

time as it "shall please God" to make possible something better.

But waiving verbal criticisms, can you imagine any teaching more likely than teaching of this sort to produce a race of men worthy to be called free? Nay, worthy to be trusted with liberty? Only suppose, if it be supposable, that the same amount of energy had, for the last twenty or thirty years, been devoted to impressing these great principles of conduct upon the conscience of the school children of this country that has been spent upon informing their intellects with more advanced knowledge than they are likely ever to use, do you think that in that event the land would have been so seriously overrun as it has been by the great army of the light-headed and the irresponsible—the men who think so highly of their abilities and deserts as to be ready to maim and kill all those who refuse to take them at their own valuation? The law of proportion applies to all things, and is it not becoming evident that our standard of training for the young has thus far lacked symmetry? Common honesty is, for the purpose of citizenship, more precious than algebra, and that public money is misspent which educates a lad in chemistry only with the result of putting him in possession of implements by which he proposes to make war against civilization. Yet algebra and chemistry must needs be taught. It is a case of "These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone."—*Rev. Dr. W. R. Huntington.*

THE APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION.

(By *Rev. V. Stavely.*)

The power to act as ministers of Christ was, as already said, given by Jesus Christ in the first instance to the Apostles. But this ministerial commission was not intended to be exercised only by them, and to cease when they died. The Christian Ministry was formed as the appointed means of applying the blessings of the Incarnation to mankind; and the Incarnation is not a passing event in the world's history, but an abiding reality. The permanent character of the Ministry which Christ ordained rests upon the permanent character of His Incarnation.

Our Lord intended the office which He bestowed upon the twelve Apostles to live on after their deaths, until the end of the world. The Apostolic Ministry is an abiding fact in a world of change.

It is true that the Commission, "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you," was given to the Apostles, but it was accompanied by the promise, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." This promise was not addressed to all Christian people, but only to the Apostles, and that too in connection with the official acts of teaching and baptising. It is as though Christ had said, "Baptise and teach all nations, and I will be with you in so doing." Moreover, He promised to be with the Apostles in performing these ministerial acts "unto the end of the world." But how could He be with the Apostles in their work "unto the end of the world?" He knew that the Apostles would die like other men, and therefore the promise of being with them as individuals "unto the end of the world" could not be our Lord's meaning.

I.

"The end of the world," of which our Lord spake, has not yet come; how then is His promise to the Apostles fulfilled?

The only possible meaning of the saying, "Lo, I am with you alway unto the end of the world" is this: "I will be with the Ministry of which you are but the first members. I will be with you, and not only with you, but also with all who shall come after you in the Ministry. You will die, but your office will live on, and I will be with that office in the person of your successors, even unto the end of the world."

Thus we have the great promise on which the doctrine of the Apostolic succession rests. As Christ was with the Apostles confirming and ratifying their official acts, so He has promised to be with their successors as long as His mediatorial Kingdom lasts. We have thus the best possible grounds for believing in the continuity of the Apostolic Ministry as it now exists among ourselves.

II.

But how was this continuity or succession to be secured? It was to be secured by the Apostles in their life-time providing successors to their office. As our Blessed Lord ordained the Twelve to be His representatives when He left the earth, so the Apostles chose others to take their place when they in turn were withdrawn by death. This plan of continuing the Apostles' Ministry was to be carried on from age to age until the end of time. As a fact of history, it has been carried on. It is now nearly two thousand years since our Lord's promise was made. During this long period successors of the Apostles, first receiving and then in turn handing on the Divine power and authority which Christ gave to the Twelve, have never been wanting. Such successors of the Apostles are with us now. The Apostolic succession is the link or bond which connects the Church of the nineteenth century with that of the first century.

In passing on the ministerial office to their immediate successors, the Apostles used the laying on of hands. This ceremony signifies the transfer of authority, and it gave its name to the rite of Ordination. Ordination is the setting apart of men to be ministers of Christ. The Apostles laid their hands upon their successors, and these successors in turn did the same to others. There are several instances of this method of passing on the ministerial offices in the New Testament. What was then done has been done ever since. Every Bishop, priest, and deacon, is now set apart by the laying on of hands. By this means there has been no break in the transmission of the ministerial Commission in the Church of God, from the times of the Apostles down to our own day.

III.

The greatest possible care has ever been taken in this matter, to secure the true succession. It became a rule of the Church, in very early days, that at least three successors of the Apostles (or bishops as they were called), should lay their hands upon the heads of those whom they admitted to the highest office of the Ministry.

The figure of a chain, reaching link by link from the Apostles' days down to our time, has been used in describing the Apostolic succession. But the figure of a net is more true to fact. The connection between the chief ministers of the Church and the Apostles is not so much the nature of a chain as of a vast network. If by chance one strand of the net should fail, yet the whole would not be broken up.

It has been mathematically argued that even if we make the absurd supposition of one consecrator in twenty at any particular moment in history have been, through some accident, himself not validly consecrated, the chances will be 8,000 to 1 against all three consecrators in any given case being in like position.

The reason for this extraordinary care is to

guard against the loss of the Apostolic succession—a loss which would result in the dying out of the Church as our Lord constituted it. A Church stands or falls by the Apostolic succession. We shall see in the next section that the Apostolic succession is the pledge of a valid Ministry, and of valid Sacraments. The term "valid" implies the fulfilment of God's conditions whereby certainty is secured. That which is "valid" rests upon the security of the Divine covenant. Without a Ministry possessing Christ's authority there can be no certainty that we possess valid Sacraments conveying the grace which they express; and if there is uncertainty about the Sacraments, there is uncertainty as to union with Christ. Without the Divinely-appointed Ministry of the Church we have no guarantee that the flow of covenanted grace would continue. Should the Apostolic succession die out, there would be need of a second appointment directly by our Lord, and of a second day of Pentecost with a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit. We need not contemplate such a disaster, for our Lord's promise stands sure, "Lo, I am with you alway even unto the end of the world."

IV.

It has already been shown that all the great features of the Christian Church are prefigured in the Old Testament. The Apostolic succession is an instance of this. The chief ministers of the Jewish Church were the High Priest, and the priests. They are described as the "sons of Aaron," for they were descended from him by natural descent, the priestly powers being handed down from father to son. The Apostolic succession is by spiritual descent, through the laying on of hands.

Aaron, the first High Priest, was called directly by God to the office; the Apostles were called by Christ Himself. It was the will of God that the office of High Priest should continue after Aaron's death. At the close of his life we read that God said "Aaron shall be gathered unto his people. . . . Take Aaron and Eleazar, his son, and bring them up unto Mount Hor: and strip Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar, his son. . . . And Moses stripped Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar, his son."

This custom was continued in after years, as we learn from Exodus xxix, 29-30, "And the holy garments of Aaron shall be his son's after him, to be anointed therein, and to be consecrated in them. And that son that is priest in his stead shall put them on seven days, when he cometh into the tabernacle of the congregation to minister in the holy place." The newly-made High Priest was to wear the vestments of his predecessor to show the continuity of the office, and to mark its complete identity with that of his predecessor. We have in all this a great foreshadowing of the Apostolic succession in the Christian Church.

Christ is gone up: yet ere He passed
From earth, in heav'n to reign,
He formed one holy Church to last
Till He should come again.

His Twelve Apostles first He made
His ministers of grace:
And they their hands on others laid
To fill in turn their place.

So ago by age, and year by year
His grace was handed on:
And still the holy Church is here
Although her Lord is gone.

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