

The Church Guardian

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CALENDAR FOR APRIL.

APRIL 7th—5th Sunday in Lent.

" 17th—6th Sunday in Lent.

" 15th—Monday before Easter.

" 16th—Tuesday before Easter.

" 17th—Wednesday before Easter.

" 18th—Thursday before Easter.

" 19th—GOOD FRIDAY. Pr. Psalm M. 22, 40, 54. E. 69, 88.

" 20th—Easter Even.

" 21st—EASTER. Pr. Pss. M. 2, 57, 111. E. 113, 114, 116; Pr. Anthem instead of *Venite*. Athan. Creed. Pr. Preface in Communion Service till April 28th inclu. (Notice of Monday and Tuesday, and of St. Mark.

" 22nd—Monday in Easter week.

" 23rd—Tuesday in Easter week.

" 25th—St. Mark, Evangelist and Mar.

" 26th—1st Sunday after Easter. (Notice of St. Phillip and St. James.

THE MINISTRY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

By Charles Gore, M. A. (Rivingtons, London).

This learned and valuable Essay on the Ministry of the Church has now been in the hands of theological students for some time, and their appreciation has been evidenced by the call for a second edition. It seems most desirable in the presence of conflicting theories, evermore making themselves heard, that now and then the true position of the Church as an Apostolic institution, with its divinely-appointed ministry, should be clearly and unfalteringly enunciated. This it is which Mr. Gore has done in the present work, which may be regarded in some respects as a reply to Mr. Hatch's recent theories in his Bampton lectures. The subject is treated in seven chapters, dealing with—(1) The Foundation of the Church, (2) Apostolic Succession, (3) The Witness of Church History, (4) The Institution of the Apostolate, (5) The Ministry in the Apostolic age, (6) The Ministry in the Sub-apostolic age; and the work concludes with some final

applications of the principles laid down. There are some appended notes which are not the least valuable part of the treatise. The part of the work that has had the most interest for us and will be found, we have no doubt, of most practical value by the spiritual aspect of the question discussed, is the second chapter, which deals with the Apostolic authority of the Christian ministry. The chapter is full of golden principles, *e. g.*—

"This is the Church principle: that no ministry is valid which is assumed, which a man takes upon himself, or which is merely delegated to him from below. That ministerial act alone is valid which is covered by a ministerial commission received from above by succession from the Apostles. This is part of the great principle of tradition. 'Hold the traditions,' reiterates the Apostle. The whole of what constitutes Christianity is a transmitted trust—a tradition which may need purging, but never admits of innovation, for 'nihil innovandum, nisi quod traditum' is a fundamental Christian principle. What breaks the tradition is heresy—the intrusion, that is, of a new and alien element into the deposit, having its origin in personal self-assertion. This conception of heresy is involved in the very idea of a revelation once for all made. Now, what heresy is in the sphere of truth, a violation of the apostolic succession is in the tradition of the ministry. Here too there is a deposit handed down, an ecclesiastical trust transmitted; and its continuity is violated, whenever a man 'takes any honour to himself' and assumes a function not committed to him. Judged in the light of the Church's mind as to the relation of the individual to the whole body, such an act takes a moral discolouring. The individual, of course, who is guilty of the act may not incur the responsibility in any particular case through the absence of right knowledge, or from other causes which exempt from responsibility in whole or in part; but judged by an objective standard, the act has the moral discolouring of self-assertion. The Church's doctrine of succession is thus of a piece with the whole idea of the Gospel revelation, as being the communication of a divine gift which must be received and cannot be originated,—received, moreover, through the channels of a visible and organic society; and the principle (this is what is here emphasized) lies at the last resort in the idea of succession rather than in the continuous existence of episcopal government, and that the Church, since the Apostles, has never conceived of itself as having any power to originate or interpolate a new office."

Again: "'There is not in the world,' says Bishop Taylor, a greater presumption than that any should think to convey a gift of God, unless by God he be appointed to do it.' Such appointment or commission, to be valid, must be of an authority—not unquestioned, indeed, for St. Paul's was questioned, but not justly open to question, as representative of Christ. Men are needed for Christ's ministry who have ready wills and clear convictions, men, that is, with a sense of vocation; but they must be also men of humanity, distrustful of their own impulses and powers like prophets of old. The very thing that such men need is the open and external commission to support the internal sense of vocation through all the fiery trials of failure and disappointment, of weariness and weakness, to which it will be subjected—nay, to be its substitute when God's inward voice seems even withdrawn—maintaining in the man the simple conviction that, as a matter of fact, 'a dispensation has been committed to him.'"

We commend to the attention of the reader the wise and weighty principles laid down by Mr. Gore in discussing the sacerdotal chapter involved in the doctrine of Apostolic succession that "formidable word" as Canon Liddon calls it, "harmless in itself, but surrounded with many invidious associations." We gladly

transfer to our pages the opening remarks of Mr. Gore on the vexed subject of "Sacerdotalism":—

"The chief of the ideas commonly associated with sacerdotalism, which it is important to repudiate, is that of a vicarious priesthood. It is contrary to the true spirit of the Christian religion to introduce the notion of a class inside the Church in a closer spiritual relationship to God than their fellows. There is 'no sacrificial tribe or class between God and man.' 'Each individual member (of the Christian body) holds personal communion with the Divine Head.' The difference between clergy and laity 'is not a difference in kind' but in function. Thus the completest freedom of access to God in prayer and intercession, the closest personal relation to Him, belongs to all. So far as there is gradation in the efficacy of prayer, it is the result not of official position but of growing sanctity and strengthening faith. It is an abuse of the sacerdotal conception if it is supposed that the priesthood exists to celebrate sacrifices or acts of worship in the place of the body of the people or as their substitute. This conception had, no doubt, attached itself to the 'massing priests' of the Middle Ages. The priest had come to be regarded as an individual who held, in virtue of his ordination, the prerogative of offering sacrifice which could win God's gifts. Thus spiritual advantages could be secured for the living and the dead by paying him to say a mass, and greater advantages by a greater number of masses. Now this distorted sort of conception is one which the religious indolence of most men, in cooperation with the ambition for power in 'spiritual' persons, is always tending to make possible. It is not only possible to believe in a vicarious priesthood of sacrifice, but also in a vicarious office of preaching, which releases the laity from the obligation to make efforts of spiritual apprehension on their own account. But in either case the conception is an unchristian one. The ministry is no more one of vicarious action than it is one of exclusive knowledge or exclusive relation to God. What is the truth then? It is that the Church is one body. The free approach to God in the Sonship and Priesthood of Christ belongs to men as members of 'one body,' and this one body has different organs through which the functions of its life find expression, as it was differentiated by the act and appointment of Him who created it. The reception, for instance, of Eucharistic grace, the approach to God in Eucharistic sacrifice, are functions of the whole body. 'We bless the cup of blessing,' 'we break the bread,' says St. Paul, speaking for the community; 'we offer,' 'we present,' is the language of the liturgies. But the ministry is the organ—the necessary organ—of these functions. It is the hand which offers and distributes; it is the voice which consecrates and pleads. And the whole body can no more dispense with its services than the natural body can grasp or speak without the instrumentality of hand and tongue. Thus the ministry is the instrument as well as the symbol of the Church's unity, and no man can share her fellowship except in acceptance of its offices."

We would observe that throughout his argument on the Christian Ministry Mr. Gore is strictly scientific. Proceeding from the two postulates—the genuineness of the New Testament writings, and the Incarnation, our author works onwards. He proves the supernatural origin of the Church as a divinely-created society with a divinely appointed ministry involving *ab initio* the distinction between clergy and laity. In other words the Christian Church was not only divinely founded but divinely organised, and it was not left anywhere in authority to invent a ministry afterwards or change it. The principle of the Apostolic Succession is what Mr. Gore puts forward as meeting the necessities of the case:

"Let it be supposed that Christ, in founding