

impossible; that which was beyond reason became both reasonable and natural.

You see, the scales had fallen from his eyes, and he saw plainly the realities of God. And his new belief he forthwith put into energetic action. He was a man of rank and position, and he owned a villa and extensive gardens in the suburbs of the city of Carthage. He sold them, and, like Barnabas, devoted the money to the relief of the distressed poor. A few more S. Cyprians in the present day—a few more self-surrenders from those high in position and power to the service of Christ and His poor—would do more to solve some of our present difficulties than all other efforts put together. Less profession and more action is what is needed. Lives and substance devoted to the service of the Master.

The zeal that Cyprian displayed as a Christian woke up the Church of Carthage. And in the course of a few years the bishopric falling vacant, he was almost unanimously chosen to occupy it. This privilege of selecting a bishop appears from the earlier times to have rested with the main body of the faithful, sometimes acting through their representatives, sometimes, as in this case, by election. S. Paul, in the interest of those particular Churches, sent Timothy to Ephesus and Titus to Crete; S. James was chosen by those at Jerusalem to preside over the Church there; while Matthias was elected by 120 disciples to fill the place of the traitor Judas. At a later period, when whole nations submitted themselves to the Christian yoke and joined the Church, it seemed natural enough that with their leaders and rulers should lie the right of selection. Thus, as the Emperor presided at Christian councils, so he chose presbyters for the episcopate.

In England, we may note, it is still customary for the sovereign through her Prime Minister to nominate to this high office, though this nomination must first be submitted to the Cathedral Body for their approval, as representing the diocese.

And this principle is quite intelligible. The object all along has been one and the same—to obtain in the quietest way possible,

and the most reverential, the voice of the whole Christian Church in the appointment of her chief pastors. From time to time a little rearrangement is necessary, as when Church and nation, once identical, have ceased to be so.

It is clear, however, that a distinction must be made between the mere nomination, and the ordination or consecration of a bishop. The appointment of a clergyman by the Crown or anybody else, does not raise him to this office. It is the solemn laying on of the hands with prayer, as we have witnessed in S. Paul's Cathedral and elsewhere. It is those who are themselves successors to, and representatives of the Apostles who alone can bequeath the grace and the authority that belong to their Order. 'As the Father hath sent Me, even so send I you.' We can never give to others what we have not received ourselves. Cyprian was duly elected and consecrated Bishop of Carthage.

And the first light in which he appears before us is that of a Church Reformer—a staunch advocate of Church discipline. He had not been bishop two years before the persecution of Decius (A.D. 250) broke over the Church with great violence. At Carthage it wrought sad havoc in the flock. Some fled into safe retreats until the tyranny was over. Among them Cyprian; though he still, from a distance, guided his people—sending them help and warning, counsel and comfort. Doubtless he thought he could be of more real service in acting thus than in remaining to face the storm. Others there were whose ties kept them to their homes. Some renounced the faith, sacrificed to the gods, and were freed from further persecution. Others availed themselves of the offer that was made, that for a sum of money they should receive certificates of having sacrificed to the gods when they had not done so. A few—and a few only—of those who professed Christ accepted no compromise, but resolutely prepared to endure all for their Lord. Of the sufferings of these, many narratives have come down to us. Protracted torture left its lasting marks upon some, and others died.