

recognize his authority to teach. We must here distinguish between authority and its recognition. Authority can come from God only. All God's messengers are sent by Himself—"The Lord gave the Word: great was the company of those that published it;" but acceptance must come from the congregation; and in the very same Psalm (the 68th, which is quoted in Ephesians iv. 8 and 11, concerning the ministry), in which it is said that the ascended Saviour "Received gifts for men, yea for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them," we read afterwards, "Bless ye God in the congregations." The aggregate of these congregations is previously called, in addressing God in the same Psalm, "Thy congregation" ("Thy troop," literally in the Hebrew "Thy living thing").

In the first verse of the 111th Psalm we find in the Hebrew almost precisely the distinction between the Greek *koinōnia* and *ecclesia*. The Psalmist praises Jehovah "in the assembly of the upright, and in the congregation"—in the Hebrew, in the intimacy, or consultation, of the upright, and in the appointed assembly. In Psalm cvii. 32, we have the convocation of the people and the session of the elders. We find then in the Old Testament intimations of the same distinction which appears in the New Testament church—a distinction between the common assembly of disciples and the inner fellowship of older believers, of elders in faith. This distinction pervades the New Testament. "Ye younger submit yourselves to the elder:" "rebukenot an elder, but entreat him as a father." And it is a distinction which arises above the possession of special ministerial gifts; for we read in Acts (chapter ix. 10 to 20) that "a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias" was sent by the Lord Jesus to lay his hands on Paul that the apostle might receive his sight, "*and be filled with the Holy Ghost,*" verse 17.

This particular narrative is conclusive upon one point—that Ananias was aware that the laying on of his hands on Paul was intended to carry with it the consequence that Paul might be filled with the Holy Ghost; although that consequence is not specially mentioned by the Saviour in the 12th verse.

Thus the apostle of the Gentiles received the Holy Ghost through "a certain disciple," of whom we have not the slightest reason to

suppose that he was an officer in the Christian Church.

The possession of this Spirit constituted "the fellowship" of the early church—"fellowship in the gospel," Phil. i. 5, or rather, "for the gospel;" in the New Revision, "in furtherance of the gospel." There can be no denial that the primitive church held a "communion of saints." And this communion of saints was gifted with the spiritual discernment needed to verify ministerial gifts. We can have no hesitation in affirming that the recognition and acceptance of a true ministry must come from the communion of saints.

And therefore our Christian ministry now must be Congregational. The approving sanction of the communion of saints follows a ministry Evangelical and Catholic.

When it is seen that the final decision on ministerial grace and gifts rests with the spiritual fellowship, and after it has been ascertained from scripture that ministers of the congregation must previously be members in the same fellowship and partakers of the same grace, there does not remain any objection, in principle, to the practical convenience of deputing to older ministers the examination of applicants for the ministry. For in the true church of Christ there cannot exist a jealousy of conflicting rights and a dread of encroachment. The Christian church is neither an oligarchy nor a democracy. It is an absolute monarchy, of which Christ is the king, involving a theocracy in which the Holy Ghost rules and directs the citizens in their devotion to Christ. Between these citizens in their devotion to Christ. Between these citizens there cannot be any rivalry—unless they err from their loyalty. Mutual service is the rule of the church which has received its order "by love serve one another."

(We are repeatedly reminded of the necessity for a catholic love.)

It is quite competent then to the spiritual community to delegate executive duty to some of its members.

But it is necessary to remember that such action takes place in virtue of the spirit which pervades the body.

It is delegated to the action of the whole body.

Dr. Geikie, in his "Life of Christ," terms the church "the Christian republic—a republic