

of the Gospel. But those who are responsible for moulding the thought of the high-church clergy have a profound and far-reaching theological conviction. They start from a conception of nature, and the process of transmission of spiritual life, that inevitably leads to their theory and practice of the ministerial office.

The Evangelical party in the Church of England, having clearly perceived the radical difference between themselves and the ritualists, have sought to refute them with an earnestness whetted by fear of disaster to their common religious heritage. Agreeing fundamentally as we do in our conception of spiritual Christianity and of the Christian ministry with the average low-churchman, whose lack of intercourse with us rests mainly on social distinction, or on a use and wont that have their roots in historical and national movements, we are bound to sympathize with him in his efforts to maintain the protestantism of his church.

I propose then to examine two theories as to the office of the holy Ministry, hoping to show that our Presbyterian practice is in principle biblical, catholic, and spiritual.

THE DISTINCTION TO BE DRAWN DOES NOT PROPERLY LIE BETWEEN  
PRESBYTERIANISM AND EPISCOPACY.

They are merely forms of government. Both are growths moulded largely by national experience and character, and as we know them to-day they differ much from the system of the Church of the Apostolic age, though the essence of Presbyterianism is undoubtedly embodied in the organization of the New Testament.

There are, however, two well-defined conceptions of the ministry which stand apart with startling distinctness. One declares for "the office of the priesthood and its succession from the ministry of the apostles"; "priests are entrusted with the mysteries of the sacraments, the stewardship and ministry of the Word, and the power of remitting and retaining sins." Priests have thus a special prerogative in the enjoyment of which they can impart new grace to their fellow-Christians.

According to the opposing doctrine, the act of ordination in itself confers no new spiritual endowment in virtue of which the minister is able to dispense a distinctive grace, but orders are the outward recognition on the part of the Christian brotherhood, that certain individuals who have had special advantages or gifts are set apart for service in the preaching of the Word, the administration of the sacraments, and the general oversight of the spiritual interests of their fellow-Christians. The ministry is thus "the organ of the corporate life of the church."

Let me ask you to consider first

THE SACERDOTAL THEORY OF THE MINISTRY,

while I examine its basis and seek to point out its practical results. Historically and doctrinally this position will be best understood if we start from the teaching as to the sacraments.

"In Baptism we have the creation of a new heart, new affections, new desires, an actual birth from above, a gift coming down from God through the operation of God and the Holy Spirit." "The bread and