

The Church Guardian

— EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR: —

L. H. DAVIDSON, Q.C., D.C.L., MONTREAL.

Address Correspondence and Communications to the
Editor, P. O. Box 504, Montreal. Exchanges to
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CALENDAR FOR MAY.

MAY 1—St. Philip and St. James, A. & M.

" 2—Rogation Day.

" 3—ASCENSION DAY. Pr. Pss., M. 8, 15,
21. E. 24, 47, 108. Athanasian
Cr. Pro. Prof. in Com. Service
till 10th incl.

" 6—Sunday after Ascension.

" 13—WHITSUN-DAY. Pr. Pss. M. 48, 68;
E. 104, 145. Ath. Cr. Pr. Prof.
until May 19th incl. Notice of
Monday and Tuesday, and of
Ember Days. Ember Col. daily.

" 14—Monday in Whitsun-week.

" 15 Tuesday " "

" 16 Ember Day.

" 18— } Ember Days.

" 19— }

" 20—TRINITY SUNDAY: Athan. Cr. Pr. Prof.
in Com. Service.

" 27—1st Sunday after Trinity.

THE MESSAGE OF THE APOSTOLIC FATHERS TO OUR OWN AGE.

(From the Irish Ecclesiastical Gazette.)

The teaching of the Apostolic Fathers on the subject of the *Christian Ministry* is most important and striking.

In the Didache we find three orders in the sacred ministry. Firstly, an order of prophets or teachers, who are also called Apostles. They were for the most part itinerant; but they sometimes took up a permanent abode. Of them it is said, "They are your chief-priests. (13.) Secondly, localised bishops, who were in reality simple presbyters, and somewhat in danger of being 'despised' or less 'honourable' than the preceding order. Thirdly, deacons. After full instruction touching the reception of prophets or teachers who come as apostles, the writer says: "'Appoint for yourselves bishops and deacons worthy of the Lord, men who are meek and not lovers of money, and true and approved; for unto you they also perform the service of the * prophets and teachers. Therefore despise them not; for they are your honourable men along with the † prophets and teachers." (15.)

In the Epistle of St. Clement the fact and importance of Apostolic succession is emphatically stated; and the Christian Ministry is likened to the Aaronic priesthood, especially in the matter of the succession. "We ought to do all things in order, as many as the Master hath commanded us to perform at their appointed seasons. Now the offerings and ministrations He commanded to be performed with care, and not to be done rashly or in disorder, but at fixed times and seasons. And where and by whom He would have them performed, He Himself fixed by His supreme will. . . . For

*The single Greek article shows that these two terms denote only one order.

†This last sentence must not be separated from the one that precedes it.

unto the high-priest his proper services have been assigned, and to the priests their proper office is appointed, and upon the Levites their proper ministrations are laid. The layman is bound by the layman's ordinances. Let each of you, brethren, in his own order give thanks unto God, maintaining a good conscience and not transgressing the appointed rule of His service, but acting with all seemliness. . . . The Apostles received the Gospel for us from the Lord Jesus Christ; Jesus Christ was sent forth from God. So then Christ is from God, and the Apostles are from Christ. Both therefore came of the will of God in the appointed order. Having therefore received a charge . . . they went forth with the glad tidings that the kingdom of God should come. So preaching everywhere in country and town, they appointed their first fruits, when they had proved them by the Spirit, to be Bishops and deacons unto them that should believe. . . . And what marvel, if they which were entrusted in Christ with such a work appointed the aforesaid persons? seeing that even the blessed Moses who was a faithful servant in all His house recorded for a sign in the sacred Books all things that were enjoined upon him. . . . For he, when jealousy arose concerning the priesthood, and there was dissension among the tribes which of them was adorned with the glorious name, commanded the twelve chiefs of the tribes to bring to him rods inscribed with the name of each tribe. . . . And he said unto them, Brethren, the tribe whose rod shall bud, this hath God chosen to be priests and ministers unto Him. . . . And the rod of Aaron was found not only with buds, but also bearing fruit. What think ye, dearly beloved? Did not Moses know beforehand that this would come to pass? Assuredly he knew it. But that disorder might not arise in Israel, he did thus, to the end that the name of the true and only God might be glorified. . . . And our Apostles knew through our Lord Jesus Christ that there would be strife over the name of the Bishop's office. For this cause, therefore, having received complete foreknowledge, they appointed the aforesaid persons, and afterwards they provided a continuance, that if these should fall asleep, other approved men should succeed to their ministrations." (40-44.)

It will be observed that St. Clement not merely states the fact of Apostolic succession as being strictly analogous to that of the Aaronic priesthood, but that he thinks it necessary to justify the ministry even of Christ and His Apostles. Could we have stronger testimony to the fact that God is the author of order, and not of independent or irregular ministrations, which can only end in confusion?

Hitherto the names presbyter and Bishop have been used more or less interchangeably. But when we come to the Epistles of St. Ignatius, at the beginning of the second century, we find the term Bishop restricted to those whom we should call the successors of the Apostles. It is no longer used of a simple elder, or overseer of a single flock. It denotes the overseer of a Church embracing many such flocks. It is not unlikely that there were even then not merely urban, but also diocesan, Bishops, as St. Ignatius, writing to the "presiding" Church of Rome, calls himself "the Bishop of Syria." (2). At all events, we find not more than one Bishop in any city, however populous. We find also the threefold ministry established wherever there is a Church.

St. Ignatius says to the Ephesians: "Jesus Christ, our inseparable life, is the mind of the Father, even as the Bishops that are settled in the farthest parts of the earth are the mind of Jesus Christ. So then it becometh you to run in harmony with the mind of the Bishop; which thing also ye do. . . . Let no man be deceived. If any one be not within the precinct of the altar, he lacketh the bread of God. For if the prayer of one and another hath so great

force, how much more that of the Bishop and of the whole Church. Whoever, therefore, cometh not to the congregation, he doth thereby show his pride and hath separated himself; for it is written, God resisteth the proud. Let us therefore be careful not to resist the Bishop, that by our submission we may give ourselves to God. . . . For everyone whom the Master of the household sendeth to be steward over His own house, we ought so to receive as Him that sent him. Plainly, therefore, we ought to regard the Bishop as the Lord Himself" (3-6.)

He says to the Magnesians: "It is meet that we not only be called Christians, but also be such; even as some persons have the Bishop's name on their lips, but in everything act apart from him. Such men appear to me not to keep a good conscience, forasmuch as they do not assemble themselves together lawfully according to commandment. . . . Therefore as the Lord did nothing without the Father, either by Himself or by the Apostles, so neither do ye anything without the Bishop and the presbyters. . . . Do your diligence therefore that ye be confirmed in the ordinances of the Lord and of the Apostles, that ye may prosper in all things whatsoever ye do in flesh and spirit, by faith and by love, in the Son and Father and in the Spirit, in the beginning and in the end, with your revered Bishop, and with you fitly wreathed spiritual circles of your presbytery, and with the deacons who walk after God." (4, 7, 13.)

He says to the Trallians: "For when ye are obedient to the Bishop as to Jesus Christ it is evident to me that ye are living not after men but after Jesus Christ, who died for us, that believing on His death ye might escape death. It is therefore necessary, even as your wont is, that ye should do nothing without the Bishop; but be ye obedient also to the presbytery, as to the Apostles of Jesus Christ our hope; for if we live in Him, we shall also be found in Him. . . . In like manner let all men respect the deacons as Jesus Christ, even as they should respect the Bishop as being a type of the Father and the presbyters as the council of God and as the college of Apostles. Apart from these there is not even the name of a Church. . . . He that is within the sanctuary is clean; but he that is without the sanctuary is not clean, that is, he that doeth aught without the Bishop and presbytery and deacons, this man is not clean in his conscience" (2, 3, 7).

Few authorities have been more unjustly handled than St. Ignatius. As a recent example, an eminent popular writer* says: "His testimony is confined to the Churches in Asia. He says nothing to imply that there is a Bishop even in Rome, just as Polycarp in his letter says nothing of a bishop at Philippi." It is strange that any scholar could make this assertion, in spite of the fact that St. Ignatius speaks of "the bishops that are settled in the farthest part of the earth" (Ephes. 3), that is, of the Roman world (compare St. Luke ii. 1), and in spite of his statement, that "apart from deacons, presbyters, and bishop" there was "not even the name of a Church" (Tral. 3). If this statement does not contain a general principle, it at least bears witness to an historical fact—the fact that at the beginning of the second century wherever there professed to be a Church there was the threefold ministry. Though there may have been no bishop resident at Philippi, St. Ignatius' statement proves conclusively the Christians there were under Episcopal supervision. It is not likely that the Bishop of the metropolis of Syria was mistaken; for news travelled rapidly in the Roman world, and the Christians were forced to be in great measure a secret society, whose members kept up a constant communication with one another.

*Archdeacon Farrar: Lives of the Fathers, p. 59.