

OFFICE
IN THE EARLY CHURCH;
GIFT,
AND ITS HEAVENLY ORDINATION;
PRIESTHOOD,
THE PRIVILEGE OF ALL CHRISTIANS.

By
A. J. POLLOCK.

(Author of "Things which must shortly
come to Pass." "The Tabernacle's
Typical Teaching," etc., etc.)



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OFFICE, GIFT AND PRIESTHOOD.

A RIGHT understanding of our subject and the carrying of it out in practical detail would go far in removing the confusion and consequent weakness existing in Christendom to-day. Alas! there is so little practical answering to God's mind that very much of God's Word remains a dead letter. We may well bear in mind the words of the prophet, Samuel, "To *obey* is better than sacrifice, and to *hearken* than the fat of rams." (1 Sam. xv. 22). May we all be found obedient and hearkeners.

It may help if we put the three heads of our subject in parallel columns:—

Office.

There were two local offices in the early Church, *viz*: that of bishops and deacons.

Bishops and deacons were strictly local to the assembly in which they were appointed.

Ordination of the bishops was by the apostles or their delegates; of the deacons by the apostles, or their delegates, or by the Assembly as guided of the Holy Ghost, and confirmed by the apostles.

Gift.

Ephesians iv. enumerates five gifts, *viz*: apostles and prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers.

Gift is for the whole Church, in contrast to office of bishop and deacon, which is local.

Ordination only by the ascended Lord, the great Head of the Church, His body.

Priesthood.

The privilege of all believers, not of an exclusive class. The highest of all privileges. Just as the Aaronic priesthood was by birth, so all who are sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus are priests in this dispensation.

We can only treat this vast subject in scant detail within the compass of a small pamphlet, but we trust that interest will be stimulated, and that the reader will search into these things for himself.

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OFFICE.

There were two local offices in the early church, *viz*: those of bishops and deacons. The main Scriptures giving instructions as to these—(1 Tim. iii. 1-13; Titus i. 5-9; 1 Peter v. 1-4)—should be carefully read.

Bishops.

The Greek word for bishop is *episkopos* = *epi*, on; *skopos*, looking, hence the word indicates one who is looking on, one who watches with interest and desire to help. On this beautifully simple and scriptural word has been reared a great pretentious state organization—EPISCOPACY—a system far removed from the teaching of Scripture as to its Church order, and government.

No less an authority than Dean Alford states that the bishops of the New Testament are totally different from the present-day bishops, and suggests that the New Testament bishops should be called *overseers* to prevent confusion. We propose to adopt his suggestion in this pamphlet.

The overseers of the Bible are one thing; the bishops of the present day with mitre, cope, chasuble, alb, pastoral staff, often ornamented with precious stones, with their sacerdotal jurisdiction, their stately palaces, their seat in the House of Lords, quite another thing. All their worldly

pomp and ritual is far removed from the simplicity and unworldliness of the Scriptures. Indeed, the whole system is a copy of Judaism and Paganism in many of its features. We read in Scripture of overseers, elders, deacons, a holy priesthood, but where do we get pope, cardinal, archbishop, archdeacons, canon, Reverend? The word reverend is only applied to God in the Scriptures, and yet man dares to adopt it as a title of his own.

The Overseer's Office was Local.

We read in Acts xiv. 23: "They ordained them elders in every church"; in Titus 1 5: "Thou shouldest ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee," whilst the apostle Paul, writing to the Philippian assembly, says; "To all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons." (Phil. i. 1).

We gather from these Scriptures that the office was local, that is an overseer in Ephesus would not be an overseer in Corinth. Further, there were a number of overseers in each assembly, their number probably regulated by the size of the assembly. The idea of jurisdiction over a diocese is not found in Scripture. Instead of one bishop over many clergy, there were several overseers in one assembly.

Presbyterianism,* which arranges for several elders to each church has a more scriptural idea than Episcopacy, which appoints a bishop over hundreds of clergy and covering in his jurisdiction a large territory. But the elders in Presbyterianism are under the minister, who is looked

* As the word Episcopacy is derived from the Greek word *Episcopos* (an overseer), so the word Presbyterianism is derived from the Greek word, *Presbuteros* (an elder, an aged man).

upon as a presiding elder, of which there is no trace in Scripture.

The Overseer's Office Carried No Stipend.

There is no instruction in Scripture for the payment of overseers, but there is a distinct intimation otherwise. The Apostle Peter in addressing the elders wrote: "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the *oversight* thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; NOT FOR FILTHY LUCRE [*base gain N. T.*], but of a ready mind."

It is as if Scripture, foreseeing the pretention of those who would debase the blessed simple office of an overseer into that of a worldly sacerdotal dignitary in a state Church with the title of "My Lord Bishop," adds, "Neither as being lord's over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock." (1 Peter v. 2, 3).

The Greek word for heritage in this text just quoted is *klēros*, from which the English word, clergy, is derived. The *Bible* clergy consisted of ALL Christians, and the laity (Greek, *laos*, the people) were the heathen outside the Christian circle. The clergy have filched a word which is common to all God's people, claiming it as the description of a class, unauthorized by Scripture, and giving the rest of God's people a title, laity, which was applied to the heathen world outside.

Overseers and Elders.

Scripture clearly indicates that the overseer (*episkopos*) was an elder (*presbuteros*), but it did not follow that every elder was an overseer. If the elder lacked the qualifications laid down in Scripture as making an overseer he would clearly not be appointed.

The following Scriptures make it clear, however, that in a general way an elder brother would be an overseer. We read in Acts xx. 17 that Paul called for the *elders* of the Assembly at Ephesus to see him at Miletus. Addressing them he said, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you *overseers*" (verse 28). Again Paul instructed Titus to "ordain *elders* in every city," and giving the qualifications, he goes on to say, "For a *bishop* must be blameless" (Titus i. 7). Again the Apostle Peter addressing the *elders* wrote, "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the *oversight* thereof." (1 Peter v. 2).

Finally Paul instructs that the appointment of overseership must not be given to "a novice" (1 Tim. iii. 6), that is not to one who had newly come to the faith.

It is well to bow to the wisdom of God's Word. Soul-history is not jumped into in a day and it is well for youth to have the restraining yet encouraging influence of age, maturity, experience. It is God's order and should be respected.

In Acts xv. when a knotty point arose, no less a person than Paul with Barnabas and others went to Jerusalem to consult the apostles *and elders*. Surely there is a lesson for us all as to God's ordering.

The Appointment of Overseers.

The appointment of overseers lay with the apostles as guided of the Holy Ghost. The apostles and prophets formed the foundation of the Church. The whole thing was so new that God not only raised up apostles and

prophets, but locally He raised up grave godly elder men to take the oversight of the local Churches. The fitness of this is very manifest.

It is remarkable how little is said of the actual appointment of overseers, though we find them spoken of repeatedly and associated with the apostles in matters of guidance. We read of Paul and Barnabas (as associated with Paul), "When they had ordained them elders in every church, etc.," (Acts xiv. 23), thus giving us the information that the appointment was apostolic.

Further, we have the case of Paul authorizing Titus to "ordain elders in every city," giving as his authority, "as I had appointed thee" (Titus i. 5). It is evident that the apostle could not have given this authorization if the appointment was not lodged in the apostles. But be it carefully noted in the case of Titus this was only a *temporary commission*, limited to the assemblies in the island of Crete. And evidently from 1 Tim. iii. Timothy had the same power conferred upon him as was conferred upon Titus. In short, Timothy and Titus were apostolic delegates in this matter with temporary commissions.

Qualifications of the Overseers.

These are given at length in 1 Tim. iii. and Titus i. Reading down the list it will be seen that self-restraint and moderation should mark them. If they could not govern themselves, they could not guide in the Church of God.

The overseer had to be blameless, "the husband of one wife." In a polygamous country, as obtained in Apostolic times, it was ordained that any who held office in the Church of God should have only one wife. It does not evidently

mean that if a man lost his wife that his re-marriage would render him unfit for office. The Greek we understand is plain, and the rendering in English correct, "the husband of *one* wife."

It is evident that a heathen, converted after he had contracted marriage with a plurality of wives, was eligible for Church membership but not for Church office, though it is just as evident that heathen bachelors converted to God would be instructed that plurality of wives was wrong. But at the beginning things would be borne with and left to the faith of the individual. Doubtless these instructions are of immense value to our missionary brethren in foreign lands.

It is important, too, to see that a man, who could not rule his own house and have his children in subjection, was not fit to guide in the Church of God. There was evidently, in that case, some lack in his character, some weakness, or, it may be, inability to govern himself, that made it evident that he was unable to guide in the Church of God. It is to be feared that this plain instruction is often set aside. We have seen men prominent in overseership, whose households were entirely beyond their control and a scandal in the world. Only disaster can come from a disregard of Scripture.

Further, the overseer had not to be a novice, that is not one newly come to the faith. Such an one might be easily puffed up, become spiritually proud, and pride was the condemnation of the devil. Ability and knowledge in a young man is no substitute for the soul-history of an elder. Knowledge is not wisdom. Scripture tells us that "know-

ledge puffeth up" (1 Cor. viii. 1), that is, the mere acquisition of terms of truth, but that we "increase by the knowledge of God" (Col. i. 10), that is not knowledge about God, but personal heart-knowledge of Him, and this comes so largely as the result of soul-history.

Finally, the overseer must have a good report of them which are without. This speaks volumes, for it is only as a man is just and gracious, upright and benevolent, one who sets forth the character of true Christian profession that he will secure this good report. The qualities, that make an overseer of good repute in the eyes of the world, are qualities that make for peace and good government in the home circle and in the Church of God.

Extra Qualifications of an Overseer.

We read in 1 Tim. v. 17. "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine." That an overseer must have a good knowledge of the word and be able to use it effectively in his overseership is manifest from Titus i. 9, "Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers," but 1 Tim. v. 17 goes further and supposes that some overseers have not only office but gift, and that they set themselves to labour (a strenuous word) in word and doctrine, whilst Acts xx. 28 speaks of them *feeding* the church of God. What the "double honour" and "especially" mean is difficult to say. The next verse, "For the Scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward" points to their receiving carnal things as a

recognition of their ministering spiritual things. But it certainly does not indicate a fixed stipend, but rather loving, grateful, acknowledgement of benefits received spiritually in the ministering of things carnal.

Nor had an accusation to be received against an elder except in the presence of two or three witnesses.

The Office of Overseer not Perpetuated.

The silence of Scripture is to be carefully noted. If the office of overseer was to be perpetuated, surely the inspired Word of God could not overlook explicit instructions in such an important matter. We have seen that the appointment of overseers lay with the apostles, and that in the case of Titus and Timothy as deputies they held but a temporary commission for a special purpose, which when accomplished, their work as apostolic deputies ceased. It is just as clear that Scripture makes no provision for the perpetuation of the *official* character of the overseership, and for any body of Christians to arrogate to themselves such appointment, whether called bishops or elders, is without Scripture sanction or authority.

To begin with the office of an apostle was not perpetuated. The apostles and prophets formed the *foundation* of the Church of God, "Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone." (Eph. ii. 20). "Apostolic succession" is a figment of the worldly ecclesiastical mind and is as sensible as a builder talking of continuing the foundation from ground floor to roof. The apostles and prophets finished their work when they laid the foundation which is seen in their work in founding Assemblies, and in their contribution to the canon of Scripture. Without the apostles'

writings, especially the Pauline epistles, we should have no clear knowledge of the Church, either as the body of Christ, or as the assembly of God, or as the house of God. If those, then, in whom was vested the appointment of overseers, passed away, evidently the *official* character of overseership also passed away. If the apostles had no successors, evidently the overseers could have none.

The Work of the Overseer is Carried on.

Whilst there are now no *official* overseers, yet it is evident that their work should be carried on. There are no *official* apostles to-day, yet there are men of extra spiritual calibre, whose presence and work are apostolic in character. To mention names would be invidious, but every now and again God raises up special men for special work of great spiritual import.

So *locally* God raises up men to do the work of overseers, who cannot be called overseers in a definite official sense.

The reason for this is worth pondering over. At first the official and the moral went hand-in-hand; in other words the official overseer was sustained in Christian character and spiritual vigour for his work.

But with the decline in the Church the moral lagged behind the official. When this took place the official character was pushed to the front, and, as the moral waned, ritualism asserted itself and took refuge in forms and ceremonies as lifeless and dry-as-dust as possible. What would the Apostle Paul have thought of the photograph of the Bishop of London in full array of extraordinary vestments to be seen any day in Paternoster Row? He would

note how form and ceremony had strangled the lovely character that becomes the overseer in the house of God. A soldier lately returned from the war was present at a ritualistic service. On returning he was asked his experience. First he said the clergy had a route march, thus describing their procession, and then they tried to gaspoison us, referring to the incense. The description was to the point.

God foresaw that the moral would not keep pace with the official and so did not provide for the perpetuation of the official side of things in the Church of God. The official character of things completely dropped.

And further if it had been perpetuated what fragment of the Church would have arrogated to itself the sole right to make appointments. As it is we know how the Church of Rome does this, and how the Establishment looks down on Dissent, when in truth all the appointments are invalid.

But is the work not to be carried on? This is why we believe that whilst very little is said about those who have the power to appoint, very much is said about the qualifications of those to be appointed. God would emphasize the *moral*, and where these qualifications exist, saints will naturally recognise them, and give the brother the place he deserves, and look up to him for guidance and help and be ready to receive the ministry of care and love God has put into his heart. Such a man will not need to seek a place, the place will seek him. Yes, surely the work of overseership is to be carried on, but we insist that God emphasizes the moral side of things, as indeed that is emphasized in every way in the Scriptures.

Deacons.

The Greek word for deacon, *diakonos*, is the ordinary word for a servant, one who does menial work. It comes from the preposition, *dia*, (through), and *konis* (dust), and described a messenger who became dusty through running on his master's errands; or one who slept in the dust and ashes in the compound of the house, ready for any menial service. Around this very humble word, with no definite religious meaning, a ritualistic ecclesiastical idea has grown. This we should dismiss from our minds, and seek to gather the Scriptural meaning.

The word is used in a wide sense, and is employed to describe magistrates and rulers, for we read, "He is the minister [*deacon*] of God to thee for good." (Rom. xiii. 4). Again, Paul and Timothy were made "able ministers [*deacons*] of the new testament." (2 Cor. iii. 6). Again we read, "Is Christ therefore the minister [*deacon*] of sin? God forbid" (Gal. ii. 17).

The context will prove whether the word is used in a general sense as minister or servant, whether secular or spiritual, or in the particular official and local sense we have in 1 Tim. iii. 8-13. It is in this latter sense we use the word.

We get some light as to the appointment of deacons in Acts vi. though the word deacon is not applied to those chosen "to serve tables," yet it is evident they were appointed to serve as deacons. In this case the appointment was not local, but an exception which proved the rule, to meet a special difficulty, viz., the distribution of funds to widows in the assemblies. The

Grecians (that is, Jews born or dwelling in Greece or other pagan lands) murmured against the Hebrews (that is, Jews born or dwelling in Palestine), because of the way in which the administration of funds was carried out, and this appointment of deacons was to meet the case. Though the apostles would not occupy their time with secularities, but would give themselves "continually to prayer and the ministry of the word," yet the assembly chose men with spiritual qualifications, two of them at least in their gift and zeal going beyond mere deacons' work. We refer to "Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost," and Philip, the only man described as an evangelist in the Scriptures. They certainly purchased "to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus." (1 Tim. iii. 13).

We need not say much as to the deacons, for their qualifications were very similar to those of the overseers, so we need not repeat.

But there was one special feature which had to mark them and their wives. There were no instructions given as to the conduct of the wives of the overseers, for their work was on purely spiritual lines, but the deacons, having to do with secularities, such as the administration of funds, it was necessary that their wives, who might help them in their good work, should be women whose character would carry respect. The deacons had not to be double-tongued, saying first one thing to one and another thing to another: their wives had to be "grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things." One can understand what mischief and heart-burnings would result from the careless or insincere use of

the tongue of the deacon or his wife.

We need only add that like the office of the overseer no provision was made for the continuance of that of the deacon, and for the same reason we believe.

One last word. The word, deacon, is often translated minister. There were deacons or ministers at Philippi, always in the plural, but the thought of *a* minister or *the* minister in charge of a church is wholly unscriptural, and is responsible for much of the spiritual babyhood of many believers.

It is strange that in dissent we should have ministers and deacons to designate different offices when in Scripture they describe the same, whilst in the Establishment we have bishops, priests, deacons, a mixing up of terms in ignorance of their true meaning. *All* believers are priests and not a privileged class. This may be admitted, but what is the good of the admission, if it is not practised? The admission without the practice robs the believer of his priesthood just as much as if there were no admission, and is indeed hypocritical.

GIFT.

THERE are three great chapters which speak of gift, viz., Rom. xii., 1 Cor. xii., and Eph. iv. The following remarks in parallel columns may help the reader.

Rom. xii.

God is the great Agent in this chapter. "God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith," (v. 3). The House of God is the sphere including the Assembly. Gift is given to the individual and differs according to the sovereignty of the Giver.

1 Cor. xii.

The Spirit is the great Agent in this chapter. "All these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will," (v. 11). The sphere is the Assembly mainly, though going out to the wider sphere — the House of God.

Eph. iv.

The ascended Lord is the great Agent in this chapter. "When He [Christ] ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men," (v. 8). In Rom. xii. and 1 Cor. xii. gifts are given to the individuals. Here the individuals themselves are the gifts.

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Eph. iv. 1-16.

Here the subject is looked at from the widest possible aspect. (1) From the standpoint of God's eternal purposes in a past eternity. (2) With the whole work of God in and through the whole Church of God in view. (3) In its relation to the world. (4) In prospect of the full completion of God's work and the Church's entire fitness for glory.

In Psalm lxxviii. 18 we read: "Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led captivity captive: Thou hast *received* gifts for men: yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them." Doubtless, this refers to the blessings men generally will come in for, consequent on the atoning triumph and ascension of the blessed Lord, and in particular will be seen in fulfilment in the millennium.

But in Eph. iv. 8, this Scripture is quoted, one word being altered: "Wherefore He saith, when He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and *gave* gifts unto men." When the Holy Spirit quotes Scripture in the New Testament, the quotation is as much Scripture in its New Testament place as in its Old, and any alteration in the quotation the Holy Spirit makes constitutes the alteration Scripture.

Here we find the gifts are *given*, not in reference to Israel but to the Church, but having the blessing of the world in view, for it says, "He gave gifts *unto men*." If we realized this more how it would help us in our Christian relationships. We are not of the world, but for the blessing of the world through Christ. We are not here to set the world right, but to let our light shine for His glory and that He may use us.

In the millennial age, "The nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it [the heavenly city, viz., the Church in relation to the millennial earth]: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into [literally *unto*] it." (Rev. xxi. 24). Of course the Church has no light of her own, it is the light of Christ. It is transmitted light. Alas! how much it is obstructed to-day by carnality and worldly-mindedness and wrong conception that the Christian is here to set the world right, but in that day the medium—the Church—will have no obstructing hindering element, and the light of Christ through the Church will shine forth in all its blessedness and helpfulness.

The gifts were five; apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, these two last bracketed together as their ministrations more or less blend.

What is Gift?

What is gift? The individual here is the gift, but he is a gift in virtue of possessing a gift. What is gift in this latter sense? It is divine ability ministered in sovereign grace by the ascended Lord, whereby He deigns to carry on His work of spiritual blessing in this world. Someone has described it as "the expression of an impression."

In the case of the apostles it must have been a wonderful impression of the whole scheme God had in view, so that, I suppose, the apostles had every gift. The evangelist must have a deep impression of what the gospel is in all its blessedness, a vivid sense of the grace of God, a deep sense of the judgment awaiting the lost, and he gives fervent expression to all this. A teacher must have a deep impression of the truth in all its parts and gives expression to that.

Ordination.

This is distinctly the Lord's prerogative. I remember giving an address in Dublin a few months ago, when a stranger came up to me and said, "What a pity you are not ordained?" I replied, "I am ordained *with the ONLY ordination that counts*," and went on to explain. Let us be clear about this, the ordination is on high, and there only. Let us refuse every other ordination. There may be happy expressions of fellowship in the service of one thus ordained, but the ordination itself is in the Lord's hands alone and is God's sovereign act.

Apostles and Prophets.

These are linked together as forming the foundation of the Church. This proves that the work of these gifts is

completed, and that they are not continued in the Christian Church. The foundation is laid, and then the superstructure finds its place.

The apostles (save Matthias and Paul) were personally chosen by the Lord when upon the earth, and in this way they held a unique place, and none could question their position. Matthias was chosen to succeed Judas by lot, the apostles thus recognizing that the Lord had this choice. Paul was ordained direct from glory without the intervention of man in any shape and sense as he points out in Galatians i.

Heb. iii. 1 draws attention to Christ as "*the* Apostle of our profession" [*confession* N.T.]. By Apostle is meant the One who reveals God, introducing the light and knowledge of God; in short, one who brings God to man, as the Christ, the same blessed Person, as our great High Priest, brings men to God—brings them into His presence as worshippers in the sanctuary.

The apostles chosen by the Lord were men divinely called to carry on the work the Lord began, and were the introducers of the divine system we call Christianity into the world, not as a system belonging to the world, but as drawing men out of the world.

Their work was done when they founded the early Assemblies on the one hand, and by their oral ministry, and in writing the inspired epistles and the Revelation. So Scripture speaks of "the apostles' doctrine and fellowship." (Acts ii. 42).

They had miraculous gifts, for the purpose of giving them credentials in the eyes of those among whom they

testified. But the main thing was not these miraculous gifts but the spiritual deposit God placed in the hearts of men through their instrumentality. The miraculous gifts were in relation to the spiritual part of their work, evangelizing, pastoring, teaching, as the scaffolding is to the building—the scaffold is removed once the building is complete.

In Rev. xxi. 14 John tells us that the holy city, figure of the Church in millennial display, had “twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.” John in Revelation answers to Paul who in Ephesians gives us the work of the apostles and prophets *as forming the FOUNDATION*, “Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone.” Here in John’s vision the foundation is seen in final display in a glorified Church.

The prophets too had a unique position in the early Church. 1 Cor. xiv. informs us of the character of their gift. Apparently in those days when the Scriptures were not complete, the prophets were chosen of God and inspired by Him to make revelations of truth—such revelations being now found within the covers of the Word of God. Anyone now pretending to an *extra-Scripture* revelation, to something beyond and in addition to the Scriptures, may be put down at once as an impostor, and severely shunned. At the same time whilst the apostles and prophets have passed away, yet the Lord’s servants may have an apostolic and prophetic character in a very secondary sense. A brother may have such an all-round and deep knowledge of the truth and may be so gifted, that the exercise of his gift may have an apostolic or

prophetic character in that way, but he is not and cannot be an apostle or a prophet.

The popular idea of a prophet is a foreteller of future events. This is the part of his ministry that appeals to curiosity and the intellect, and herein lies the danger of so handling Scripture prophecy. Prophecy is always intended to have a present and subduing effect on the minds of those who receive it.

But a moment's reflection will show that this is only a part of their ministry. A large part of the Old Testament prophet's ministry was given to bringing the mind of God in relation to the state of the people and calling them to repentance. It was not only foretelling but also forthtelling. So it was with the New Testament prophets. But apart from *special* revelation, which has completely passed away with them, we have the prophetic character of their ministry, and "he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification [building up], and exhortation [stirring up], and comfort [binding up]." (1 Cor. xiv. 3). How much of this may be sought to-day to real profit.

Evangelists.

The meaning of the word evangelist is the bearer of glad tidings. Those tidings are the gospel of the grace of God. Wherever he goes he is characterised by setting forth the gospel of God. Eph. iv. is the only Scripture where the evangelist is mentioned among the gifts. Where the point of view is the exercise of gift in the Assembly or in the wider sphere of God's house, as in 1 Cor. xii. and Rom. xii. evangelists, as such, have no place. But where the whole counsels of God on the one hand, and the full

completion of the work on the other hand are in view, the evangelist has his place. What a high and holy privilege it is when this gift is given.

But let it be noted that the foundation of the apostles and prophets is laid before the evangelists as a separate gift is brought before us. That is to say, the Assembly must be his home. He goes forth from the Assembly and returns to the Assembly. He owes his ordination to the ascended Lord alone and to Him alone. He looks for spiritual support and direction. The Assembly may not control or direct his steps.

Yet, if it is clear that he has received heavenly ordination, the saints of God will not be slow to lay their hands upon him, in short, to express fellowship with him in his work, and further him in it in whatever way he has need.

The evangelist in his work has been happily likened to a pair of compasses. There is the fixed leg at the centre and the loose leg, always attached to the fixed leg, making its sweep at equal distance from the centre, describing the biggest circle it can.

So the evangelist has a fixed leg, as it were, in the Assembly. As a saint of God he has his responsibilities as every other saint of God has. He is a member of the body of Christ as much as his fellow-believers are.

As an evangelist he goes out on a roving commission, carrying the good news of the gospel far and wide. But his desire is, that his converts should find the same home as himself, even the Assembly of God. There they are brought under wonderful influences, gathered to the Lord's name, enjoying the only fellowship that Scripture recognizes,

“the fellowship of God’s Son, Jesus Christ our Lord,” (1 Cor. i. 9), expressing their communion with the death of Christ in the Lord’s Supper, coming under the exercise of the gifts of the pastors and teachers, learning what the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship is, and being where “the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.” (Eph. iv. 16). We have already pointed out that the evangelist is not under the direction of the Assembly as to the carrying out of his work. Yet, if in his work he transgress plainly the principles of truth, or uses methods and ways which are unspiritual and tend to bring the work of the Lord into disrepute, it is clearly the duty of godly brethren to lovingly point out where he goes beyond scriptural bounds, and if the evangelist is wise, he will pay heed to and be thankful for the admonition. The same may be said of the pastor and teacher. It takes great humility and grace to give godly admonition. It takes as great grace to receive it.

Pastors and Teachers.

Unlike the evangelist whose sphere of labour is outside the assembly, the pastor’s and teacher’s sphere is inside the assembly. The idea of the word, pastor, is that of shepherd. Just as a shepherd chooses the pasture for his flock, so the pastor feeds the saints of God. Peter’s exhortation to the elders is, “Feed the flock of God which is among you” (1 Peter v. 2).

The meaning of the word teacher is obvious, suggesting the thought of an instructor of pupils or learners.

It is significant that the pastor is mentioned before the teacher, though in conjunction. The pastor feeds, the teacher teaches. The former has before him the needs of the saints in the way of spiritual food and he is in touch with their condition and knows how to use the Word of God skilfully so that he feeds the soul of the saints. The teacher is more occupied with the truth, and brings it out in a systematic way, and is very helpful to those who are really interested in the truth.

Some have an idea that a pastor chiefly or altogether visits the saints in their homes and pays what is popularly called "pastoral visits." This may or may not be part of his work, happy if it is so, but the gift of pastor certainly finds its chief and highest expression in ministry, adapted to the conditions and needs of those he addresses.

The evangelist goes out with the gospel and brings in his converts, the pastor feeds them and the teacher instructs them in the truth of God.

There should be no rivalry between the evangelist and the pastor and teacher, for their work is under the direction of the same Lord, they are complementary one to the other, and all working towards one grand glorious consummation, even to the display of the Church as the produce of the wisdom and power of God to His glory alone throughout the ages of ages.

The apostle Paul had the ministry of the gospel and the ministry of the Church committed to him, and he was the prince of evangelists, the tenderest of pastors and the wisest of teachers, thus showing how these gifts are complementary one to the other.

The Gifts Perpetuated.

The gifts are given "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." (Eph. iv 12-13). The Lord is faithful to His Assembly. As long as the saints are down here the great Head of the Church, His body, will care for His own. His blessed ministry in this way will go on till the Church history on this earth is over, and we are with and like the Lord.

But just as we take in the ministry of the Spirit as thus given us we shall be growing towards this measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ, and shall not be tossed about by every wind of doctrine. Alas! how much this being tossed about with every wind of doctrine characterizes the saints of God to-day. May we be exercised as to this.

PRIESTHOOD.

THIS is the privilege of all Christians. One of the greatest causes of the weakness that obtains in the professing Church of God is because this great truth has been set aside, and the priesthood has been arrogated as the right of a privileged class, many of whom, alas! are unconverted, and many, even when Christians, clearly lacking the ordination of heaven.

The root meaning of the word priest means, one who offers a sacrifice. This is clearly seen in the typical priesthood, who offered the sacrifices on the altar. We read in Hebrews viii. 3, "For every high priest is ordained to offer, gifts and sacrifices," carrying on the same principle. Again, "Ye . . . are . . . an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices." (1 Peter ii. 5).

It is interesting to note that the Hebrew word for priest is *cohen*, and all the Jews with this name and its variations are descendants of Aaron and will be entitled to the priestly office, when it is re-instituted in the millennial day. (See Ezekiel xlvi).

The Latin equivalent for priest is *sacerdos*; from which has sprung the word, *sacerdotal*; whilst the Greek equivalent is *hiereus*, from which has sprung the word *hierarchy*, thus showing how far removed are the thoughts of worldly and carnal men when they take up religious matters. Sacerdotal and hierarchical are words that speak of religious pride and pomp culminating in "Mystery, Babylon the great, the Mother of harlots and abominations of the earth." (Rev. xvii. 5).

Every Believer is a Priest.

Two Scriptures prove this. Peter addressing believers says, "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, *an holy priesthood*, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. . . . Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood." (1 Peter ii. 5 and 9). Again: "Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father," etc. (Rev i. 1, 5). Mr. Darby's New Translation gives a better rendering of this passage, "To Him who loves us and has washed us from our sins in His blood, and made us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father," etc.

We learn from this that all believers are priests in this dispensation. And if all believers do not exercise their priesthood, not only are they the losers but God is the loser, He is robbed of the worship that He seeks from His redeemed ones. It is a serious matter to hold the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers and not to practise it, for to hold it and not to practise it is to condemn ourselves in a very serious way. How deeply God's glory is involved in this is seen when our Lord said, "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, *for the Father seeketh such to worship Him.*" (John iv. 23). May this pamphlet be a means in God's hand to stir up His beloved people to give Him the gratification of His heart in a fuller measure.

What does the Priest Offer?

We are told distinctly in 1 Peter ii. 5, "To offer up *spiritual* sacrifices," whilst Heb. xiii. 15 confirms this:

“By Him let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.” How far removed this is from the bloodless sacrifice of the mass which Roman Catholicism blasphemously offers on the thousands of her altars, or offered on high anglican altars, which goes far in the same direction.

How sweet and simple it is when saints of God gather alone to the Lord's name, and in the power of the Holy Spirit offer their heartfelt praise and worship. This is higher than service to the Lord, higher than ministry to man, this is ministry *to God*, the highest privilege of all, and which heaven will afford none higher.

Are we in Priestly Condition?

Alas! tens of thousands of God's people have never exercised their priesthood, because they are not in priestly condition. They are content either to allow a special class to filch their privilege from them, they continue in organizations so designed as to put everything into the hands of one man; or, being in a place where the Spirit of God is recognised, through spiritual apathy, or the allowance of carnal mind and ways, or it may even be of wrong practices, giving them a bad conscience, they are not in a condition to exercise their priesthood.

The levitical law laid down the canon that a priest, having a blemish such as blindness, lameness, crooked back, broken-footed or broken-handed, etc., etc., should not go in unto the vail, or come nigh to the altar, though he might eat of the bread of his God, even when most holy (See Lev. xxi. 16-23). This bears out what we say.

Shall we, as believers, not seek to be in a condition in

which with fulness of heart we shall gladly pour out our worship and praises unto God, the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ?

Of course sisters are as much priests as brothers, though in the ways of God, all wise, it is ordained that only brothers take audible part in the Assembly. If a sister, because she is not permitted to take audible part, comes into an Assembly unexercised, she can be but a drag upon the meeting. But, if she comes exercised, she will be a help, and may be used of God in putting backward brothers on their feet.

Do we Worship the Father?

In the Old Testament the Father was not revealed, and worship was always to God. The people could only come into the outer court; the priests only into the holy place. "The way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest." (Heb. ix. 8).

But now the veil is rent consequent on the finished work of Christ, and all believers have "boldness to enter into the holiest of all by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh," (Heb. x. 19, 20).

Not only so, but in the New Testament *the Father* is revealed. Believers are now brought into the relationship and dignity of sons, and as sons it is their high and holy privilege to worship the Father.

Our Lord said in John iv. that the Father was seeking worshippers who should worship Him in Spirit and in truth—"in Spirit," as opposed to forms and ceremonies; "in truth," as formed by the revelation of God as the God and

Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the believer's association with the Lord, as He said to Mary Magdalene, "Go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father and your Father; and to My God and your God." (John xx. 17). How wonderful that "He is not ashamed to call us brethren." (Heb. ii. 11). In Rev. i. 6 it is said that believers are a kingdom of priests unto God *and His Father*.

Worship, the Service of Heaven.

The word for worship, *proskuneo*, signifies *to kiss (the hand) toward*. Just as a loyal subject bends low before his sovereign and kisses his hand in token of fealty and reverence, so what must it be to bow low in heart before the blessed God, known too, as Father, and express, it must be, at best, in feeble faltering tones, appreciation of all that He is in His own blessed Person—to bow low in heart before the Son, our blessed Lord Jesus Christ, who has carried manhood up to the eternal throne, in whom everything of Christianity is revealed and by whom every blessing is manifested, and pour out our heart in worship.

This is the highest bliss of the creature, and this will be the eternal service of heaven, begun here in feebleness and weakness, to be continued there in fulness and for eternity.

*"On earth the song begins,
In heaven more sweet and loud."*

How we may thank God for the earnest of the Spirit, sent into our hearts that we may taste these things, and thus be drawn with quickened steps to those scenes of ineffable bliss and glory, where we shall know as we are known.

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