

in his house; but they were all essentially one in doctrine and in fellowship, and were all under Christ as the Head, and under the direct government of the Apostles, 'to whom He had given commandment by the Holy Ghost.'

I think there is also very clear evidence of special work in the government of the Church having been committed to the faithful—'Where two or three are gathered together in My Name there am I in the midst of them.' But there is a very particular meaning of the 'My Name,' similar to that of the baptizing them 'into the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;' and the united prayer of true believers, meeting together in accord with the full mind of Christ, may call forth those extraneous outpourings of the Holy Spirit which are to be found recorded outside the regular form of Church Government. But as a normal state the rule of the Apostles is manifest everywhere. The one hundred and twenty were associated together in the election of St. Matthias, but it was Peter, as the head of the Apostolic band, who called them together; it was he who directed them what they were to do, and who told them the qualifications for the Apostleship; and it was Christ who gave the direct answer to their prayer.

Again, the first recorded exercise of Church discipline in the matter of Ananias and Sapphira was the independent act of St. Peter speaking for the other Apostles in the Name of Christ; and it is specially recorded that 'the Apostles were all with one accord in Solomon's Porch, but of the rest durst no man join himself unto them.' Though we read there were being 'daily added unto the Church those that should be saved.'

Again, when the brethren were disputing about the giving away of alms, it is 'the twelve,' not the brethren, who proposed the remedy, and the special qualification of those who went to receive the delegated power—'Chose ye out seven men, of good report, full of the Spirit, whom we may appoint over this business;' and the brethren chose the men 'and set them before the Apostles, and when they had prayed they laid their hands upon them.' It is manifest from this account that the minute details of the ministry were from the first left in the hands of the Apostles; so that not even the distribution of alms could take place without a special delegation of the Apostolic power.

We must, however, never forget, that although it was Christ Himself governing His Church, and though He was pleased to do so primarily and ordinarily through the Apostolic ministry, there were also direct ministrations by Himself, or by the Holy Ghost in direct answer to the prayers of the faithful few gathered together in His Name. These direct ministrations are shown by the first outpouring of the Holy Ghost on the great day of Pentecost; by the conversion of St. Paul and the other appearances to him; by the visible outpouring of the Holy Ghost on Cornelius and his family, as the first Gentile converts; and in answer to prayer, 'The lot falling on Matthias;' the 'Separate me Paul and Barnabas;' and perhaps in the general call of the Prophets of the New Testament, who seem to have acted in an independent way, and who were to be judged (not so much by any formal appointment as) 'by their fruits.'

But, side by side with all this, the government through the Apostles was ever recognised. When Samaria receives the Word the Apostles send out two of their number to confirm the brethren, and they receive the Holy Ghost at their hands. It is the Apostles who appoint Elders in every Church, even in the same way as they first delegated some of their power to the Seven. So, again, at the Council or Synod over which St. James presided, apparently with the delegated power of the future Episcopate, in the Church at Jerusalem. The Elders and the brethren came together to consult and advise, but St. James, as the head of

the Church there, in the Name of Christ and of the Apostles, gives the decision. 'It has seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us'—a decree binding on the whole Church everywhere, and evidently accepted by all as such.

It is impossible to ignore these things. It is equally clear that St. Paul was the special ruler of all the new branches of the Church that he had won to the faith at Corinth, at Ephesus, in Crete, &c., and that he ruled over them all directly until he delegated his power to Sts. Timothy and Titus, or others, for a time or for a continuance; but he himself bound all the branches of the Church into one by collecting alms from all for the poor Saints at Jerusalem, and by himself reporting to St. James and the Church at Jerusalem all the great things that God had wrought by him.

It is true that in the branch Churches founded by St. Paul, though under him they were governed by Elders or by such as Timothy, who had direct power to appoint Elders, the faithful were associated in the work of Church government; they were exhorted to carry out special discipline; they are rebuked for not doing so effectually; but though St. Paul ruled them with a rule of love it was a very real and sensible guidance. He tells them very plainly what they are to do, and if when he comes again it has not been done he tells them very plainly that he will not spare them; and in one case he threatens a special anathema. This is a very different thing from being left alone to their own guidance, or to the congregations of the faithful being specially left with the supreme power of self-government. Everything was done ordinarily for the Lord Christ, either through the Apostles themselves or through those to whom from time to time, or for all time, they delegated different portions of their power.

This apparent unity in the primitive Church does not compel a strict uniformity. And this paramount overruling power of the Apostolic College does not militate against the existence of large powers among the faithful in the various congregations, in regulating the form of their service, in the choice of those who shall be placed before the Apostles on whom they may lay hands, or in the exercise of Apostolic discipline even in the case of priests or elders who may have gone astray.

Nor does the existence of the normal rule of Church Government, and of the normal rule of Sacramental Gifts, given through the outward and visible sign as specially ordained by Christ, overrule or restrict the free outpouring of God the Holy Ghost in answer to private prayer or to the united prayers of the faithful. Nor does it necessarily ignore the witness of the power of the Holy Ghost, given from time to time by the faithful work and lives of many at present unconnected with the visible communion of the Church.

If we once accept the principle of the Apostolic rule, as foreshadowed by the sitting on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel, and as clearly revealed in the New Testament as the normal rule of Church government, it becomes a matter of comparatively small moment how the present Episcopate arose; whether from direct appointment as a separate order, or out of the priesthood. We have seen that the Apostolic power was specially delegated by them to others: first to the seven, then by the appointing of Elders in every Church; then by the appointment of others, such as Timothy and Titus, with special power to appoint Elders, and to transmit the gift conferred on themselves. So that, whether our present Episcopate comes direct from the Apostle St. John, to represent the Apostles after his decease, or whether they be chief among the Elders (as Rome of the present day and the mediæval Church teaches), they inherit alike a delegated Apostolic power, and with such an inheritance they have become the Centre of Unity of the branch of the

Church, whether it be large or small, over which they are appointed to preside.

There is no principle at stake as to the size of the Diocese, as to the territorial position, as to the formation of a National Church, or of a Patriarchate, and the like. Of course these things could only be a matter of growth, and a thing that may alter to accommodate itself from time to time to the relative positions of the Church and of the world, and could not be expected to be clearly found in the New Testament record. Yet the germ of many of these things is clearly discernible. St. James' position as first ruler or Bishop of Jerusalem preparatory to the departure of the Apostles from Jerusalem on their different missions, is very like the Episcopate which obtained universal acceptance when the last of the Apostles was called to rest. St. Paul clearly exercised a sort of Patriarchal Jurisdiction over the different branches of the Church founded under his preaching in the great cities of the Roman Empire, and apparently as they grew committed them specially to the charge of others, who should rule them after his decease.

But there is no doubt that the delegated power of Bishop, Priest, and Deacon, has descended to our day, and that the Episcopal form of government, forming the centre of Unity in every Diocese, has kept the Church together from the decease of the last Apostle to the present time. Where the Episcopate has failed, there ever-increasing divisions have entered in; where the Episcopate has been maintained, there is the nucleus of a Unity, which, by God's mercy, may once more present to the world that outward Unity which is to convince all of the power of the God of Love as the Great Ruler of the Nations of the earth. For over all He is the Great Ruler of His people, and the more individually we endeavour to live after His likeness, and in our daily life to spread the leaven of His Example through the world, the more shall we take our share in the restoration of that outward Unity, and the fulfilled success of that Great Kingdom of Love, which will verily subdue all things unto itself.

#### CONGREGATIONALISM.

(From the Church Times).

The initial difficulty about the Congregational theory is that it requires the rejection of the whole body of evidence making for local Churches regarded as aggregates, and the substitution of "congregation" where the facts obviously do not bear out that interpretation. Another and much more serious difficulty is that it is perfectly clear that no local Church in New Testament times was independent and autonomous, with a right to appoint its own officers and to manage its own concerns without external interference. The council of the Apostles and Elders, so long as it was in session at Jerusalem, dictated the conduct of the Church there and everywhere else (Acts xvi: v. 4); the Churches of the Gentiles were strictly ruled by St. Paul, who gives his orders distinctly, and threatens severe penalties for any disobedience, not only in respect of doctrine, but of discipline also (1 Cor. vii: 17; xvi: 1; II Cor. xiii: 2, 10, &c.); while the ordination of elders and the rite of laying on of hands has to wait for the arrival of an Apostle, even in places where there is already a Christian body with elders. (Acts viii: 14-17: xiv: 23). It is no answer to this objection to reply that the peculiar commission and inspiration of the Apostles gave them rights which must have died with them; because if independent Congregationalism had been the divinely appointed method of Church government, unquestionably the Apostles would have set it up, and instead of St. Paul giving his orders he would have gone no farther than offering advice, telling the particular congregation he happened to address, that it was for