

persons who please may confer the sacred office, then is the door opened to all disorder and confusion and division; then things cannot be done decently and in order in that very society when order and unity ought to be perfectly displayed; and then the precept of Heb. xiii. 17 is given to us in vain. Moreover, not one trace of such a system is to be found in the New Testament; it is entirely without the sanction of the Apostles of Christ or of the Word of God, and as we shall soon see, it is quite opposed to that method which was established by the Apostles, and which has continued in the Church ever since.

III. Since, then, there must be a succession of some kind in the office of the Christian ministry, let us consider what necessarily follows from this conclusion.

Mr. Y. cannot ordain Mr. Z. unless he is himself ordained and has received the power of ordaining others.

The same may be said of the person who ordained Mr. Y.

And so on backward, at every ordination. Now, when are we to stop in this series of ordinations? If the series begins with Mr. X., who either took upon himself the sacred office or was ordained by a person who had not been ordained himself, what has the series to hang on? It all falls to the ground together. For if Mr. X. was ordained by Mr. W., what was his ordination with, if Mr. W., what was his ordination with, if Mr. W. had no spiritual authority to confer the sacred office? It was only a mock ceremony. It had no reality, no validity in it.

And so when Mr. X. undertook to ordain the next in the succession, what was the worth of the pretended ordination? It was nothing at all. So that on this supposition the whole line or series of ordinations was of no validity at all. The persons so ordained were really none of them ordained. None of them had any true or lawful call to the ministry in the Church of Christ.

How far back, then, must we go? Surely to the Apostles themselves, who had been divinely commissioned by the Head of the Church Himself.

Unless the series of ordinations proceeds from the Apostles, it has no lawful beginning. But if it begins from them, then it hangs on a most firm and strong support; then through them it begins from the Divine Head of the Church Himself, from whom alone spiritual authority in the Church must be derived. Thus we are lead naturally and necessarily to the fundamental doctrine of the Apostolic Succession.

Without the succession from the Apostles of Christ, there is no lawful or regular ministry, and without a ministry there is no properly constituted Church.

But now for the more confirmation of this truth, let us reverse the order of the proof and beat the other end. For after all that has been said, the strongest argument remains to be explained. If we begin from our own time, we cannot avoid arriving at the doctrine of the Apostolic Succession of Holy Orders.

Let us now begin from the Apostles, and we shall find a still stronger proof of the same doctrine.

In the first place, then, we read that even our Saviour Christ did not glorify Himself to be made the great High Priest or the Head of the Church. But God the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world; and upon His Ascension gave Him power, in His glorified humanity, to be the Head over all things to the Church.

Our Saviour exercised this power in sending forth the Apostles to build His Church throughout the world. Just as He was ascending He said: "All power is given unto Me in heaven and earth; go ye, therefore," etc. This sacred commission, given to the eleven by the Head

of the Church, is the spiritual authority on which they acted.

And what we have now specially to observe is the method which the Apostles took to hand on this commission before they left the world. Our Lord had distinctly promised them, as He was ascending, "Lo! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." This could only mean that our Lord would be with those who should succeed the Apostles in the ministry of the Church, even to the end of the world; for the Apostles themselves were soon to leave the world. Hence it was necessary that the Apostles should make some provision for the continuance of the ministry in the Church after their departure.

When our Saviour said to His Apostles, "As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you" (St. John xx. 21), He distinctly gave them such a Divine commission as included in it a power of sending others to succeed them in the ministry of the Church. The Father sent the Son, and by virtue of that mission the Son sent the Apostles; they in like manner, by virtue of that mission, sent others, who had also power of sending others with a similar commission.

Thus, accordingly, we read in the Acts of the Apostles that they ordained elders and deacons in every branch of the Church that they planted, reserving for a time the highest order of the ministry in their own hands. But before they died they gave the first Order to others, with the express power of ordaining. This we see recorded in the Epistles to Timothy and Titus. St. Paul ordained Timothy by the imposition of hands, and afterward commanded him to "lay hands suddenly on no man" (1 Tim. v. 22).

All the directions to be used in the choice of fit persons to serve in the sacred offices of the Christian ministry are exclusively given in Holy Scripture to individuals, namely, Timothy and to Titus, the first Bishop of Ephesus and Crete, not ordinary members of the Church nor to congregations. And thus Titus was bid to ordain elders in every city of Crete (Titus i. 5).

Now suppose for a moment that you had been living in one of those cities of Crete. In it there was an elder (or as we say, a priest) who had been ordained by Titus. Titus himself had been ordained by the Apostle. The Apostle had received the Divine commission to act as a minister in the Church from the Head of the Church Himself. Here, then, is the Apostolic Succession most distinctly established by the Apostles, and recorded in the Word of God.

The Christians living in the city of Crete were evidently bound by the most sacred obligations to be in communion with the Elder, who had been ordained and set over them in the Lord by Titus, Bishop of Crete, who had been left in Crete for the very purpose among others of ordaining Elders in the Church. If you withdraw yourself from communion with that Elder, how could you be in communion with the Church? If you separate yourself from him, how would you not be breaking that precept which is written in Heb. xiii. 17? How would you not be breaking the order and unity of the Church, and become guilty of the sin of schism?

Now, it is contended that this was the method established by the Apostles, and this alone, for the continuance of the Christian ministry upon earth throughout all generations. There is no trace of any other method in the New Testament. And what adds certainty to our conclusion, is the fact that the whole universal Church throughout the world constantly practiced this method, and this alone, from the times of the Apostles, as all the history of the Church abundantly testifies.

The principle of the Apostolic Succession was just as well known and acted upon as any other principle of the Christian religion. When false teachers arose, or some new sect was

formed, claiming to be a branch of the Church, the members of the Church were taught to apply the test of this fundamental principle.

Thus about the end of the second century after Christ, Irenæus writes: "We can enumerate those who were by the Apostles instituted Bishops in the Churches, and their successors, even to our time." "Wherefore it is necessary to obey those presbyters (i. e., elders) who are in the Church, those who have succession from the Apostles." At the end of the second century Tertullian writes: "If any heresies dare to connect themselves with the Apostolic age, we may say, Let them declare the origin of their churches, let them unfold the catalogue of their Bishops"; so descending by succession from the beginning that the first Bishop had as his ordainer some one of the Apostles or of the Apostolic men remained united to the Apostles.

About the middle of the third century Cyprian writes: "Novatian is not in the Church; nor can he be reckoned a Bishop, who, despising the evangelic and Apostolic tradition and succeeding to no one, is sprung from himself. These are they who of their own accord, without the Divine will, appoint themselves to preside over some random conventicle; who, without any lawful ordination, constitute themselves pastors."

No principle, then, of the Christian religion admits of a clearer or more certain proof than this of Apostolic Succession in the ministry of the Church. And it has been acted on, most carefully and most distinctly, throughout the whole Church from the times of the Apostles, as the history of the Church abundantly declares.

This method, therefore, of handing on the original Divine commission in the Christian ministry, is the only one established by the Apostles and recorded in Holy Scripture. Now, the Apostles were directly commissioned by the Head of the Church, and were under the immediate guidance of the Holy Ghost; so that what they established carries with it the Divine sanction as plainly as any institution can do.

Since, therefore our Lord has appointed by His Apostles this one particular method of continuing the ministry in His Church from generation to generation, who that professes to regard His will will ever think lightly of this Succession, much less neglect or reject it? It is plain that any community which is without this Succession is not a rightly constituted branch of the Church of Christ. If it is governed and taught by self appointed ministers, it has no sanction whatever from the Word of God. To speak in the mildest terms possible, it is entirely doubtful whether any acts of those self appointed ministers are acceptable to God; and it is entirely doubtful whether the ministry of that community ever can receive the Sacraments of Christ.

In a word, since there is nothing at all to choose between this doctrine of the Apostolic Succession and the principle that every man that please may lay on hands upon his own head and make himself a minister for Christ, it is plainly a doctrine of the very highest importance, and one that concerns very nearly the salvation of each soul. No one can be a consistent member of the Church who does not understand and hold this doctrine.—*From Tracts on Church Principles.*

I cannot believe and cannot be brought to believe, that the purpose of our creation is fulfilled by our short existence here. To me the existence of another world is a necessary supplement of this, to adjust its inequalities, and imbue it with a moral insignification.—*Thurloe Weed.*

It may be a clear eye that sees difficulties, but it is a clearer one that sees through them.—*Dr. R. A. Holland.*