

Plain Papers on  
New Testament Christianity  
No. II

# **The Apostles of Christ**

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## Prefatory Note

IN accordance with Resolution 42 of the GENERAL ANNUAL MEETING OF CHURCHES OF CHRIST, held at Liverpool in August, 1900, the Publishing Committee invited a number of well-known writers to prepare pamphlets on selected topics. On the whole the response has been very encouraging. The writers are all busy workers, who, without fee or reward, have readily undertaken this extra task, in hope of advancing the glorious cause which has for its aim THE COMPLETE RESTORATION OF CHRISTIANITY AS PERFECTED BY CHRIST AND HIS HOLY APOSTLES.

It is hoped the Churches and individual members will heartily do their part by purchasing and circulating these booklets. The writer of this pamphlet is the esteemed editor of the Bible Advocate. The subject dealt with is of vital importance to a right apprehension of New Testament Christianity; and the Committee regard his treatment of it as admirably calculated to put in a clear and forcible style before the reader what Scripture teaches respecting the Authority and Work of Christ's Apostles, and to expose the baselessness of some high-sounding claims advanced at the present time in various quarters and in different forms.

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## Introduction

EVERY reader probably knows who are meant when we speak of "the Apostles of Christ." The names of some of them - as Peter, John, and Paul - rise to the lips at once, and the fact is recalled that Christ chose a company of men whom he called and commissioned to be His Apostles. It is well-known that, from the very beginning of Christianity, great authority has been ascribed to these men - "the Twelve" and "Paul.". Their teaching has been accepted as inspired, and their commands treated as possessing the same authority as those of Christ Himself.

In using the New Testament to discover the mind and will of the Master, no distinction as to authority has been made between instruction from Christ's lips and that from the lips or pens of His apostles. Accordingly Christianity has been regarded as the Teaching of Christ and His Apostles as found in the New Testament.

Even in churches where apostasy from the teaching of the New Testament is undeniable, the same place of authority has continued to be granted to the Apostles. In Ecclesiastical buildings we meet, in sculpture, or in painting, with "the Apostles of Christ." The Church of England liturgy gives a first place to "the goodly company of the Apostles," and even the claim of Rome to "Apostolic succession" is a recognition of the great place in Christianity given by its Divine Author to His Apostles.

Of late years, however, many religious leaders have begun to make a decided difference between the Master and His School - meaning by "School" the Apostles and the other New Testament writers. Arising apparently from a distaste for the teachings of the Apostles - of Paul especially - regarding the Deity and Atonement of Christ, the attempt now is to get behind the Apostles to Christ Himself; and the investigators find - so they say - that He taught differently from them. For such teachers and those they lead, "Back to Christ" has come to mean the regarding of the Apostles' teaching, such as that on the great subjects just named, and that on "the Church," as lacking Christ's authority and as expressing no part of Christ's Mind. If this, or anything approaching this, is true, everyone can see that all parts of Christianity are rendered loose and indefinite, and a great deal of the contents of the

New Testament becomes of no authority whatever. We purpose to return to the revolutionary and destructive character of this theory, to the impossibility, if it be true, of our having any certainty as to the teaching of Christ Himself; but for the present pass on to review the contents of the New Testament, which, in any case, is the basis on which our decision as to the authority of the Apostles must rest.

As far as space permits we shall consider the following points, devoting a Chapter to each:-

- I. The Names of the Apostles
  - II. Their Authority and Work
  - III. Their Qualifications and Credentials
  - IV. Their Continued Authority and Alleged Successors
  - V. Their Alleged Imperfect Example and Uninspired Teaching
  - VI. The Two-fold Sense of the Cry, "Back to Christ!"
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## Chapter I

### The Names Of The Apostles

READERS of the Gospels are struck by the deliberateness with which Jesus attached to Himself and then appointed the Twelve. The beginning of this work is recorded in the first chapter of John, where we learn how Andrew and Peter, Philip and Nathanael, and John himself, got their introduction to Him Who was to become their all in all. Such beautiful and natural beginnings of discipleship we can suppose were made with each of the Twelve, until they gradually became His more or less constant companions; but an epoch in his work, and in their lives, was reached, when He chose them to be in a special sense "the Disciples," solemnly called them, and deliberately named them Apostles.

The careful exercise of choice is specially noticeable in Mark's account, which reads: "And He goeth up into the mountain, and calleth unto him whom He Himself would: and they went unto Him. And He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him, and that He might send them forth to preach and to have authority to cast out devils" (Mark 3: 13-15). There surely must be something uncommon meant by the strength of that expression, "WHOM HE HIMSELF WOULD." It was not an appointment made because they or others wished it. The same emphasis on His choice is found in Christ's question, "Did I not choose you the Twelve, and one of you is a devil?" (John 6: 70), and in His declaration, "Ye did not choose Me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that ye should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should abide" (John 15: 16).

In Luke's account there is further evidence that Christ regarded this appointment of quite marked importance. The choice, we are here told, was preceded by spending "all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, He called His disciples: and he chose from them twelve, whom also he named Apostles" (Luke 6:13). Note the deliberate choice of the word Apostle to distinguish the Twelve from the other disciples. It shows the Mind of the Master. The word means, "a person sent forth;" and its selection by Jesus shows He is looking forward to sending them forth, as His Messengers. So, by the name Apostle, He indicates the work He has for them to do - the work and the GREATNESS, for if it

is true, as Christ said, that "the Apostle is not greater than He that sent him" (John 13: 16 R.V. margin), it is also true that the Apostle gets a reflex greatness when he is sent by a Great One; and these men were chosen to be the Apostles of CHRIST, to be sent forth by Him, to whom was given all authority in heaven and on earth.

Another thing that denotes the importance of the place of these Apostles, if not, this time, in the mind of Christ, at least in the thought of the early Church, is the fact that we have no fewer than four lists of their names (Matt. 10: 2-4; Mark 3: 16-19; Luke 6: 14-16; Acts 1: 13). The Apostolic roll, taking the order given in Matthew, and borrowing epithets from the Gospel history, at large, is as follows:

#### FIRST GROUP

**Simon Peter** – The man of rock

**Andrew** – Peter's brother

**James and John** – Sons of Zebedee, and Sons of Thunder

#### SECOND GROUP

**Philip** – The earnest enquirer

**Bartholomew**, or Nathaniel – The guileless Israelite

**Thomas** – The melancholy

**Matthew** – The publican (so-called by himself only)

#### THIRD GROUP

**James (the son) of Alphaeus** – (James the Less? Mark 15: 20)

**Lebbaeus, Thaddaeus, Judas of James** – The three-named disciple

**Simon** – The Zealot

**Judas, the man of Kerioth** – "The Traitor"

On comparing the four lists, they will be found divisible as above into groups of four, with Peter, Philip and James, son of Alphaeus, respectively, at the head of each group of four. Peter stands at the head in each list, and Judas Iscariot is always at the foot.

It is not said why twelve and no more were chosen. But we know that shortly afterwards seventy others were chosen for special work, and so suppose the number was not limited for lack of more to choose from. The thought that the Twelve were to suggest the fullness of Israel, the twelve tribes, seems confirmed by our Lord's words to them when

"Peter said unto Him, Lo, we have left all, and followed Thee; what then shall we have? And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit on the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matt. 19: 28).

The appointment of Matthias "to take the place in this ministry and Apostleship, from which Judas fell away" (Acts 1: 15-26) has been much discussed. It will suffice here to say that we see no reason to doubt that the appointment was Divinely approved; and to deny that it was so, tends to weaken our confidence in Luke as a historian, for he not only does not tell us the appointment was a mistake, but treats Matthias as an Apostle (Acts 2: 14; 6: 2). While the validity of the appointment really does not matter so far as the Apostles' teaching is concerned, for we have no word spoken or written by this man, yet it seems reasonable to conclude from Matt. 19: 28, that "the Twelve" were to suggest, by their number, the tribes of Israel; and when one of them fell out of the number, it was needful to fill his place, so that all might be equally clothed with the Spirit, and when the great work was begun for which they had been trained and endowed, they might stand, a significant body of twelve, before the devout Jews gathered from every nation under heaven (Acts 2: 5-14).

Whatever may be our conclusion as to Matthias, there is no room to doubt that Saul of Tarsus was "apprehended" and appointed by Christ to be His Ambassador. The ninth chapter of Acts, which contains Luke's narrative of Saul's conversion, tell us that Jesus said of Saul: "He is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name unto the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel;" and similar language is used in Paul's own accounts in Chapters 22: and 26: Paul's Apostleship was often assailed during his lifetime, and so he often refers to the proofs thereof in his Epistles, some of which statements we shall need by and bye; meantime it will suffice to quote the strong words of Galatians 1: 1, where he inscribes himself "an Apostle (not from men, neither through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead)."

Paul, however, while claiming equally with the original Apostolic Body to be an Apostle of Christ, does not number Himself among the Twelve. In Galatians, Paul narrates how the Apostles at Jerusalem acknowledged his claim to be an Apostle, but agreed that while Peter

was for the circumcision, Paul was for the uncircumcision. He was, as he elsewhere glories in being, the Apostle of the Gentiles. Further, in 1 Cor. 15:, having mentioned Christ's appearances after the Resurrection to "the Twelve" and to "all the Apostles," he mentions himself in addition to them: "And last of all," he says, "as unto one born out of due time, he appeared to me also. For I am the least of the Apostles, that am not meet to be called an Apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and His grace which was bestowed upon me was not found vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."

These then are the Apostles of Christ - the Twelve, and Paul, the Apostles of the Gentiles. We must now consider the authority and work assigned to them by their Lord and Master.



## Chapter II

### Their Authority And Work

A WISE Roman centurion argued that work and the authority necessary to its performance, go together; that, in fact, the presence of the one implies also the presence of the other: "For I," said he, "also am a man under authority, having under myself soldiers: and I say to this one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to My servant, Do this, and he doeth it." So, he argued, as Jesus was appointed to do work by God, the authority to command disease would be given Him by the Power under which He was. In like manner we have but to note the work committed to the Apostles by Christ, and that will define the authority they had from Christ. Their work is denoted by the following names applied to them.

#### I. APOSTLES

We have already observed that Jesus chose for them the designation Apostles. This word, meaning one sent forth, is not confined in the New Testament to the Twelve and Paul. It is in one place applied to Christ Himself as sent by the Father. The word is also applied to messengers sent by churches (2 Cor. 8: 23 R.V. margin); these were Apostles of the Churches. Barnabas was not one of the Twelve, yet is called an Apostle (Acts 14: 14), we presume because sent by the Church at Antioch on this evangelistic mission.

This word, then, gives only a general idea of the work and authority of the Apostles of Christ. The greatness of any band of Apostles, must be gathered, not from the generic name Apostle, but from the special circumstances of their mission. In estimating the authority of the Apostles of Christ, we consider, First, the One who sends them. Our Lord Himself has been very diligent here that no one should think they can despise His Apostles and yet claim to reverence Him. Even of the seventy He said, He that heareth you heareth Me; and he that rejecteth you rejecteth Me; and he that rejecteth Me rejecteth Him that sent Me." Repeatedly of the Twelve He used similar words, as in the strong asseveration: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth Me; and he that receiveth Me receiveth Him that sent Me" (John 13: 20). Then, secondly, the work given them

to do must be held in view in estimating the importance of the Apostles of Christ. It is conceivable that Jesus might send some one to execute a comparatively trivial duty, as when two disciples were sent to bring the colt on which he rode into Jerusalem. But as we examine in detail the work the Twelve and Paul were commissioned to do, and their qualifications and credentials for that work, we shall have reason to conclude that the Apostles of Christ are entitled to the greatest deference, not only because sent by Christ, but also because of the work embraced in their Apostleship.

## **II. WITNESSES.**

One part of this important work is expressed by saying the Apostles were witnesses. That is, it was their function as Apostles to bear witness to the things of Christ they had seen and heard and felt, especially to testify that they had seen Him after He rose from the dead. The reader must carefully observe that this witness-bearing is quite another thing from ordinary preaching of the Gospel, which is sometimes called bearing testimony or witness to Christ. The witness of the Apostles required them to have been "eye-witnesses" (Luke 1: 2). The Twelve were called "that they might be with Him." Three of them at least were chosen to be with Him on some specially pregnant occasions, as on the Mount of Transfiguration, and closer than the rest in the Garden of Gethsemane. But all of them beheld His miracles, heard Him teach as never man taught, and saw Him after His Resurrection. This last was the main point, as Divine Wisdom had ordained that the reality of Christ's claims should be made to rest in a special way on the fact of the Resurrection.

Let us observe the striking proofs that this witness-bearing was a vital and essential part of the office of the Apostleship. In our Lord's address to them before He suffered He said, "AND YE ALSO BEAR WITNESS, BECAUSE YE HAVE BEEN WITH ME FROM THE BEGINNING" (John 15: 27). To them, as the Apostles whom He had chosen, He showed Himself alive after His Passion by many proofs (Acts 1: 3). On the day of His Ascension, as he parted from them He said: "Ye shall be my witnesses, both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1: 8). The account of the election of Matthias is very instructive as proving that the Disciples understood witnessing to the Resurrection was an essential function of an Apostle. Peter put it thus: "Of the men therefore

which have accompanied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, unto the day that he was received up from us, of these must one become a witness with us of his Resurrection" (Acts 1: 21, 22).

The same impression, namely, that witness-bearing is an essential function of the Apostolic office, is produced by the way in which the Apostles in Acts advance their testimony. On Pentecost, Peter for himself and the eleven said, "This Jesus did God raise up, whereof we all are witnesses" (Acts 2: 32); in Solomon's porch he said: "Whom God raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses" (Acts 3: 15); to the Council: "We cannot but speak the things which we saw and heard" (Acts 4: 20). Luke in a summary of the happy condition of the early Church says: "With great power gave the Apostles their witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 4: 33). Note their witness. The evidence is abundant, but we must be content to add the statement of Peter when preaching for the first time to Gentiles: "And we are witnesses of all things that He did. .... Him God raised up the third day, and gave Him to be made manifest, not to all the people, but unto witnesses that were chosen before of God" (Acts 10: 34-43).

Paul, too, recognized this function of the Twelve, and also that the appearance of the Lord to Himself was necessary to him bearing witness, and so to him being an Apostle. Thus at Antioch in Pisidia he said: "But God raised Him (Christ) from the dead. And He was seen for many days of them that came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now his witnesses unto the people" (Acts 13: 30, 31). About his own work he informs us that Ananias said to him: "The God of our fathers hath appointed thee to know His will, and to see the Righteous One, and to hear a voice from His mouth, for thou shalt be a witness for Him unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard" (Acts 22: 14, 15). We need not pause to point out the transcendent importance of this work. All who have believed in Christ have done so "through their word" (John 17: 20). It is sometimes said many of the Twelve were apparently very ordinary men, for we read of no great work they did. We have nothing but necessary portions recorded of the work of the Apostles, and that no record remains is no proof those not mentioned did not great things. But grant they were ordinary men. It does not take a genius to bear faithful witness, and all at least took part in this, and thus enabled others to possess that "precious faith" in Christ as the Son of God which is the basis of Christianity.

### **III. STEWARDS.**

Another word applicable to the Apostles of Christ is steward. On one occasion "Peter said, Speakest Thou this parable unto us, or even unto all?" The result was that Jesus spoke the parable of "the faithful and wise steward, whom His Lord set over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season." In other words He likened Peter and His fellows to stewards entrusted with giving something to others. Now it is true the word steward is applied to elders and to others. Indeed, every one of us is a steward; we have all something entrusted to us that others should profit from. But when we note the teaching given to the Apostles by Christ, and which the Holy Spirit was to bring to their minds; and the revelations made to them of the mysteries of God, we find this word most expressive to describe much of their work, its responsibility, and its value for others. "If so be," wrote Paul, "that ye have heard of the stewardship of that grace of God which was given me to you-ward, how that by revelation was made known unto me the mystery .... which in other generations was not made known unto the sons of men, as it hath now been revealed unto His Holy Apostles and Prophets in the Spirit" (Eph. 3: 2-5 R.V. margin). The fullness of revelation which came to men through the Apostles will appear as we proceed, and will increase our conception of the greatness and uniqueness of their stewardship.

As the Apostles, in the miracle of feeding the thousands, received from the Master and gave to the people, so the Twelve and Paul dispensed the word of life and communicated the will and promises of the exalted Lord. The thought of their wonderful stewardship might well fill them with a sense of responsibility; and how careful it should make us not to despise or treat lightly what they communicated and instituted in the discharge of their stewardship.

### **IV. AMBASSADORS.**

Perhaps no single word gives a more distinct impression of the peculiar authority and work of the Apostles than the word ambassadors. Paul in asking the saints at Ephesus to pray that he might be able "to make known with boldness the mystery of the Gospel," adds, "for which I am an ambassador in chains" (Eph. 6: 20). But the most notable use of the word is in that supremely precious passage where Paul expounds the mystery of reconciliation with which the Apostles of Christ had been

charged (2 Cor. 5: 11-21). Lest our reader does not turn up and read this beautiful passage, we will secure him and enhance this page by quoting verses 18-21:

“But all things are of God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and gave unto us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not reckoning to them their trespasses, and having committed unto us the word of reconciliation. We are ambassadors, therefore, on behalf of Christ, as though God were entreating by us; we beseech you on behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled to God.”

Now although it is not unusual for preachers today to quote these words, unthinkingly or presumptuously naming themselves ambassadors of Christ, a moment's consideration of what is meant by the word, will shew that Paul here is either using the words in the plural for himself, associating others with him by courtesy, or for the Apostles as a Body. Dr. Beet, the Wesleyan writer, whose commentary on Corinthians is so universally allowed to be a careful and competent exposition, says under verse 18: "Us: True of all believers; but Paul; thinks specially of himself and colleagues, as the following verses show;" and under verse 20 he adds: "We are ambassadors (Eph. 6: 20): messengers sent formally by a king, especially to make peace. Very appropriate to Apostles sent personally and formally by Christ. John 17: 18; 20: 21; Acts 26: 17; Gal. 1: 1."

The word ambassador denotes one sent immediately by a king (or government) to transact business of state on behalf of his king. It thus gives the idea of one who is clothed in the dignity of the king who sends him; and whose word is as authoritative as that of his king - in fact, is the word of his king. See for illustration Luke 14: 32, where a king sends an ambassador to ask conditions of peace. This word therefore well defines the authority of Christ's Apostles in the Kingdom and Church of God. They base no claim on the ground of personal superiority; but as acting and speaking on behalf of Christ they are His plenipotentiaries, commissioned to make known His gracious will, and act as His agents in the establishment and ordering of the Kingdom and Church. Not, of course, to do this in any arbitrary way, or way of their own choice, but, as we shall see, according to instructions received from Him - from Him in person, or through inspiration of the Spirit promised and given to guide them into all the truth.

## **V. CHRIST'S AGENTS IN ESTABLISHING HIS KINGDOM.**

During our Lord's ministry the Kingdom of God was proclaimed as at hand, and on one occasion Jesus said some were present who should not taste of death till they had seen the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom. That kingdom, no doubt, was fully established when he sat down on God's right hand, and, being now glorified, sent to the waiting Disciples the Holy Spirit as their Advocate and Guide. To this Kingdom He refers in the great central passage which records Peter's confession that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, and also records Christ's benediction on Peter. It is important the reader should note that these words are the words of Christ as their being so gives this passage, and indeed all passages where Christ speaks of the work of His Apostles, a decisive bearing on the right meaning of the cry, "Back to Christ." His words are:-

"And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. I will give unto thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. (Matt. 16: 18, 19).

The keys here, it is universally allowed, are a figure of speech for the power of shutting and opening. Of course the power would be exercised by Peter as Christ directed and as His agent. Light is thrown on the reality signified in the figurative language of Christ by the history in Acts of Apostles. On the Day of Pentecost, when the Spirit came, it is Peter who advocates the Lordship and Messiahship of Jesus, and who answers the question: Men and brethren, What shall we do? He named the conditions on which those who believed that Jesus was the Christ, that is, the anointed King, should be admitted into the Kingdom. In that way he opened the Kingdom to Jews (Acts 2:). But for some time no Gentiles were admitted; in fact they were not thought of as eligible. Peter especially seems to have had the Jewish prejudices very strong. But it is he who is Divinely induced to go and preach to Cornelius and his household and admit them, though Gentiles, into the Kingdom as he had previously done the Jews. It is clear that there were many Jewish believers who would not have needed so much inducing to preach to Gentiles as Peter did: and it is no doubt one reason why "God made choice" of Peter, that by his mouth "the Gentiles should hear the word of the Gospel and believe" (Acts 15: 7), that on Peter the

keys, that is the privilege of opening the Kingdom of heaven, has been bestowed.

Then note respecting the power of binding and loosing that Matt. 23: 4 suggests the right meaning. The Scribes and Pharisees are there described as binding heavy burdens and grievous to be borne and laying them on men's shoulders. To bind is to make a precept or command obligatory; to loose is to declare a precept or command not binding. Such expressions as this were at the time common: "The School of Shammai bindeth it; the School of Hillel looseth it." The decisions of Peter as a Spirit-led Apostle were to be ratified in Heaven. As we shall see, however, while Peter possessed this power, so did the other Apostles. For later our Lord gave the great commission to all the Apostles in which they are told, to teach the Disciples all things He had commanded them (Matt. 28: 18-20). We may say, therefore, that throughout the New Testament what the Apostles command is binding and what they say is not binding is loosed - Christians are freed there from.

Again, Jesus told the Apostles that when He should sit upon the throne of His glory they also should sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Matt. 19: 28). The word regeneration occurs only once besides this. That instance (Tit. 3: 5) shows that it denotes that state which is entered by those re-born "through the laver of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit," or, as Christ put it to Nicodemus: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God" (John 3: 5). The Regeneration and the Kingdom of God are interchangeable phrases, and we thus see that the citizens of the heavenly Kingdom have been born again. In this New Age, then, the Apostles sit enthroned as law-givers. Hence, after Jesus rose from the dead, He said to the Apostles, "As my Father hath sent Me, even so send I you," and then conferred on them the power of forgiving and retaining sins (John 20: 20-23). And in the Great Commission he charged them to go and disciple all nations, baptizing them, and teaching them to observe all He had commanded them, promising to be with them till the end of the age.

The writer of the Acts tells us (1: 3) that in His many appearances to them during the 40 days between His rising and ascension, He was "speaking the things concerning the Kingdom of God." Besides He assured them that the Spirit would guide them into all the truth and

bring to their remembrance all he had told them. In accord with all this, the Lord directed the attention of the Jewish people to the Apostles on Pentecost by the outpouring of the Spirit and the extraordinary manifestations. Peter stood up with the eleven and delivered the King's message, and to the penitent rebels, laid down His conditions of pardon, thus admitting on that day about 3,000 souls to the Kingdom in its present dispensation.

## **VI. THEIR PLACE IN THE CHURCH.**

The Church is here regarded as an institution within the Kingdom, but practically what is here said is a continuation of the subject of last section, the Apostles as agents in the Kingdom of God. We prefer Church here because in the Acts and the Epistles the more specific word Church is more largely used than the more general term Kingdom. In two lists of the officers in the Church, the Apostles are placed first: "And God hath set some in the Church, first Apostles, secondly Prophets" (1 Cor. 12: 28): "And He" (the ascended Christ) "gave some to be Apostles; and some, Prophets" (Eph. 4: 11). In Eph. 2: 19-22, where the Church is figuratively spoken of as a building, the believers who compose it are said to be "of the household of faith, being built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone." This can mean no less than that their teaching and commands are regarded as the rule of faith and practice in the Church.

Accordingly we everywhere find the Apostles as claiming and having conceded to them the place of first authority. In the Great Commission Jesus gave them this place; indeed that Commission may be said to involve, directly or indirectly, all that is here said as to the apostles as agents of Christ in His Kingdom and Church. In another of the booklets of this series (No. III.) this Great Commission is fully dealt with, therefore it is here enough to quote it:-

"And Jesus came to them and spake unto them, saying, "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." (Matt. 28: 18-20).



It will be seen that this infers that the Disciples made and baptized, to the Apostles for teaching - to learn from them the will of the Master whose School they have entered. Hence as soon as the first converts are made - three thousand of them - we are told that "They continued steadfastly in the Apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers" (Acts 2: 42). the Apostles were regarded with awe and as men apart: "of the rest durst no man join himself to them: howbeit the people magnified them" (Acts 5: 13). In Acts 6: we see the Apostles legislating as to the internal order of the Church. They command seven men to be chosen to take charge of the finances of the Church, which command is obeyed. We see the same legislative power exercised by the Apostle Paul in Acts 14: 21-24; Titus 1: 5-9; 1 Tim. 3: 1-13. When the Apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word they sent two of their number to impart unto them the Holy Spirit (Acts 8: 14, 17). Again we find them appealed to to settle a question affecting the salvation of Gentile Christians (Acts 15:)

There is a general air of authority throughout Apostolic Epistles which shows the place of authority conceded to the Apostles. Here and there the authority is very marked, thus in 1 Cor. 4: 14-21, Paul says, "as I teach everywhere in every Church," and warns some that if he comes and finds them unrepentant He will come with a rod to punish. In the next Chapter He commands a fornicator to be excommunicated. Similar commands are not uncommon in his writings, and Peter speaks of "the commandment of the Lord and Saviour through your Apostles" (2 Peter 3: 2). Interesting are the references to the instructions of the Apostles as a body of traditions, things to be handed on to others. Paul commends the Corinthians for holding fast the traditions as he delivered them to them (1 Cor. 11: 2); of these traditions, verses 26 and 27 give an example - Paul had received of the Lord instructions relating to the Lord's Supper which instructions he had given to them. Again the same Apostle says to the Philippians: "The things which he both learned and received and heard and saw in me, these things do: and the God of peace shall be with you." And to the Thessalonians: "So then, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye were taught, whether by word or epistle or ours (Phil. 4: 9; 2 Thess. 2: 15).

## VII. THE AUTHORITY AND INSPIRATION OF THEIR WRITINGS.

The passage just quoted is one of several which show that authority and inspiration were claimed from the beginning for Apostolic writings.

Paul distinctly claimed for himself and other inspired teachers, that through the Spirit they had revealed to them "things which eye saw not, and ear heard not, and which entered not into the heart of man;" that they spoke these things, not in words which man's wisdom taught, but which the Spirit taught; and in short, that they had "the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2: 6-16). He required every prophet and spiritual (inspired) man to admit that the things he wrote were "the commandments of the Lord" (1 Cor. 14: 37). He solemnly commanded the reading of his epistles to the Churches (Col. 4: 16; 1 Thess. 5: 27). He exhorted the brethren to stand fast in the things he taught them: "Whether by word, or by epistles of ours" (2 Thess. 2: 15). And he commanded the Churches to enforce obedience to his written injunctions, even to the exclusion of the disobedient from fellowship. See also 1 Tim. 6: 3-5. Peter refers to Paul's Epistles and classes them with "the other Scriptures" (2 Peter 3: 15, 16). He also undertakes to make such provision that the brethren should be able after his decease, "to call these things to remembrance;" claims to have "the word of prophecy made more sure" (2 Peter 1: 15-21), and exhorts to the remembrance of the "words spoken before by the holy prophets, and the Commandment of the Lord and Saviour through your Apostles" (2 Peter 3: 1, 2). John affirms that those who are of God will hear the Apostles (1 John 4: 6), and forbids Christians to receive or countenance those who bring different teaching (2 John 9-11; see also 3 John 9, 10).

The transcendent authority and all-important work of the Apostles is, we hope, fairly outlined in the above, but to deal fully with the subject would require a volume. Special care should be taken to note that, great as is the place accorded to the Apostles in Acts and in the epistles, it is nowhere greater than in the words addressed to the Apostles by the Lord Jesus Himself.

## Chapter III

### Their Qualifications And Credentials

#### I. QUALIFICATIONS

ONE of these Apostles traced his preparation for his great life-task back to the very dawn of life. "It was," wrote Paul, "the good pleasure of God, who separated me, even from my mother's womb, and called me through His grace to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach him among the Gentiles." In Paul's case the wonderful providence of God in preparing him to be the Apostle to the Gentiles, during years when the very idea of such a work was in no man's mind, much less in that of Saul the Pharisee, is very manifest, and is dwelt upon with much enjoyment in all our works on the Life of Paul.

May not God Who doeth marvelous things without number prepare all His people unknown to them for the work which after conversion they are led to do? At least we do not doubt that the life of each of the Twelve previous to knowing Jesus, prepared him in some degree for his work as an Apostle of Christ. Matthew's Gospel bears traces of the tax-collector's classified accounts; and the life of fishermen which several of them had lived, no doubt qualified them to be good witnesses and patient laborers in the Kingdom of God. Our Lord Himself indicated the analogy between their earthly and their heavenly avocation, when he said to them: "Come ye after Me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matt. 4: 19).

But all must see how well calculated their companionship with the Son of God was to fit them for their Apostolic work. Even if our Lord has taken no pains with them, their knowing Him so intimately would have prepared them to identify Him when risen from the dead; and seeing and hearing His public miracles and teaching would have prepared them to testify as to him being "approved of God." But Jesus did take pains to train them for their work. He called them as we have seen that "they might be with Him," and those who have not read the Gospels from this view-point, will surely be surprised on doing so to see what a large portion of them is taken up with, to use the title of a well-known work on the subject, "The Training of the Twelve."

Let us note instances and sayings indicating our Lord's care for the special growth in knowledge of His Disciples. We recall the introductory words to the Sermon on the Mount, that great discourse on the Righteousness of His Kingdom:- "When he had sat down, his disciples came unto him and he opened his mouth and taught them." In private he explained the parables to the apostles, saying, "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of heaven." "Let these things," He would say, "sink in your ears;" and the great privilege which was theirs in hearing and seeing, as "the babes" for whom he thanked the Father, cannot be better described than in His own words, "All things have been delivered unto me of my Father; and no one knoweth who the Son is, save the Father; and who the Father is, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him. And turning to the disciples he said privately, Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see: for I say unto you that many prophets and kings desired to see the things which ye see, and saw them not; and to hear the things which ye hear, and heard them not" (Luke 10: 22-24).

The general course He pursued in teaching them is clearly marked in the Gospels and is highly instructive. There was first general teaching about the Kingdom; this gave place to teaching about His Own Person, until they confessed Him to be the Christ, the Son of God; then (not till then could it be done) He taught them about His Cross and the great lessons on the Kingdom embodied in Him thus dying to reign. In this way, with many a pointed correction of their "savoring of the things of men," He taught them the nature of the heavenly Kingdom. True, they were dull. But the seed was sown in their minds, and in Chapters xiii-xvii. of John, we see how it is to be made to germinate - the Holy Spirit is to come and bring all things to their remembrance and guide them into all the truth. Indeed our Lord emphasized the fact that all else would leave them unqualified unless they received the Holy Spirit, and so charged them not to depart from Jerusalem until they were clothed in this supernatural power. At the close of the Gospels the assurances of special endowment and guidance are numerous; the following will show the full force of this, especially if the reader will consult all the references:-

Jesus assured His Apostles that he would pray the Father, Who would give them another Comforter (instead of Himself), Who should abide with them forever, even the Spirit of truth (John 14: 16-18). 'He shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto

you' (25, 26). He further assured them that the Spirit Whom He would send to them from the Father would bear witness concerning Him (John 15: 26), that is through them (see Acts 5: 32); that He when he came would convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment; and that He would guide them (the Apostles) 'into all the truth' (John 16: 7-13). After He rose from the dead, when giving them the Great Commission, Jesus said: 'And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age' (Matt. 28: 20). He also after His Resurrection confirmed the promise of the Holy Spirit, which He had conveyed from the Father to them before He suffered; and charged them to tarry in Jerusalem till 'clothed with power from on high,' when baptized in the Holy Spirit (See Luke 24: 48, 49; John 20: 21-23; Acts 1: 4, 5, 8).

In reference to the Apostle Paul, we know of course that he had not the great privilege of being with Christ during His ministry; though we do not know that he never, as an unbelieving Pharisee, saw Jesus in the days of his flesh. We have already seen, however, that Jesus appeared to Paul for the very purpose of qualifying him to be an Apostle, enabling him to testify to the Resurrection. He evidently had the absence of personal intercourse during Christ's life on earth, compensated by special visions and revelations afterwards. He speaks of the exceeding greatness of these revelations (2 Cor. 12: 7); and we find him declaring that he received of the Lord what he had communicated to the Corinthians concerning the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11: 23). His possession of the Holy Spirit alike to work miracles and inspire him is affirmed in many places in his epistles, and we can say is proved to us by the existence of such epistles as his, especially those to the Romans and Ephesians.

## **II. CREDENTIALS**

It is interesting to note Dr. Ogilvie in his definition of this word credentials referring to the Apostles of Christ. After referring as an example of credentials, or that which gives credit, to the letters of commendation and power given by a government to an ambassador or envoy, which give him credit at a foreign court, he adds: "So the power of working miracles given to the Apostles may be considered as their credentials, authorizing them to preach the Gospel, and entitling them to credit."

In view of the greatness of their work, it was of course of the highest importance that the revelation of the Gospel and will of God these chosen men made, should be demonstrated to be of God. Their authority could not reasonably be accepted by men if not accompanied by Divine power; nor if so accompanied could it be reasonably rejected. Hence to the Apostles Christ promised: Ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you" (Acts 1: 8). Note the distinction here between authority (exousia), and power (dunamis), not observed in the C.V. The power which Christ had was the sign of His authority - "But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath authority (exousia) on earth to forgive sins (he said unto him that was palsied), I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch, and go unto thy house" (Luke 5: 24). Any imposter can say, 'Thy sins be forgiven thee,' but demonstrating the authority claimed by the power manifested is another matter. Exousia is the word used in Matt. 28: 18, to denote the authority claimed by Christ. His commission conferred authority on the Apostles, but that men might know they possessed such authority they were to be clothed with power (dunamis) from on high. They, too, were authorized by Him to forgive and to retain sins" (John 20: 23), hence their work was accompanied by "demonstration of the Spirit and of power" that the faith of believers "should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God" (1 Cor. 2: 4, 5).

We have so far as possible treated the qualifications and credentials separately, but it will be noted that the same power was at once a qualification and credential, so that in concluding this Chapter we may sum up the whole as

### **THE THINGS ESSENTIAL IN AN APOSTLE.**

1. He must have seen the Lord after His Resurrection so as to be able to bear first-hand testimony to that great fact. 1 Cor. 9: 1. Compare Acts 4: 17; 23: 14; 26: 16; 1 Cor. 15: 8.
2. He must have been Divinely chosen and appointed. Rom. 1: 1-5; 1 Tim. 1: 1: 2: 7; 2 Tim. 1: 11. Compare Acts 22: 14, 15; 26: 15-18; the usual opening of Paul's epistles; and especially Gal. 1: 1, 11-17 and 2: 6-9.
3. He must be able to work miracles to prove his claims by exhibiting "the signs of an Apostle" by performing "signs and wonders and

mighty works." 2 Cor. 12: 11-13; Rom. 15: 15-20. Compare Heb. 2: 2-4; 1 Cor. 14: 18; Acts 2: 4, 43; 4: 29-33; 5: 12-16; 15: 12; 21: 19.

4. He must also be able to impart supernatural gifts to others. Some, like Philip the evangelist, could preach the Gospel, work miracles in proof of its Divine origin, and found churches (Acts 8:); but Apostles alone could impart "spiritual gifts" to others (Acts 8: 14-18; 19: 5, 6). When, in defense of his Apostleship, Paul in 1 Cor. 9: 1, 2, claimed the Corinthian Christians as the seal of his Apostleship, it was not merely because he had preached the Gospel to them in demonstration of the Spirit's might, and thereby won them for Christ and formed them into a Church of God; but because above all this he could say of them that they came behind in no gift. See 1 Cor. 1: 4-7; 12: 1-11, 27-30. Compare Rom. 1: 11; Gal. 3: 1-5; Acts 19: 5, 6. Paul's argument is simply this: None but an Apostle can bestow Spiritual gifts; you came behind other Churches in none of these; therefore "If to others I am not an Apostle, yet at least I am to you; for the seal of mine Apostleship are ye in the Lord." To the same effect are his words in the second epistle to the Corinthians (3: 1-3) - "Are we beginning again to commend ourselves? or need we, as do some, epistles of Commendation to you or from you? Ye are our epistle, written in our hearts, known and read of all men; being made manifest that ye are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God."

## Chapter IV

### Their Continued Authority And Alleged Successors

THE question of questions, for us, in reference to the Apostles of Christ - the Twelve and Paul - is this, How are we today to regard their authority? Are we to think that it was to last only during their lifetime; or that their teaching and example are to be regarded as expressing the will of the Lord Jesus until he comes, and the dispensation ends?

It is true, so far as the present writer is aware, that in theory all the divisions of Christendom today, the Roman, the Eastern, the Anglican, and the Nonconformist Churches, will all alike quote Peter or Paul as Divinely inspired and present-day authorities on Christian duty. Even the Catholic Apostolic, or Irvingite, who has, or had, his restored Apostles, and the Latter-day Saint, who also claims that there is in his Church a restoration of Apostles, will acknowledge the authority of the Apostolic writings in the New Testament.

But as in many cases this acknowledgment of Peter and Paul and their fellows, is accompanied by a claim for others which practically makes void the authority of the first and only true Apostles of Christ, we must here state our objection to these claims.

First of all and as affecting the most people, there is what is called APOSTOLICAL SUCCESSION. There are ostensibly two forms of this stupendous claim, the Roman or Papal form, and the Episcopal or Anglican form, though, judging from their efforts made to secure re-union with Rome, it is manifest many Church of England clergymen accept the Roman view. Up to a certain point the two views are identical, both regard authority and grace as being transmitted in long line from the Apostles to our present-day bishops; but the Papal view makes the whole claim centre in the Primacy of Peter, and of the Pope as his successor; so that bishops not in union with the Pope are really not in the line of Apostolical succession at all. Dr. Newman in "Tracts for the Times" speaks of "the real ground on which our authority is built - our Apostolical Descent; and describes it thus: "The Lord Jesus gave the Spirit to His Apostles; they in their turn laid their hands on those who should succeed them; and these again on others; and so the sacred gift has been handed down to our present bishops."



To give a more recent example of the claim, Canon Gore, in his work on the Ministry of the Church, while granting that Bishops and others might fitly be elected by those to whom they are to minister, adds, "But their authority to minister in whatever capacity, their qualifying consecration, was to come from above, in such sense that no ministerial act could be regarded as that valid - that is, as having the security of the Divine Covenant about it - unless it was performed under the shelter of a commission received by transmission of the original pastoral authority which had been delegated by Christ Himself to His Apostles" (page 71). "This," he adds, "is what is understood by the Apostolic succession of the ministry." The same view of the matter is set forth by Pope Leo XIII. in his Encyclical of June, 1896, and which in its earlier part was accepted by a bishop of the Church of England as, "An admirable exposition of the foundation of the Church on Jesus Christ and of the devolution of power upon the Apostles generally, and from them to their successors in due course."

Both the Pope and Canon Gore know that certain functions of the Apostles, as that of witnessing to the Resurrection, could not be communicated to others, for in the nature of the case a witness can have no successor, but what they contend for is authority to bind and to loose, to forgive sins, and to give validity to the ordinances. The substance of what the Pope says is given thus: "Christ commanded that the teaching of the Apostles should be religiously accepted and piously kept as if it were His own. Then as these Apostles, like all other men, were under the universal law of dissolution by death, it was provided by God that the magisterium (or teaching authority) should be perpetuated by being delivered from hand to hand. ... Wherefore Christ instituted in the Church a living, authoritative and permanent magisterium, and willed and ordered under the gravest penalties that its teachings should be received as if they were His own." All this Romanist and Anglican are agreed upon. It is only when the validity of the Bishop is made to depend on communion with the Pope, as Peter's successor, that some Anglicans demur. The Pope wrote: "The Episcopal Order is rightly judged to be in communion with Peter, otherwise it necessarily becomes a lawless and disorderly crowd (*multitudo confusa ac perturbata*)."

The very audacity of these claims has given them a hold on many pious God-fearing people who are almost afraid to consider the truth of them lest they should be chargeable with irreverence. It will also be seen that

anyone admitting this claim practically accepts the teaching and authority of every duly ordained Bishop as equal to that of Christ Himself. We have seen that we have our Lord's own words directing us to give this high regard to the Apostles as His inspired teachers and ambassadors. We cannot reject their teaching without rejecting Christ. Surely if others are to have the same deference they must show the same credentials! We have seen that the Apostles did not get their place in the early Church by saying, "Christ laid His hands on us and gave us authority." But they gave the "signs of an Apostle," and in these signs the early believers saw the Divine credentials. Of substantial proof of this kind none is afforded to support either the Pope's claim to Primacy or the Bishop's claim to Apostolical Succession.

The matter is one for historical investigation as to whether in the past Apostolic power has been manifested by those who have claimed to possess Apostolic authority; and those now claiming such authority should be called on to demonstrate their claim by showing "THE SIGNS OF AN APOSTLE." It is astounding that such claims should be conceded without proof by so many; yet, as Dr. Brown remarks, "Institutions and systems based upon unreal foundations seem for a whole to be impregnable; but sooner or later the scientific appeal to history and fact, with its ever-growing influence upon the intelligence of mankind acts as a powerful solvent upon what is unable to stand the test of truth."

And how unreal are the foundations of these stupendous claims! Thus the Primacy of the Roman Bishop rests upon a tradition that the Apostle Peter transmitted his chief authority to the Bishop of Rome and this authority has come down from Bishop to Bishop and Pope to Pope since. But this is all without historical foundation. The New Testament gives no superior authority to Peter over the other Apostles, though it shows him chosen to take the leading part in opening the Kingdom to Jew and Gentile. And as to Rome there is no proof in the New Testament and only the haziest tradition that Peter ever was at Rome, and he certainly was not there when Paul wrote "Romans," who surely would have saluted this chief Apostle and bishop. But if he did go there to die, there was no bishop at Rome for long after Peter's day to whom he could have transmitted his primacy and authority. A little fact may be noted here. In June, 1894, the Pope made proposals of Re-union to the Eastern Church on the basis of their acknowledgment of his position as "supreme pontiff, highest spiritual and temporal ruler of the

Universal Church, sole representative of Christ upon earth, and dispenser of grace." The Patriarch of Constantinople, with twelve other prelates of the Eastern Church, replied. On the claim to primacy, they reminded the Pope that it was first made in the Pseudo-Clementine writings and supported by the forged decretals of Isidore; and though these documents are now admitted to be spurious even by the Roman Church itself, she has never withdrawn the claim to absolute authority first built upon them.

The recent events in connection with the Pope and the Church of England have tended to show the utter baselessness of the whole claim to Apostolic Succession. The Pope declared the Anglican Orders to be utterly void. Why? Not because the right hands were not laid on, but because the right words were not said at their ordination. Well, that led the Anglican bishops to look matters up, and they were able to tell the Pope that the words he said were essential to valid ordination were not known in his own Church for 800 years! So, they point out, if Anglican Orders are invalid because of the absence of these words, on the Pope's own showing, so are his own. The question of the right hands being laid on is not to be laid aside. The theory of Apostolic Succession requires that the authority of any bishop should be traceable as transmitted to him from bishop to bishop right back to one of the Apostles. We do not dwell on the inextricable confusion in this transmission caused by some exercising the prerogative of bishops who were not duly ordained themselves. We point rather to this:

1. If someone in every age was to have the same authority as Christ Himself, that neither Christ, nor the Apostles, whom we know He did authorize, would have said a word on the subject?
2. As a matter of fact, for at least 150 years there were no bishops in the sense in which the word is used by Romanists and Anglicans. The bishops were at first simply presbyters, more than one in each Church; and at a later stage the bishop was simply the pastor of a single Church. What matters the proof, if it could be made out, that our English bishop has been ordained through a line of bishops right back to a Bishop of Rome, if the chain of succession does not go back to the Apostles by a break of 150 years?

Of a somewhat different claims of Irvingites and Mormons, we need not say much. Mr. Irving, we understand, claimed to have been directed

to restore the gifts to the Church, including twelve apostles. These were to minister in the sealing of the one hundred and forty and four thousands, at the end of which the Lord would appear. These apostles have all died. We understand mention has been made of appointing deputies to fill their place - a new kind of Apostolical succession. The Mormons profess to have had apostles appointed in a similar way; but I gather in answer to an enquiry that they keep on adding new ones as required, who are usually spoken of as elders.

We do not attempt to decide whether these claimants are to be regarded as deliberate impostors or as self-deceived. The Church in Ephesus is commended for trying "them which call themselves apostles and they are not." We may do the same. In the previous Chapter we have the criteria for testing. Let those whose claim to be apostles or to have the same teaching authority the Apostles had, shew the same credentials; let these bishops and apostles perform miracles in the same open manner as did the Apostles whom Christ chose; when they lay on hands let those on whom they lay hands prove the presence of the Spirit by the working of miracles; and lastly, let them communicate some new Revelation such as the body of truth found in the New Testament, the faith once-for-all delivered to the saints; but if these demands for credentials are not met, then it seems to us that to acquiesce in these claims at the mere word of those who make them, is to lay one's self open to be imposed upon by any deliberate impostor or self-deceived enthusiast.

The true view of the matter is that expressed by the words, "Their continued authority." It is true they are dead, but if it could be said of Abel that "being dead he yet speaketh," why may not the same thing be true of the Apostles? Some of their work, as witnessing to the Resurrection, and communicating by the Spirit's aid what Christ had taught them, no one else could possibly do. As an actual and indisputable fact no one today believes in Christ except through their testimony. We have seen that the New Testament contains no hint of the devolution of their authority on others; but it does contain evidence that the Apostles' authority was to continue. This may be inferred from the fact that they were agents in establishing the Kingdom of God, in which we include establishing the Church of Christ. Whoever lays down or reveals the constitution of a kingdom lays down what will remain in force, not only as long as he lives, but as long as the Kingdom lasts. Hence the things of the Kingdom established by the

Apostles will not pass away until the end of the Dispensation. As an example of this, we may refer to Paul's words "till he come" (1 Cor. 11: 26).

We have already noted that he claimed to have established this ordinance of the Lord's supper among the Corinthians by express direction from the Lord. So when he speaks of this feast being attended to thus - until Christ comes, he implies its continuance, and so the continuance of his authority, until he comes. Their Commission as recorded by Matthew ends with a promise that Christ would be with them even to the end of the age. Believers are built upon the Foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the Chief Corner Stone (Eph. 2:), which implies that Christ's authority and that of the Apostles go and continue together. The Savior's prayer shows that the word of the Apostles would be essential to the faith of future believers (John 17: 20). Observe, too, Paul's injunction to Timothy: "And the things which thou hast heard among many witnesses the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2: 2). This shows that the Apostle expected the things to be handed on - not a fresh set of things revealed to each generation. So Jude exhorts believers to contend earnestly for the faith once for all revealed to the saints.

Let these indications be added to those we have quoted or referred to, which shew the writings of the Apostles were regarded as inspired and classed with those of "other Scriptures," and it will be seen they fit no other view than that the Apostles were by their teaching and example to be the permanent authority in the Church until Christ's return. And here we have the analogy of the Old Covenant. Jesus taught that men had Moses and the Prophets, although these were all dead, and said that those who could not learn their duty from Moses and the Prophets would not do so though one were sent to them from the dead. "Moses," said James to the Jerusalem Conference, "from generations of old hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath Day (Acts 15: 21). We conclude that the view which the New Testament suggests is that which was accepted from the beginning before "Apostolical Succession" or "Restored Apostles" were heard of, viz., that, just as Moses and the Prophets continued to speak God's word through their writings, so the Apostles and Prophets of the early Church were to continue to teach the "all things" necessary for the conversion of the world and the well-being of the Church through the

writings of the New Covenant Scriptures. After looking in Chapter V., at some alleged imperfections in Apostolic teaching and example, we shall consider in Chapter VI., how Christianity stands, or rather does not stand, if the Apostles be rejected from the exalted place which, as we have sought to show, Christ intended them to occupy unto "the end of the world."

## Chapter V

### Alleged Imperfections In The Teaching And Example Of The Apostles

IT will be seen that practically the question is, Can we accept the New Testament as a Book by Apostles and other inspired men, revealing to us the Christ of God and His way of Salvation and Life, and as our rule of Faith and Practice?

Some have raised the question as to the form of the Revelation. The books and epistles all seem to have been written to answer a need of the writer's day, rather than to stand as apart of a Divine Law-book for successive generations of believers. But the same form of Revelation is found in the Old Testament. The Psalms and the Prophets were accepted as a Divine Guide in the time of our Lord and by our Lord Himself, yet much there was evidently written for a particular, local, and passing occasion. The fact is that this form of Revelation distinguishes the Bible throughout, and is much in favor of its Divine Origin. For, on the one hand, it is not such a form as would have occurred to man; but, on the other hand, once it is made in that form, man finds by experience that it has an interest and suitability for him that a more formal Revelation could not have possessed.

Some have found difficulty in the supposed fact that Paul disclaims inspiration for parts of his teaching in 1 Cor. 7: As for instance in verse 25: "Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord: but I give my judgment as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful." And again in verse 40: "But she is happier if she abide as she is, after my judgment, and I think that I also have the Spirit of Christ." If it were true that Paul were here excepting a few remarks of his as not inspired, his doing so would give strong emphasis to the rest as being inspired. It does not appear, however, that the contrast in verses 10 and 12 is between Paul's inspired and uninspired teaching, but is between what had been said by the Lord (See Matt. 19: 3-12), and what Paul was now saying by way of covering features of the case at Corinth not covered by what the Lord had said. And as to verse 40, note the words I also, "and I think that I also have the Spirit of Christ," and recall the fact that Paul throughout these Corinthian Epistles had in mind certain opponents of his who made great claims.

It is therefore an ironical allusion to their claims that Paul is here making. So understood, it expresses Paul's certainty that he had the Spirit. The Corinthians would grasp the allusion and understand him to mean that while these arrogant teachers thought themselves highly gifted he claimed to have the Spirit of God. When one considers the incidents in the Gospels in which our Lord has to correct the thought of His Disciples, it is a remarkable thing that in their teaching in Acts and in the Epistles, dealing with some of the most delicate, social, moral and religious questions, there is nothing which can be said to have been proved mistaken. Exceptions have been taken here and there, as when Dr. Horton refers to Paul's argument in Galatians 3: 16 based on the singular number of the word seed in Genesis: "He (God) saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ." The objection that the word seed in Genesis does not refer to a single person, only shows the objector does not grasp Paul's meaning. His argument requires that by the word Christ he here means not simply the Lord Jesus, but also those united to Him. Paul, in effect, says that the word seed, not seeds, agrees finely with the fact that the promises are realized by those in union with Christ, one organic whole. In similar fashion it will be found that objections taken to the teaching of the Apostles are based on the words being looked at from some other view-point than that from which the writer is treating the subject. And we submit it as remarkable, and indicative of inspiration, that there should not be anything of this kind which is not seen to be just and right, when a due effort is made to catch the Apostle's precise meaning.

Perhaps Gal. 2: 11-16, where we find one Apostle rebuking another, is oftenest referred to as a difficulty. It is thought that if an Apostle could thus act wrongly, the fact makes their example unreliable. But this is not so. It must be noted that there was no difference between Paul and Peter as to the truth. It was Peter's inconsistency with his own teaching that laid him open to Paul's rebuke. The Apostles were not infallible in conduct, but were responsible like the rest of Christians for their actions. But neither here nor anywhere else does the wrong or doubtful action of an Apostle obscure the truth they taught on behalf of Christ. Here that truth is evidently thrown into bold relief. While this one wrong action of Peter's after Pentecost shows us he is still the "consistently inconsistent" Peter of the Gospels, surely the general contrast between his life before and after Pentecost suggests that he truly possessed illumination and guidance of the Spirit which the Acts



of Apostles claims for him. Similarly the dispute between Paul and Barnabas is another case where no difference of teaching or practice of Christianity is involved. If it could be shown that both acted wrongly it would but prove their fallibility in conduct - the infallibility of their teaching would remain unaffected.

There are a few other actions recorded in Acts as Paul circumcising Timothy (16: 1-3), Paul's vow (18: 8), Paul and the Nazarites (21: 17-26), and Paul and the High Priest (23: 1-10). In reference to the last of these any commentary will be found to contain one or more suggestions exonerating Paul from all blame, and any action which is thus capable of explanation can never be rightly regarded as an objection to the perfection of an Apostle's example. The others belong to a series of decisions to which the Apostles came, which prove to a remarkable extent the un-human character of their teaching. The treatment of politics, of slavery, of Jewish ritual, of differences on minor matters, were all questions where a wrong step might have (humanly speaking) wrecked the prospects of Christianity in the world. The keenest and freest of minds have examined these actions of Paul, and have found them all in harmony with his principle of treating such matters so as to give least offence, except when the truth of Christianity would be compromised thereby.

Strange that what is a difficulty with some is an aid to faith with others! Henry Rogers, beside whom for power of discernment not one of our modern critics is, in my opinion, fit to stand, found in actions and decisions of the Apostles regarding such matters, indications of a moderation and wisdom more than human. Anyone who reads his chapter in his book on the Superhuman Origin of the Bible, discussing these matters will see how completely they are shown to be wise and moderate, while yet free from unmanly casuistry; and will agree that he is entitled to ask at the close triumphantly as follows:- "May we not ask, as the Jews did, concerning their Master Himself, 'Whence had these men this wisdom?' How is it that while they introduce a system which operated a greater revolution in the world than had ever before been effected, they yet avoided those excesses into which the passions of men in general, with far less enthusiasm than theirs, and under far less wrongs and oppressions are so easily provoked? How is it that while they made greater progress than Puritans and Huguenots, the Apostles exercised a self-control, a sobriety, a moderation, which the

most ardent admirers of those reformers and confessors of subsequent times will hardly claim for them."

## Chapter VI

### Two-Fold Sense Of The Cry: "Back To Christ."

IT is perhaps vain to hope to redeem a cry which has been so much abused, and all we wish to do now is to point out that the cry, though it has often been used to denote one of the most destructive tendencies in the religious thought of our day, is yet capable of describing the very best.

I need hardly say that by the destructive tendency, reference is intended to the view that we must treat Christ's own words as having a value and a truth not to be expected, and not actually found in the teachings of His Apostles. The meaning of the cry in this sense is, Go past the Apostles to Christ; they and He differ; He is right and they are wrong.

A recent most excellent work, entitled "The Relation of the Apostolic Teaching to the Teaching of Christ," has taken up this question, and dealt with it in a manner that does not need repetition. In a host of particulars the teaching of the Apostles and that of Christ are shown to be in living, subtle, admirable, and, on the supposition of merely human origin, unexplainable harmony. Into that kind of treatment we cannot here enter, but have pleasure in recommending this work, which is the Kerr Lectures for 1900, by Prof. Robert J. Drummond.

But we should like to bring home what is involved in the attempt to separate between the Teaching of Christ and that of His Apostles.

At first sight it might seem that it would be an easy matter to take the Gospels and say, Now this is Christ's Own, and, this is another's. But when you get started, it is not so easy as it looks. Suppose you say, Well, we can take the Gospels as a reliable history. We do not need to think of the writers as inspired, but we shall accept them as reliable history, and hear from them what Christ taught. Do so, and what is the result? In this pamphlet we have taken from the gospels some portion only of what Christ, according to them, said to and concerning His Apostles. But enough has been taken to show that the strongest things are said as to their authority and their being guided into all truth by the Holy Spirit. I submit, if the gospels are taken as reliable, the old view

as to the authority and infallibility of the Apostles is the only one possible.

Now refuse to accept the portions of the Gospels which describe Christ training and commissioning the Apostles and promising to them the endowment and guidance of the Holy Spirit, then you throw a doubt over all that is said about Christ in the Gospels. The mind will be uneasy. You will reason: "Christ wrote nothing. These records of what he said and did were written by others. If they have incorporated so much about the Apostles which is not to be accepted, may they not have misrepresented Him in their reports?" No reliance could be placed on what they said until it had been subjected to very careful sifting and editing. We know by experience what that would end in. Thus in passing the Apostles to get back to Christ, you lose all certainty as to what Christ Himself did, or said, or was. At the bottom we are dependent upon the Apostles for all we know of the Work, Doctrine and Personality of Jesus Christ. This sense of "Back to Christ" is arbitrary and destructive in the highest sense.

But the words may be used to mean, "Let us leave all teaching and every practice for which Christ is not responsible." In this sense Back to Christ would include going back to the Apostles. It would be recognized, of course, that in personal character and dignity there is an infinite distance between Him and His Apostles. They are our fellow-servants and fellow-worshippers of Jesus Christ our Lord. Their authority is not their own; it is His. Hence going back to what they taught and commanded in His name is going back to Christ.

We see then that there is really no choice between reducing Christianity to that condition in which the natural world once was, without form and void, and accepting the authority and instruction of the Apostles as set forth in the New Testament. Our Lord has Himself so committed Himself to the Apostles that you cannot have Him and reject them. Christ, as we saw, always anticipated that the knowledge of Himself would reach mankind through the Apostles. He trained them and endowed them to communicate His will, and if we treat the teachings of these men as of comparatively little importance we ignore the guiding and will of Christ whom we profess to be anxious to go right back to.

But take the authority of the Apostles as we have seen it exhibited and enforced in the New Testament, and how complete a Guide-book we

possess; enabling us all to attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. By the Spirit's aid we have a four-fold record of what Christ did and said and suffered for us. But we note in these Gospels that there were some things Christ could not teach outside the circle of His Apostles, and that even by them some aspects of His teaching were not understood and appreciated.

The Resurrection and Ascension take place. The Spirit is given and the things concerning the Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ are more and more unfolded. The Apostles teach them all things Christ had taught them. The Faith is once for all delivered, and now is embodied in the writings of the Apostles and Prophets preserved for us in the New Testament. There we may learn the Will of Christ concerning Salvation, and the Life in Him and the organization of that Church which he loved and for which he gave Himself. No difference is made between the authority of Christ's teaching and that of His apostles. It is all His teaching. Our obedience to it is not compelled. But our love and reverence for Him is expected to lead us to cheerful continuance in obedience to it all; and we are responsible for obedience, not to the Apostles, but to Him who sent them, the One Lord, their Lord and ours.