be to the elder and deacon what with us the monarch is to the Lords and Commons—(though with a real power which the constitutional monarch does not possess)—a separate and superior estate of the ecclesiastical realm; while the body of the people—the laity, as they came to be called—stood on a level still lower, and in ecclesiastical opinion wholly subordinate. And yet the bishop of the sub-apostolic age is a functionary of a type essentially different from that of the modern episcopate.

We find the type—in the Ignatian Epistles—very clearly delineated. Ignatius—martyred under Trajan—gives us in these letters the earliest post-apostolic views of the questions about which he writes; and one of these is the government of the Church. But that Ignatian Episcopacy and diocesan Episcopacy, as now known in the Greek or the Roman or the Anglican Church, are one and the same thing, is only maintained by controversialists whose zeal outruns their discretion. It is important to weigh carefully what the first advocate of Episcopacy says of the system, with the view of determining whether Ignatius understood by

a bishop a diocesan, or simply a congregational functionary; and I therefore quote his exact words. In a letter to the Church at Smyrna he says: "Let no man do anything connected with the Church without the bishop. Let that be deemed a valid Eucharist which is either by the bishop or by one to whom he has intrusted it. Wherever the bishop shall appear, there let the people also be. . . . It is not lawful without the bishop either to baptise or celebrate a love-feast. . . . He who does anything without the knowledge of the bishop serves the devil."

To the Magnesians he writes: "Neither do ye anything without the knowledge of the bishop and presbyters. Neither endeavour that anything appear reasonable and proper to yourselves apart; but, being come together unto the same place, let there be one prayer, one supplication, one mind, one hope in joy and love undefiled. There is one Jesus Christ. . . . Do ye therefore all run together as unto one temple of God, as to one altar, as to one Jesus Christ."

Again to the Philadelphian Christians: "Take heed to have but one Eucharist. For there is one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, and one cup to the unity of His blood; one altar, as there is but one bishop along with the presbyters and deacons."

His brother bishop, Polycarp, he advises thus:

“Address thyself to each man severally as God enables thee. Bear the infirmities of all. . . . Let nothing be done without thee. . . . Let your meetings be held more frequently: inquire after every one by name.”

Now, here observe that the Church at Smyrna, at Magnesia, at Philadelphia, has each its own bishop. Ignatius's maxim is a bishop for every altar. Without the bishop there could be no baptism, no love-feast, no congregational assemblage. None but the bishop, or one appointed by him, could administer the Eucharist. It was the duty of the bishop to know every one of his flock by name, to sympathise with each one individually, to have frequent meetings with them, and at the same time to conserve his authority by allowing nothing to be done without him.

It need not be argued that the office which involved all these duties and responsibilities was not—could not be—that of a diocesan bishop. The great number of bishops within a limited area is another proof of the same thing. Palestine, for example, a smaller country than Wales, had some fifty-five bishops.¹ Cyprian was the typical High-Churchman of his time

¹ Le Quien, in his map of Palestine (*Oriens Christianus*: Paris, 1740), marks the sites of at least forty-two bishop's sees, and says there were thirteen besides whose sites could not be identified. Wales has only five bishops.

(middle of the third century) and champion of Episcopal rights; and yet the language he uses in reference to his charge of his church, and his relation to the presbyters and other members, forbids the idea that he was speaking either of a diocesan jurisdiction or an Episcopal authority, in the sense in which these are now understood. The bishop's diocese was his parish; and his authority was shared by the other presbyters, and limited by the constitutional privileges of the congregation or brethren.¹

¹ A few quotations—many might be made—will bear this out. Cyprian, writing "presbyteris et diaconibus fratribus," speaks of "compresbyteri nostri," and adds: "A primordio episcopatus mei statuerim nihil sine concilio vestro, et sine consensu plebis meæ, privatâ sententiâ gerere."—*EPIST.* vi. 5.

In regard to ordinations he says: "In ordinationibus clericis, fratres carissimi solemus vos ante consulere et mores ac merita singulorum communi consilio ponderare."—*EPIST.* xxx. 3. And similarly, in administering discipline, he refers to his acting "eum collegis meis, quibus presentibus, secundum arbitrium quoque vestrum, et omnium nostrum commune consilium," &c.—*EPIST.* xl. 7.

He apologises to the elders and deacons for ordaining a reader to the eldership in a case of necessity, in their absence: "Nihil a me absentibus vobis novum factum est; sed quod jam pridem communi consilio omnium nostrum cœperat, necessitate urgente promotum est."—*EPIST.* xxiv.

As the congregation's consent was necessary to the appointment of their bishop, so could they depose him if they deemed it right. Dealing with the cases of two deposed bishops, Martial and Basilides, Cyprian says; "Plebs . . . a peccatore præposito separare debet, nec se ad sacrilegi sacerdotis sacrificii miscere; quando ipsa maxime habet potestatem vel eligendi dignos sacerdotes vel indignos reeusandi."

I have enlarged on this office and function more than you may think necessary, because it is in the development of the episcopate we see the widest divergence from the venerable simplicity of the early Church; because with it are connected other developments equally alien from primitive principle and use; and because we find in the Scottish Church, whose ministry is the subject of these lectures, a marked fidelity to the apostolic type in many of its best characteristics.

Among the developments I refer to were the changes in the administration of the sacraments. Instead of the simple plunge into stream or pool, which had admitted the apostolic converts to the fold of Christ, baptism became an elaborate ceremonial. After a course of catechetical instruction, the candidates fasted and prayed, and made a formal renunciation of the devil, his angels, and his works, and a profession of their Christian faith. In addition to this renunciation, they underwent a form of exorcism, by which it was supposed the diabolic power over them was crushed. (This is one of the early traces of that oriental dualism familiar to the Gnostics, and which, in the sphere of demonology, raised the devil to the dignity of a malignant god.) Then followed a triple immersion, with the repetition of the baptismal formula; after which the baptised, wrapped in

white garments, were anointed with oil, and the bishop laid his hands on their heads. The priest or the deacon could immerse and anoint, but the bishop alone could bestow the "confirmation," which made the neophyte a full-blown member of the Church.

In the celebration of the Lord's Supper the growth of superstition expelled the natural and Scriptural ideas of social communion and devout remembrance. The priests of paganism had possessed the "mysteries" of the ethnic religions. Christianity must have its mysteries too, in which only the initiated could have a share. As the mystic character of the sacrament was exalted, its celebration was more jealously restricted to sacerdotal functionaries: the words of the institution began to be whispered, as the watchwords of the secret and sacred feast, which was now observed in the early mornings, and preceded by fasting. The communicants no longer received the elements as the disciples had received them from the Lord in the upper chamber, and divided them among themselves. They were first offered to God, with the words, "We give Thee thanks through Him, that Thou hast thought us worthy to stand before Thee, and to sacrifice to Thee"; and after this oblation the bishop partook, then the priests, the deacons,

the subdeacons, the readers, the singers, the ascetics, the deaconesses, the virgins, the widows, and the children—in a regular gradation.¹ The wide departure from the sacred memorial, as instituted by our Lord, the change in form, and the infusion of novel doctrinal meaning, need not be pointed out. The sacrament was now a sacrifice, the table an altar, at which the priest, like his Jewish and heathen prototype, had a sacrifice to offer. And this was no less than the body and blood of Christ, present in the sacramental elements, over which the priestly incantation had been pronounced.

All these changes sprang from the sacerdotal root. The system, of which these were parts, in its initiation—in its development—was essentially alien from and repugnant to the spirit of Christianity. "Contemplate," says Bishop Hampden, in his Bampton Lectures on the Scholastic Philosophy, "our Saviour at the last supper, breaking bread and giving thanks and distributing to His disciples; and how great is the transition from the institution itself to the splendid ceremonial of the Latin Church! Hear Him, or His apostles, exhorting to repentance; and can we suppose the casuistical system, to which the name of Penance has been given, to

¹ Apostolic Constitutions, book viii. chaps. xii. and xiii.

be the true sacrifice of the broken and contrite spirit? Or, if we think for a moment of Jesus Christ taking the little children in His arms and blessing them, and declaring that 'of such is the kingdom of God,' and then revert to the minute inquiries as to the state of infants dying unbaptised; do we not seem to have exchanged the love of a brother for the cold charities of strangers to our blood, not knowing the heart of man, and dealing out a stinted measure of tenderness by the standard of abstract theory and the law of logical deduction?"

Could those who first began this system of sacerdotal pretension and sacramental mysticism have foreseen all the sore evils to which it would lead, they might have paused in fear and wonder; but the future lay beyond their ken, and the development went on unchecked. There could be no more attractive study than to trace its progress and its results, as these emerged in the ritual, the government, and the doctrine of the Church. But this lies outside the lines within which I must pursue my special subject. From our view of the ministry of the Church as it existed in the apostolic age, and in its earlier subsequent evolution in the East, we must turn to our own country, and observe the characteristics which marked it, and the conditions under which it developed there.