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THE TRUE DOCTRINE OF APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION.

As stated in another column, *Principal Willis*, on the occasion of the closing of *Knox College*, gave a lecture on the "True Doctrine of Apostolic Succession." As the subject is important, and the lecture states the question in a clear and satisfactory manner, we have pleasure in giving the substance of it.

In stating the question, *Dr. Willis* said he was not to be understood as denying apostolic descent, if by that was meant that the Christian church had continued without interruption from apostolic days, and that a Christian ministry had never been wanting; but the security for a perpetual ministry did not consist in any hereditary official line of men, far less any mere form of investiture by imposition of hands or otherwise. Protestants, indeed, and Presbyterians very particularly, held it to be important that men should not usurp the ministerial office at their own hand, without the call of the church, and formal approval by its existing rulers; but Protestant Episcopalian as well as Presbyterian divines had held that, as the primary test of a true church is its adherence to the apostolic faith, so the primary test of a ministry is its faithful dispensation of the pure gospel, and orderly administration of discipline; and that the promise of the Saviour's presence from age to age with his servants, is accomplished in his qualifying men by his holy spirit for such administrations, and giving tokens of his acceptance and approval of them by his blessing on their labours. The early Reformers were not so much accepted by the church on account of their "orders," received in the corrupt communion of the Papacy, as for their fervent zeal in the work of reformation, and the impress of a special commission which they bore in the singular adaptedness of their gifts and graces to the necessities of the church. *Dr. Willis* read, in proof of this, the interesting account given by *McCrie* of the installation of *John Knox* into his ministry at *St. Andrew's*, and also cited the candid exposition of the English Articles by *Bishop Burnet*. The latter, while holding for Episcopacy as scriptural, says, that "if a company of Christians find the worship of God, where they live, to be so leffled that they cannot, with a good conscience, join in it; and if they do not know of any place to which they can conveniently go, where they may worship God purely and in a regular way; if such a body, finding some that have been ordained, though to the lower functions, should submit itself entirely to their conduct; or, finding none of those, should by a common consent desire some of their own number to minister to them in holy things * * * when this grows to a constitution, and when it was begun by the consent of a body, who are supposed to have authority in such an extraordinary case; whatever some hotter spirits have thought of this since that time, yet we are sure