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THE OFFICE OF BISHOP UNDER APOSTLES,

AND THE OFFICE OF BISHOP
WITHOUT APOSTLES

A SERMON
BY REV. HENRY DALTON, M. A.

THE OFFICE OF BISHOP UNDER APOSTLES, AND THE OFFICE OF BISHOP WITHOUT APOSTLES.

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There is one feature characterising the work of God in these days well worthy of our notice; one eminently tending to point out its Divine origin, or at least to confirm the faith of those who receive and acknowledge it to be the work of God. What I allude to is this: the immediate and prominent object of this work is, doubtless, to recur to former things; to restore ordinances and channels of blessing which have been either lost or curtailed; yet, with this, there has been a distinct and constant recognition of the things which exist: a desire to “strengthen the things that remain and are ready to die:” and not only so, but even an appreciation of existing relationships, such as their most ardent admirers and most able defenders have not possessed, nor been able to attain to.

The works of God are characterised by the edification, confirmation, and support afforded to all that is good; whilst those of man are marked by destructiveness and separation. What God works in the Church is for unity; what man does tends to division.

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PETER SGOTZAI . AM KIRCHBERG 24 . 64743 BEEFELDEN

The essence of sectarianism is the exaggeration of some one point, to the exclusion or injury of others; and this exaggeration of a truth itself becomes a heresy.

When we cast our eyes over Christendom we see an innumerable number of sections, contending each for some one point; it may be, some one truth; to the almost entire exclusion of others: and each section regards the rest, if not as enemies, at least as rivals. Romanists, and Protestants, and Greeks, Episcopalians and Presbyterians, High Church and Low Church, and innumerable sects, each contend for and exaggerate some truth; which truth, being exaggerated, becomes an error: and, consequently, they are incapable of being witnesses for the whole truth of God.

Now this feature in God's work to which I allude - the recognition and appreciation of things that are - is peculiarly and strikingly exhibited in regard to that subject on which I am desirous to address you a few observations, viz. Episcopacy, or the office of Bishop. And in regard to this I believe I shall be speaking the mind of those amongst us who have given most attention to the subject, in saying that the work of God has not only enhanced the office and position of Bishops, even as at present existing, but has led to such an

appreciation of the real character and nature of that office as they never possessed before; and enables them (whilst believing in the restoration of Apostles) to maintain the truth of Episcopacy, as none others can.

The consideration of this subject, therefore, may not be altogether unprofitable; and, in order to bring it more clearly and practically before you, I propose considering these three points:—

1. What were the origin and nature of the office of Bishop, as instituted by, and exercised under, Apostles?
2. What were the condition and character of that same office, when Apostles ceased?
3. What has been the development of that office under a restored Apostleship?

1st. In regard to the first point, "The origin and nature of the office of Bishop, as instituted by, and exercised under Apostles;" it must be remembered that we have very little detail given us in Holy Writ on these points. Yet that little, with the traditional testimony of the age, contemporaneous with, or immediately succeeding Apostles, is sufficient to give us a clear understanding of the subject.

And first, then, we notice that to the Apostles, holding their office immediately and directly from Christ, were committed the rule and government, order and ministry, of Christ's Church. Jesus, the ascended Lord, is the Diaconos, the Episkopos, the Apostolos: and the diakonia, episkope and apostole, which are in Him, He gave to His Apostles, as those sent immediately and directly from Him, to exercise and distribute in and for the Church. To them it belonged, as under and for Christ, to exercise and carry out this trust, as they might find occasion and need, and according to the wisdom given them.

Now the first step we find them taking in this matter (after they had received the Holy Ghost on the Day of Pentecost) was to constitute the office and order of Deacons. They directed the multitude, or congregation of [02] believers at Jerusalem, to choose out seven men for that office, "whom, say they, we may appoint (institute, establish, *katastesomen - katasth,somen*) to this business."¹ Accordingly seven were chosen, and were set in their place by the Apostles, with prayer and laying on of hands.

Such was the origin of the office of Deacon. On it I need not now enlarge. They, the Apostles, having the

¹ Acts 6:3.

ministry, both as regards the temporal and spiritual things of the Church, committed to them by Christ, appointed and set ministers (deacons) to carry out this part, viz. the administration of the temporal things to the Church,

But further: they, the Apostles, as elders, *presbuteroi - presbuteroi* had the oversight of the Church universal committed to them. This charge they could not personally fulfil; therefore, as congregations were gathered and churches arose in various parts, they appointed and ordained elders, *presbuterous - presbuterouj* (in every church (Acts XIV.)). These elders were authorised and empowered by ordination (after having been called by prophecy) to undertake the oversight, *episkope - evpiskoph.* of the particular church or congregation where they were set. Hence St. Paul (Acts, xx.) says to the elders of Ephesus (*presbuterous - presbuterouj*), "Take heed to yourselves, and to the flock over which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers (*episkopous - evpisko,pouj*), to feed the flock of God." And St. Peter says (1 Pet. V.), "The elders who are amongst you I, who am a fellow-elder, exhort; Feed the flock of God, taking the oversight thereof (*episkopountes - evpiskopou/ntej*)."

Thus, then, we have another step or stage brought out in the development of that charge given

to the Apostles: a further expansion or distribution of that which was contained in the apostleship (apostole - avpostolh). Apostles, as deacons of Him who is The Deacon (Diakonos - dia,konoj()), Christ, appointed deacons. Apostles, as the elders, priests, presbyters (presbuteroi - presbu,teroi), appointed presbyters or priests. These presbyters were (episkopoi - evpisko,poi) overseers. They had, as I have said, the oversight of the flocks over which they were set; and they received the gift of the Holy Ghost for that ministry, by the laying on of the hands of the Apostles.

To those acquainted with the Greek Testament it is almost superfluous for me to remark, that the terms episkopoi and presbiteroi, overseers and elders, or presbyters, are interchangeably applied to the same persons. Thus, in 1Tim. iii. he who is called episkopos, overseer, translated bishop in our English version, is in Tit.1:5-7, shown to be a presbyter. The English reader may, perhaps, be surprised to learn that the word translated bishop, meaning literally overseer, has nothing officially in common with what we now term "bishop", but was intended to express that oversight which the elder or presbyter should exercise over the flock. In a word, the elders or presbyters were the overseers, episkopoi, over the flock and congregation. And this appointment and ordination of elders, or (episkopes - episkophç), was the next step in

the development of the ministry (episkope - evpiskoph.) entrusted to the Apostles.

But when we proceed further in the history of the actings of the Apostles, we find that not only did they appoint and institute first deacons, and then elders who, as episkopoi, had the oversight of the particular flock or church where they were set, but likewise that they appointed one (doubtless taken from amongst the presbyters), who should have the rule and oversight, not only of the flock, but also of the deacons and presbyters themselves. Of this fact Timothy and Titus afford us the first and most prominent exhibition. It matters not, as regards the point in hand, whether they were set respectively over the Churches in Ephesus and Crete, with a permanent or with a merely temporary, and, of course, delegated authority. The fact is, on either hypothesis, equally demonstrated, viz. That they were set over the presbyters and deacons, as well as over the flock. They were authorised by the Apostles to ordain presbyters in every city and church. They had the entire rule and government of the Church or congregation where they were. To them it belonged to rebuke and reject even elders or presbyters, to guard the doctrine of the Apostles, and enforce obedience; to set in order the worship; in a word, to rule over the several churches.

Adopting the usual chronology, it would appear that the Second Epistle to Timothy, and that to Titus, were written in the last year of the Apostle Paul's life, and, therefore, give us plainly to see that there was an order, or rank established and confirmed by Apostles, giving to one of the presbyters the rule and headship (under apostles) over the rest, both presbyters and deacons, within their specific charge. It is obvious from the words of St. Paul, and likewise from those of St. Peter, that the Apostles - in view of their own departure, in view of the evil days fast coming on, in view of the fact that all Asia had turned away - gave such authority and direction to those who were set at the head of the presbyters, deacons, and people, as might enable them not only during the lifetime of the Apostles, but afterwards, to defend and guard each their separate charge, waiting for the coming of the Lord; enjoining upon them that what they had thus learned they should commit to others - a charge, however, which is in no way whatever implied that they (Bishops) should or could transmit their own order or office to others.

About thirty years after this, the only surviving Apostle writes certain Epistles to certain Churches in Asia, in which he speaks to one, and only to one, whom he styles the Angel of the Church. In each case respectively the Angel of the Church is addressed as

being responsible for the condition, good or bad, of the respective Church; and is praised, and rebuked, and warned accordingly. Such an one is, and must be, head of the Church so named [03].

And thus the last act of Apostles establishes the fact, that at the head of each respective Church (and one of those Churches - Ephesus - was the very one whose elders were before spoken to by another Apostle; the very one over whose elders and deacons one had been placed, temporarily if you will, but still had been placed), over each such respective Church, with elders and deacons, one was placed who ruled the Church, and its elders and deacons, for and under Apostles; and he was the Angel or Bishop; the overseer of the overseers of the flock, the elders.

I need not say to those conversant with such matters, that the concurrent voice of antiquity assigns the place of headship and rule of a particular Church to the one styled the Angel of the Church, in later times called a Bishop; for, as Hooker remarks, "things are ancients than names;" and there is little doubt that the office and standing of the one who was set over presbyters and deacons was established before the name of bishop or overseer was restricted in its application to that office. All presbyters are overseers, or bishops; but this title was finally limited and

applied only to one set over the other presbyters; just as the name of apostle, at first applied to different offices, was eventually limited to those to whom it had been originally given. The words of St. Clement, contemporary with St. Paul, and the words of St. Ignatius, said to have been consecrated by St. Peter, about thirty-six years after our Lord's crucifixion, and set over the Church at Antioch, not to mention many others, are decisive on this point. The latter says: "Let all men reverence the Deacons as Jesus Christ, the Bishop as him who is the Son of God, the Presbyters as the Sanhedrin² of God and college of the Apostles: without these there is no Church". And again: "See that ye follow, all of you, your bishop as Jesus Christ follows the Father. Follow your presbyters as apostles. Let nothing be done without the bishop in matters pertaining to the Church." – "Where the bishop is there let the people be, as where Jesus Christ is there is the Catholic Church." And again: "My soul be surety for those that submit to their bishop, with their presbyters and deacons." I might give innumerable passages to the same effect.

Hence, then, we arrive at this obvious conclusion, that as at first the Apostles set and appointed

² Sanhedrin [hebr. Form of Synedrion] the council of the Jews = Synedrium [gr.-lat.].

deacons who were chosen by the people, and as they afterwards appointed presbyters, elders, overseers, priests, who are interchangeably called presbuteroi and episcopoi, so did they finally appoint one of them in each particular Church or congregation to be the head over the other presbyters and deacons, as well as over the flock, who, under the title of Angel of the Church, was recognised and established as the ruler, responsible in doctrine and discipline within the border and limits of that church. These were, to use the words of Hooker, "bishops with restraint", as apostles were bishops or overseers without restraint, being elders or episcopoi of the Universal Church.

Those conversant with ecclesiastical history know that this is the almost universal tradition and testimony of antiquity; thus tracing back the origin and institution of Bishop (so called, but more correctly, Angel) to the direct appointment of Apostles.

Of course we are all aware that learned men at different times, amongst whom is Jerome, endeavour in after times to show that the appointment of Bishops was an afterthought; rendered necessary by the condition of division into which the Churches had fallen; and assigning for its first establishment no earlier date than the year A.D. 140; but the argument we ha-

we have briefly and imperfectly sketched is sufficient to refute this anti-episcopalian theory.³

I conclude this part of our subject by saying, that to every honest-minded person reading the Scriptures in faith of its being the revelation of the mind and will of God, it can scarcely but be evident that Apostles sent directly from Christ did, in the exercise of their commission, appoint and establish the office of Angel or Bishop. And I may here state what is well known to every ecclesiastical student, that many amongst those who denied an absolutely divine authority for that office willingly conceded that the office of Bishop was not opposed to, but consonant with Scripture. Melancthon, who drew up the Augsburg Confession, Luther himself, and even Calvin, Bucer, and, more ex-

³ Moreover, it would seem that Jerome's words have been misunderstood. His language at first sight seems to place presbyters on a level with bishops, and even with apostles; but, when more closely considered, his reasoning is plain enough, and really makes for episcopacy instead of against it. He speaks, indeed, of "a decree made over all the world that one presbyter chosen from his brethren should be appointed over the rest, on whom the whole management of the Church should devolve, and by these means the seeds of schism be removed; but the context clearly shows Jerome's meaning. He dates the decree from the time when one said, "I am of Paul, &c.," to the very time of the Apostles themselves; and, therefore, makes it an Apostolical decree and institution, and not one of mutual agreement at a later age. See Hieron. Com, in Tit. cap. i. ; Ep. ad. Evagrium.

traordinary still, John Knox, all admitted this; and some went so far as to deplore that it was the abuses of the office which rendered its rejection necessary [04].

When then Apostles were alive, and up to the time of their departure, the office of Angel or Bishop, as superior ruler in each particular Church, was in existence and operation. Beyond this (except so far as that book which purports to be "The Revelation of Jesus Christ," given to Him by God, sets forth, in prophetic anticipation, in typical and symbolical allusions, the future history of the Church until "the Tabernacle of God shalt be with men"), the New Testament Scripture gives us no further light on the subject of ecclesiastical rule. The curtain drops with Apostles dying out; leaving behind them, in the various Churches they had established, an angel, presbyters and deacons; and at the same time telling them of evil days, "perilous times," coming in; and bidding them to keep the charge, waiting for the Lord, and to commit to faithful men the things they had themselves learned from Apostles.

Before we lift that curtain again to look at the next point or stage in our subject, viz. the condition and character of the office of Angel or Bishop, after

Apostles had ceased, let us make one or two inquiries:—

1st. Did the Apostles appoint those whom they had set as Angels over the particular Churches to succeed them in their place as rulers over the Church Universal?

2nd. Did they ever intimate that the order and constitution which should come in after their own departure, in which there should be Angels (or Bishops), Priests and Deacons, without Apostles, was the more perfect condition to which their own presence and office were only preliminary and preparatory? in other words, that their own presence, was only needed or intended to organise the more perfect and permanent condition?

3rd. Did they ever authorise and direct Bishops (or Angels) to constitute or admit others to that office and rank, as well as to ordain presbyters?

Finally, Did they ever tell them that, in their corporate capacity, they would have the same rule and authority, and be the centre of unity, even as they had been themselves?

Our reply is, There is not a single word in the New Testament which gives an affirmative answer to these questions; and we assert that, however, rightly or wrongly, Angels (Bishops) may have been constrained to take upon them any of these positions, there is no authority for their doing so recorded in Scripture.

II. But this leads us to our next point, viz. to inquire what was the condition and character of the office of Bishop when Apostles ceased?

To enter into anything like a full and satisfactory investigation of this part of our subject would, necessarily, far exceed the limits of this discourse, and neither be fitting the time or place. We can only take a general and superficial sketch.

What are the facts? Apostles departed; and they had instituted, and they had left, as we have stated, Angels, Priests, and Deacons: Angels or Bishops being at the head of each Church or congregation, with the priests and deacons.

Doubtless then, during the apostolic age (under which term we embrace that period when they who had companied with the Apostles or their immediate disciples called “Apostolic Men”, were still alive), dur-

ing that age, and moreover, whilst the Church was exposed to persecution and suffering; doubtless, I say, the savour of the truth, the discipline, and the example given by Apostles, served to preserve a healthful spirit of piety, obedience, and unity. "The Angel" (or Bishop) was regarded, indeed, "as Christ Jesus; the Presbyters as the Apostles." – "Nothing was done without the Bishop." As St. Ignatius teaches, "that only was considered the Sacrament which was consecrated by a Bishop, or by the one delegated by him." In a word, we have good reason to suppose that for some time - but, alas! for no long time - this continued, in some measure at least, as the Apostles had left them. Did they continue so? Did they improve, or did they retrograde? We cannot now, in this imperfect sketch, trace the history of the Church, century by century; or it would be no difficult matter to show how, from age to age, from century to century, we might almost say from year to year, the way of God was more and more departed from. How unity was broken; how heresy and schism entered, and often prevailed; what attempts were made, partly successful, partly unsuccessful, to stop or check the fearful downward tide of evil. We might, with Chillingworth, cite Council against Council, Pope against Pope, Bishop against Bishop, wars undertaken and blood shed in the contention for Christian truth; so that the history of the Church is little else than one continued

struggle; not a struggle against the powers of darkness and of evil; not a struggle against the world, the flesh, and the devil; but one continued struggle carried on in the very bosom of the family - the struggle of "a house divided against itself."

Doubtless, when Apostles ceased to rule over Bishops; when every Bishop had an independent jurisdiction, the only thing they (Bishops) could do was to endeavour in their corporate capacity, to try and meet the evils that arose [05].⁴

Therefore, when such heresies came in as called in question the Divinity, the Personality, the twofold Nature of Christ, the Personality of the Holy Ghost, and such-like, Bishops rightly endeavoured, in the only way left to them, viz. by Councils, to try and meet these errors. With what success, in what way, and under what restriction they assembled; how the Councils were conducted, and their results; these are matters patent to all; and must be admitted to have been but miserable substitutes for the powers and rule of Apostles. And yet, in accordance with the principle characterising the present work of God, to which I have already referred, how gratefully are we taught

⁴ They had only improperly a corporate capacity. They were not constituted a corporate body, college or corporation.

to accept, and how thankfully do we acknowledge, the good deeds thus done; and the inestimable blessings handed down to us by those who contended for the faith even to persecution and death; and have left us, in the Creeds of the Church, “the form of sound words.”

But was this the way, the perfect way of God? Was this the condition which the Church was led to hope for and expect by the words of her departing Lord: “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world?” Was this state of things the development, the true, legitimate, and purposed development, of the promise of the Comforter, who should lead her into all truth? I trow not!

Truly the evil condition into which the Church came witnessed to her departure from God; whilst the preservation of so much truth and faith witnessed that God had never forsaken her.

We shall not now go back upon the history of past ages: but suffer me to point out to you one or two features in the existing state of things which throw us back on the past, and show, beyond all contradiction, that the condition of the Episcopate under Apostles, and the condition of the Episcopate without Apostles, were totally unlike.

The first point we may notice is the absence of, and yet the incessant desire for, and witness for the need of, Headship, as a centre of unity. What was there to bind the Angels (or Bishops) of the Church together, when each Bishop had an independent jurisdiction? The present state of Christendom is itself the witness and the answer: there were no means of doing so.

Looking at Christendom as a whole, we see the Episcopate for the most part occupying two distinct positions: one part headed up in a supposed Successor of an Apostle, called “the Vicar of Christ;” the other portion subordinate and subjected to, controlled, alas! too often tyrannised over, by the temporal and civil ruler.

Now the instinct which led to the gradual rise and establishment of the Popedom, however misdirected and misused, was a true and legitimate instinct: for it was only the conscious need that there should be some Head which, as a centre, could bind and keep together independent Bishops. And more than this, it was the conscious instinct that Apostles are the ordinance appointed by God to effect this - the link which unites all other ministers of particular Churches unto Christ. Therefore a Bishop, supposed to occupy the seat which an Apostle filled who had a

primacy amongst Apostles, was raised to headship over all Bishops. But what a view does it give of the condition into which the Church had fallen when, instead of being united unto and kept in union with Christ, by a ministry immediately and directly holding from Him, one Bishop chosen by man was put in the place of, and supposed to succeed to, the rule Apostles alone exercised; and when to that one Bishop is given the title of "Vicar of Christ," - a name expressive not of the Church's oneness with Christ, but of separation from Him. Vicar means a substitute; and the Lie of Popery is, that there is one on the earth who takes the place of, and for, Christ. The Lie, I say, of Popery is, that there is one who, instead of Christ, as a locum tenens, occupies His place; the spiritual foreshadower of Antichrist.

But there must be Headship; and before the evil contrivance of a Pope, and likewise when men sought in after times to break away from its galling and guilty oppression, the Church sought for and accepted the rule of protectors, and the smiles of emperors and kings. What that rule, protection, and smile have cost; with what sacrifices the favour of kings and princes has been purchased; let the Church, from the time of Constantine, bear witness. Let the Church of the West, seeking to unite temporal sovereignty and spiritual headship in one person, bear witness. Let

the Church of the East, ruled by one styled - isos apostolos-, bear witness. Let the Church of Henry, Edward, and Elizabeth, bear witness. Let the Church, silenced in her Convocation; declared by her law courts to have no altar; ruled as to her liturgy by acts of the legislature; her bishops subject to penalties if they reject the unorthodox, and themselves appointed by the civil ruler; the Church herself bound hand and foot in all her spiritual functions; let these bear witness that it is an evil and a bitter thing to depart from the ways of the Living God.

And this leads us to notice one other sad evidence of the condition of the Episcopate without Apostles; the necessary condition. It becomes earthly. It is content to rank as of, and is willingly admitted amongst, the institutions of society. The State appoints the Bishop, and assigns him a territorial jurisdiction. The Priest, without consent of the flock, and often in opposition to the intention, wishes, and doctrine of the Bishop, is assigned territorial district or parish. Ecclesiastical names are names of earthly honour and rank; and the Church sits down and is acknowledged as an essential part of civilised organisation! [06] .

Was this the condition of the Church ruled over by Angels, under Apostles? And yet men will quote to

us, with inconceivable simplicity or unknown ignorance, we know not which, the words of St. Clement and St. Ignatius already I referred to, as though there were anything in common between the bishop of a diocese, sometimes comprising more than two counties, and the angel, who, with his elders and deacons, presided over each flock and its dependencies. The one, having the care and cure of souls, ruling and feeding the flock as a shepherd; the other, little more than the administrator of rules and regulations for the most part imposed by civil authority. And yet to hear men speak, as they are wont, one would think that Bishops chosen and appointed by the State, placed over a large territory, having no personal care or cure of souls, imposed without their consent over priests and people, bound and fettered, and having their jurisdiction defined by acts of the temporal legislature; - one would think that they, and the Angels of a particular Church, placed by and acting under Apostles, were one and the same; or, at least, that the words of St. Ignatius and others were equally applicable to both. If it be so - if the Episcopate be now holding the same place, and having the same functions as formerly under Apostles - why, we would fain ask, does it not carry out and follow the directions and rules given for its exercise? Why does it not put forth the powers entrusted to it by Apostles? But where is the trying of spirits? the ruling over and fighting

against evil spirits? Where the carrying out the rules given for the due exercise of prophesying, and other spiritual gifts? Where the bringing up of tithes and offerings by deacons? Where is pastorship? where the unbinding of burdened and weary hearts? the rendering, of every burden by voluntary confession? Where the recovery of the sick through anointing of oil and prayer by the elders? Where the deacons, administering the temporal things? Does the Bishop, as head of the flock, see these things carried out, and rule in these things? I trow not. The separate flocks and congregations are only headed up by Presbyters; and shall we be told that the obligatory confession imposed by Rome; or the occasional visits of the clergymen; or the church shut and silent from Sunday to Sunday, Lord's day after Lord's day, without Eucharist, and only occasional Communion; - are we to be told that these are the legitimate expression and expansion of the charge given by Apostles to Angels? Say we these things in the spirit of accusation or boasting? God forbid! Can we forget or ignore how God has graciously dealt with and blessed us, even in Babylon? Are we unmindful of what we have received and learnt from our Hookers, our Kens, our Beveridges, our Jeremy Taylors, our Bulls, our Horsleys, Bramhalls, Jewels, and Tillotsons, Butlers, Stillingfleets, and a host of others? God forbid!

But it is too late in the day to trifle. And when men say they have Bishops, “successors of Apostles;” or when they say they have Bishops, such as Apostles appointed, and therefore want nothing more; our answer is, that even if it were so, this would be no argument against the restoration of Apostles, seeing they (Bishops) were appointed by, and served under Apostles. The presence of Timothy or Titus did not exclude the presence of Paul. But we deny the fact; and assert that those who now hold the place of, and are called Bishops, do not occupy the same place or the same office which Apostles appointed; we assert that there are no Bishops or Angels in the existing Churches such as were originally constituted. Nay, not only so; we assert there can be no Angels or Bishops, in their full office, except under Apostles: as there can be no presbyters in their true place except under bishops; nor deacons, except under presbyters and bishops. The present condition of Christendom is the witness that the Episcopate under Apostles, and the Episcopate without Apostles, are totally unlike.

III. And now we gladly turn to think what God has taught us, and brought out, respecting the place and office of Angel or Bishop. The first - or almost the first - development of this work was to teach us what was the place of the Angel of a particular Church. This was done by the prophetic openings of the sym-

bolical and typical parts and services of the Tabernacle; by men being called and set in that office; by the solemn words and charges spoken to them; by the reference to the epistles to the seven angels of the seven churches; and, practically and gradually, by the acts and works those set in this office were called on daily to fulfil.

Then it was discerned that the Angel, with his elders, is, in the particular Church, a representative of Jesus the Lord, the Angel of the Covenant; who, with His Apostles, elders of the Universal, is the Head of the Church. Then was it seen that to him (the Angel) are committed the rule, government, and ordering of all things, in the border of his Church, under Apostles; that to him, and to him alone, it pertains to be the guardian of spiritual gifts and spiritual persons; that by elders (priests) he carries out his rule, in word and doctrine, in pastorship and oversight; whilst through deacons he ministers and rules in outward and temporal things. In a word, that he rules supreme in the border of his Church under Apostles; by whom, and through whom, he receives his authority, and is upheld in his place; as they receive theirs, direct from Christ. Then we were taught the meaning of the word that “the Son of Man had in His right hand seven stars;” and the meaning also of the words, “I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of

the seven golden candlesticks one like unto the Son of Man;” for then we learnt the full meaning of the words, that “the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven candlesticks are the seven churches.”

There is another part, and that is a chief and a prominent part, of the office and duty of the Angel or Bishop of the particular Church under Apostles, to which I will now only refer; being that which has been brought out and developed by the work of God; and which pre-eminently distinguishes the office of Angel under Apostles from the office and charge of Bishops without Apostles [07].

To the Angel of the particular Church it be longs to offer and present unto GOD INTERCESSION. To Elders, priests of different borders, whether prophets, evangelists, or pastors, it belongs to offer prayer, supplications, and praises; but to the Angel (or to one occupying his place) alone, in each Church, it belongs to offer the Intercession. Respecting the doctrine and truth which we have learnt in regard to Intercession I cannot now enlarge. Suffice it to say, that Intercession, in its full and distinctive meaning, is not merely prayer, or more earnest and frequent prayer. INTERCESSION is the act of one who for, and as the head of, a body, is set to plead, to deprecate, to inter-

vene, to mediate; to offer and present the petitions of those of whom he is the constituted head and representative. Jesus, the Lord, Head of the Church, Angel of the Everlasting Covenant, He only in heaven presents the prayers and supplications and wants of His Body, the Church. And the Angel, or head of each Church, being His representative in that border, gathers up and offers the supplications and prayers of that Church; and presents them in and through Him, by whom, as our great High Priest, who ever liveth to make the Intercession for us, they are presented before God. From the ends of the earth go up, or should go up, “the prayers of all saints;” presented in each Church by the one who is at the head of that Church; and these all, as the smoke of one incense, are at the throne of God in the heavens offered up by Him “who was dead and is alive again, and liveth for evermore.” Therefore he who, in the border of a particular Church represents the actings of the Head of the Universal Church, offers up incense, the symbol of the prayers of the saints; and he, in the Intercession, brings before God the prayer that has been made, the supplications that have been poured out.

How little did we know (how little do men now know!) what Intercession is, before the work of God developed it! Ah me! what an idea does it give of the departure of the Church from the ways of God! Angels

of particular Churches have long ceased to be; and, with that loss, the Intercession, at least in its full meaning and grace, has long ceased to be offered. The prayers which priests, elders, offer are not Intercession; for Intercession is the further act of presenting the prayers that have been made. No wonder such evil things have been wrought in the house of God! Think you that invocation of saints, prayers to the dead, worship of a creature (the most blessed of all creatures), could have protruded themselves into the house of God, if the cloud of incense, the Intercession, had day by day gone up from the Angel's hand? Think you such monuments of spiritual death would everywhere be seen as Churches shut and silent from Sunday to Sunday, without even supplication, or prayer, or the voice of thanksgiving being heard, morning or evening? Think you that Sunday after Sunday there could stand before the face of Heaven an Altar without Sacrifice, a Table without Bread? Oh! could these things, these evil deeds, have been done, had the Angel of each Church known what it was to present daily Intercession and to offer incense unto God?

We speak of the loss of Apostles: but the truth is, it is the loss of Angels, the necessary fruit of the loss of Apostles, that we have to deplore. There are no Angels of Churches; there are no Bishops, or Angels of

Churches, as constituted by Apostles; and, therefore, the worship of God's house has been corrupted, or contracted and misused. The ruling by elders; the shepherding by pastors; the administration by deacons; the voice of prophecy; the anointing of the sick for their recovery: all, all, have been lost! And yet men say, "We are increased with goods, and have need of nothing."

Nevertheless, God would bless, and honour, and help, as He has ever done, the things that are, even though "ready to perish." Those who, by no fault of their own, are Bishops of dioceses, with territorial jurisdiction and earthly rank, and not as they should be, Angels of Churches; not ruling in spiritual things; even them God would honour and bless: and the first thing which was done when the work of the Lord began, was the delivery of a Testimony to the Bishops of the Church, setting forth the nature and object of the Work. Their standing, however faulty and deficient it has been proved to be, was recognised and honoured; and they were recognised and addressed as rulers in the Church of God. They were approached with honour, respect, and affection. They were not called on to leave their places, but to stand fast therein, witnessing for the 'truth of God, and fulfilling the duties that came to their hand to do; and at every stage of the work, presbyters, or priests under bishops, have been

recognised, and exhorted and taught to abide in their places, and to give honour and obedience to their bishops, for whom prayer and intercession are offered day by day.

And thus, as I stated at the beginning of this discourse, we have been brought back to things that were; and we have to recognise, and seek to strengthen, the things that are.

From the foregoing rapid and imperfect sketch we gather the following instruction:

FIRST, we see that Angels or Bishops, together with Presbyters (Priests) and Deacons, were set by the Apostles over the respective flocks and congregations; and that they fulfilled their ministry under the guidance and rule of Apostles.

SECONDLY, that with and after the cessation of Apostles, the true character of the Angel's office, as head over priests and deacons of a particular flock, was gradually but effectually lost; and with that loss followed, as a necessary consequence, the loss of intercession, of pastorship, of the exercise of the prophetic and other spiritual gifts: and that the position which Bishops now occupy, having a territorial jurisdiction and administration defined and assigned by

the civil ruler, without the personal and immediate cure of souls, is entirely different from that originally instituted by Apostles; and is the sign, as well as the fruit, of the earthly condition and standing which the Church has assumed [08].

THIRDLY. That the restoration of Apostles was, as a necessary consequence, followed by the restoration of the office and standing of the Angel of the particular Church; and, consequently, by the restoration of intercession, pastorship, prophecy, and other spiritual functions; as, likewise, of deaconship, payment of tithe and many other things, which had fallen into complete or partial desuetude.

It only remains for we to add one or two remarks, by way of practical application.

And first: How shall we thank and praise God for His inestimable mercy and gift to us, who has taught us the place and office of the Angel of the Church! Did the wit of man, or man's device and skill, bring us back to "what the Spirit saith unto the Churches," headed up, each one, in its Angel? Surely we knew as little as any of our brethren what the Angel is, or what Intercession is: and now, after thirty years' experience, have we found it to be a delusion? You who have been gathered under Angels, have you found it

to be a delusion? you who have found the shelter, the protection, the defence, the pastorship, the ministrations, only to be found under Angels, what is your testimony? what is your witness? What but this? "When the Lord turned our captivity we were like men that dream! Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing."

Have you found the waiting upon God morning by morning, and evening by evening, a burdensome task? Are you not ready to say "Take away this; take away the shelter and rule of Angels; take away the care and oversight of our pastors; take away from us the daily waiting at the altar; take away from us our morning and evening sacrifice; take away from us the offering up of incense and the voice of intercession: in a word, tell us it is all delusion; and then tell us - would you not say? - tell us where we shall go? Shall we go to her who would make us give worship to a creature, pray to the dead, and bid us hope for escape by passing through purgatory? Shall we go to her whose churches are silent; whose altars are bare; who, from week to week, gives no bread; who refuses to pray for the dead; whose children, by hundreds and thousands, and tens of thousands, are without pasture, or fold, or shelter; who "has none to guide her of all the sons she has brought up," and finds her best guide, not in the Word of the Living God, speak-

ing through men, but in the writings of past ages? Oh, no! Your witness is that you have found that rule, and shelter, and teaching, and nurture; daily, weekly, hourly blessing; that unbinding of the weary heart; that lifting up of spirit; that love for the Body of Christ; that longing and waiting for His appearing; which nowhere else you had found; which nowhere else you can find; which nowhere else is given; which nowhere else is even professed to be given.

Your witness is, "God hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad." And you, my brethren, who are called to go forth among men and preached the Gospel of the kingdom, tell men what God has done. Tell them that He has built again His Altar which was broken down. Tell them that once more not only supplication and prayer are made, but that once more Intercession - Intercession at the Altar, Intercession by the one appointed thereto by God - Intercession once more is heard on earth, before the dark and dreary night closes in a long, sad day. Tell them that the judgement that begins at the house of God is even at the doors. Tell them the night is far spent, and the day is at hand. Tell them that even now the Angel's intercession holds back the winds until the servants of God are sealed. Tell them, in a word, that God has arisen "to avenge His own elect;" and therefore He has given them to "cry unto Him day and night."

Yes: the loss of the Apostleship involved the loss of the office of Angel; the loss of the rule of Elders; the loss of the tender care and watch of Pastors, The voice of prophecy, the voice of the Comforter, the Paraclete, soon became silenced when there were no Angels of Churches to guide, and use, and direct it. Intercession ceased, when he, whose it is in the particular Church to offer it, ceased: and became a mere name for more earnest and frequent prayer. Confession, the unburdening of a burdened conscience, ceased, or became obligatory and enforced. In a word, there was none to rule as Elders in the Church Universal in the name of Christ: there was none to head up a particular Church in the name of Christ; and evil came in and abounds. The wonder of wonders is that any grace, or faith, or hope, has been preserved! But God changeth not. Jesus is the Head of His Body. In Him all fullness dwells. Therefore He has been with, and He has kept and preserved that Body, weak and feeble, and denuded though it is, until this day; and now He would bless and help it by the same ordinances and means given at the first. Oh, why do not men rejoice even to think it may be so? Why do they not even hope that it is so? Why will they use every argument, every excuse, every shift and device, to show that it is not so; and even that it cannot be so? Why will they believe anything, hold to anything, cling to anything, whether in the shape of Roman corruption,

or Anglican negations, or Presbyterian nudities - anything, sooner than believe that God has arisen, or can or will arise, to bring back His own way, His own order, His own mode of blessing? Nevertheless, the prayers of the Body, the cry of the Body, that has gone up from age to age, and from the ends of the earth, for help and deliverance, shall be heard, are heard, and shall be answered. And now, when once again the Angel lifts up the Voice of Intercession, and the Cloud of Incense goes up to the Altar of God, it is the assured sign that God has arisen to bless, and will bless, that the day is at hand; that the time has come - THE TIME OF DELIVERANCE.

Wherefore, my beloved brethren, "Be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as ye know that your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord."

AMEN.