

## THE APOSTOLICAL SUCCESSION.\*

On this subject no controversy exists at the time of the Reformation. It was, at that time, as it had been for 1500 years, taken for granted, that no man might presume to minister in sacred things, unless he were first appointed to the office by persons having authority to make the appointment by their regular succession from the apostles. Upon this point is no one more eloquent or more decided than our own reforming Archbishop, Dr. Cranmer. Accordingly, when in the reign of Elizabeth the Thirty-nine Articles were agreed upon in a convocation of our clergy, the doctrine was assumed: "It is not lawful for any man to take upon him the office of public preaching or administering 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"—not *by*, but *in*—"the congregation to call and send ministers into the Lord's vineyard." (Article xxiii.) But the point being settled that there are some persons in the congregation or Church who have powers to ordain, the question is who those persons are? This was the question in debate at the Reformation, and it is easily answered so far as the Church of England is concerned, since it was settled, before the Thirty-nine Articles were received, in the ordinal, in which it is affirmed: "It is evident to all men diligently reading the Scriptures and ancient authors, that from the apostles' time there have been these three orders of ministers in Christ's Church, bishops, priests, and deacons." (Pref. to the Ordinal.) In the order for consecrating bishops, as well as in the Ordination Service, she speaks of the offices of priests and deacons as offices *divinely* instituted; and, if instituted by God, of course they cannot be lawfully abolished. But it is a point not controverted, that wherever these officers exist, the power of ordination rests with the first, assisted by the second. And accordingly, in legislating on this subject, the Church of England ordains that "no one shall be accounted and taken to be a lawful bishop, priest, or deacon, among us, or be suffered to execute any of the ministerial functions, except he be called, tried, examined, and admitted thereunto, according to our form of Episcopal ordination, or hath had formerly Episcopal consecration or ordination." (Pref. to Ordinal.) A more complete answer to the question, who are they that have authority in the congregation, could not be given by a Church which reverences Scripture and the ancient authors. And hence it is, that while a minister of the Roman Church officiates among us, upon the renunciation of his errors, without a further ordination, a converted Presbyterian minister is unable to do so. The one has had, the other has not had, Episcopal ordination.

Now this regulation very naturally offends the various self-appointed ministers and teachers who have, of late years, abounded in the land. They accuse the Church of intolerance, bigotry, and illiberality, since they conclude that she implies, by this regulation, the invalidity of all but Episcopal ordination; and in this conclusion they are the rather confirmed when they find our canons denouncing, as *ipso facto* excommunicated, not only those who affirm that the Church of England is not a true and apostolical Church, (Can. ii.) or that the form of God's worship in the Church of England is corrupt, (Can. iv.) but also those who, not being of the Church of England, challenge to themselves in England the name of true and lawful Churches, (Can. xi.) Under such a reproach some of the members of our Church are impatient, and deny that the conclusion must of necessity be drawn. Others, rejoicing in every thing to hear the scandal of the cross, admit the justice of the conclusion, but contend that the Church is no more to be blamed for this than a mirror for the wrinkles or deformities it may bring to view. The Church injures no one by asserting the fact, for, if it be a fact, a fact it is whether she asserts it or not. It either is a fact that a society of believers, organized without the Episcopal order, is not a Church, but merely a sect not organized according

to apostolical and scriptural rule, as our Church insinuates, or it is not a fact. It is open to discussion whether it be a fact; there is no want of charity in our declaring what we believe to be such. As maintainers of God's truth we are to declare it in this as in every other instance, and in God's good time the truth will be known and recognised, and those who have deserted it will perceive that Christian unity is to be restored, not by our yielding to them, but by their returning to us. As we may preach that faith in the Lord Jesus is necessary to salvation, without denying the salvability of the heathen; so none will refuse to admire and reverence and love the pious and consistent Christian of every communion, whether Romish or Protestant; none—God forbid,—will doubt of his being capable of salvation, though we may still believe that in many respects he may have fallen short of gospel truth. But be this as it may—it is a principle to be discussed with those who are in principle separated from us, it is certainly no just cause of angry dispute among ourselves, who have declared our unfeigned assent and consent not only to our articles, but to our ordination offices, the first of which declare that those only may minister in sacred things, who are duly ordained, and the second that those only are to be considered by us as duly ordained who have received Episcopal orders.

Remember, brethren, that our enemies are many and mighty: the two extremes of Romanism and Ultraprotestantism are banded, together with infidelity, against us, and if, like Sampson's foxes, they are pulling different ways, the brands which are attached to them have one and the self-same object—our destruction. And is this a time to divide our house, and form parties and factions? Is this the season for discord? Remember, brethren, the ties, the sacred ties, which bind us to one another: as men we are all under the same condemnation, we are all heirs of the same corrupted nature, equally one and all children of wrath: as Christians, we seek for reconciliation with an offended Maker, through the atoning merits and the all-prevailing intercession of the same crucified, the same glorified Saviour, through the sanctification of the same blessed Spirit: we worship the same God, the Trinity in Unity. We are brethren of the same household, with one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all; ministers of Christ acting under the same apostolical commission, pledged all to walk by the same rule, and to speak the same thing; bound all by the same vows with interests, and pursuits, and duties, and privileges identical; where, I ask again, can Christian unanimity and harmony be found if we find it not here? "Sirs, ye are brethren," Oh, wrong not one to another. "Sirs, ye are brethren," and your Master is praying in heaven that ye may be one even as he is one with the Father; Oh seek not by your passions to frustrate his work! "Sirs, ye are brethren,"—as brethren let us act cordially together, and gradually our differences will lessen, our agreements will extend. Then shall we stand, a holy army, closely embodied together, prepared with redoubled vigor to prosecute our warfare against the powers of darkness,—and then we shall find how sweeter than the ointment with which Aaron was anointed, how refreshing, as the dews of Hermon, it is for brethren to dwell together in unity—then the peace of God will rest upon us; that peace which the world can neither give nor take away.

My Brethren.—Build not upon the privilege you possess of visible connexion with an orthodox Church. If her doctrines be not savingly wrought into your hearts, and the spirit of faith which glowed so brightly in many of her martyrs has not descended upon you, your baptismal enrolment amongst her children will profit you nothing.—He was not a Jew which was one outwardly: nor is he a heaven-born christian who possesses but the privilege of professional church membership. God can write folly upon the charter of the most glorious privileges, if they lead not to sanctification. He can cast the unfruitful trees out of the richest vineyard, and out of its stones raise up children to Abraham.—*Boyd on the Church.*

## SATURDAY EVENING.

Sweet is the last and parting ray,  
That ushers placid evening in,  
When with the still expiring day,  
The Sabbath's peaceful hours begin:  
How grateful to the anxious breast,  
The sacred hours of holy rest!

Hush'd is the tumult of the day,  
And worldly cares and business cease,  
While soft the vesper breezes play,  
To hymn the glad return of peace!  
Delightful season! kindly given  
To turn the wandering thoughts to heaven!

Oft as this peaceful hour shall come,  
Lord, raise my thoughts from earthly things,  
And bear them to my heavenly home,  
On faith and hope's celestial wings,—  
Till the last gleams of life decay  
In one eternal Sabbath Day!

Anon.

## BAPTISMS IN A COUNTRY CHURCH.

The congregation was dismissed, for the afternoon service was ended, and the parting blessing had been given; but there still remained two or three scattered groups. There were mothers who came to return thanks for their deliverance from their "great pain and peril." Little children brought to be washed in the water of baptism, and presented in faith as heirs to their merciful Saviour. Grave fathers thinking, perhaps, of new exertions to be made in answer to the calls of an increased family; and young sponsors, serious, yet evidently pleased with their interesting office. I left my accustomed seat, and went as I sometimes do on such occasions, into the gallery behind the font. I was alone! The christening parties went into the vestry, and I sat looking on the seats and silent aisles, which, as the evening closed, became every moment more and more dim. The rising wind in the tossing chesnut branches, was for a short time, the only sound I heard; and the light was placed on the communion table, and an orderly party knelt at the rails, and there arose a sweet, clear voice of praise and thanksgiving. It ceased, and the train moved down towards the font. There was the priest, in his simple dress of "liver clean and white." Long may such a dress be a memorial emblem that thy priests, my country's church, are "clothed with righteousness." And when he had taken his station at the font, the light which was needed, and yet which struggled imperfectly with the fading gleam of evening, shone on a varied and pleasing group. The elder women's scarlet cloaks formed a bright contrast, with the long white robes in which the infants were arrayed; and the mothers and the young female sponsors, wearing their beautiful, light, cotton gowns, silk shawls, and new straw bonnets,—formed, for a poor country parish, a very gay assembly. Do not quarrel with my word,

"The innocent are gay,—the lark is gay."

I assure you, that, as the service began, there was a silence that spoke of the mind's attention, and the heart's prayer.

The priest took one fair child after another in his arms, "received him into the congregation of Christ's flock, and did sign him with the sign of the cross," and one mother after another stepped trembling forward and took her own precious one, and followed to her heart, feeling more than she had ever felt before, all the depth of a mother's blessing. There was a pause, and two or three persons dressed in shabby mourning, which had evidently been worn for many a relative, and many an acquaintance,—brought to the font an infant, whose size, form, and weak, moaning cry, told more than a narrow band of crape round its head, or the black shawl in which they had wrapped it, a tale of "father and mother forsaking." It might be said, but I thought the tone of tenderness, in which the minister had addressed each unconscious child, who lay in his arms, was yet more tender, when he looked on this one. The mothers, I thought, gazed

\*From a Visitation Sermon of the Rev. Dr. Hook.