

CHAPTER II

A CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN APOSTOLIC TIMES

CAN we, piercing the mists of two thousand years, see a Christian Church as it was in Apostolic times—a tiny island in a sea of surrounding heathenism? Our vision gets most assistance from the Epistles of St. Paul, which not only are the oldest records of the literature of the New Testament, but give us much clearer pictures of the earliest Christian assemblies for edification and thanksgiving than are to be found in the Acts of the Apostles. The more we study these epistles the more clearly we discern that we must not project into these primitive times a picture taken from any of the long organized churches of our days. On the other hand, we can see many an analogy in the usages of the growing churches of the mission field. This is not to be wondered at. The primitive church and churches growing among heathen surroundings have both to do with the origins of organization.

For one thing, we must remember that the meetings of the congregation were held in private houses; ¹ and as the number of believers grew, more than one house must have been placed at the service of the brethren for their meetings for public worship and for the transaction of the necessary business of the congregation. We are told that in the primitive church at Jerusalem the Lord's Supper was dispensed in the houses,² and that the brethren met in the house of Mary the mother of John Mark,³

¹ It is true that we read in Acts xix. 9, 10 that St. Paul held meetings in the *Schola* of Tyrannus: but this is a unique instance,

² Acts ii. 46: κλωτές τε κατ' οἶκον ἄρτον.

³ Acts xii. 12: "The house of Mary, the mother of John whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together and were praying."⁴

in the house of James the brother of our Lord,¹ and probably elsewhere. At the close of the Epistle to the Romans, St. Paul sends greetings to three, perhaps five, groups of brethren gathered round clusters of distinguished Christians whom he names. One of these groups he calls a "church," and the others were presumably so also.² The account of Saul, the persecutor, making havoc of the Church, entering every house and haling men and women to prison, reads like a record of the persecution of the Huguenots among the house-churches of Reformation times in France, or like raids on house-conventicles in the Covenanting times in Scotland. It becomes evident too as we study these early records that when it was possible, that is, when any member had a sufficiently large abode and was willing to open his house to the brethren, comparatively large assemblies, including all the Christians of the town or neighbourhood, met together at stated times and especially on the Lord's Day, for the service of thanksgiving. Gaius was able to accommodate all his fellow Christians, and was the "host of the whole Church."³

Traces of these earliest house-churches survived in happier days. The ground plan of the earliest Roman church, discovered in 1900 in the Forum at Rome, is modelled not on the basilica or public hall, but on the audience hall of the wealthy Roman burgher, and the recollections of the familiar surroundings at the meetings in the house-churches probably guided

¹ Acts xxi. 18; xii. 17.

² Rom. xvi. 3-5: "Salute Prisca and Aquila : : and the church that is in their house"; xvi. 14: "Salute Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and the brethren that are with them"; 15: "Salute Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints that are with them"; 10: "Salute them which are of the household of Aristobulus"; 11: "Salute them of the household of Narcissus." The groups saluted in verses 10 and 11 may have been a number of freedmen or slaves belonging to the households of the two wealthy men mentioned; but the other three groups are evidently house-churches.

St. Paul sends salutations to other house-churches; to that meeting in the house of Philemon at Colossae (Philem. 2), to that meeting in the house of Nymphas in Laodicea (Col. iv. 15), and to that meeting in the house of Stephanas (1 Cor. xvi. 15).

³ Rom. xvi. 23.

the pencil of the architect who first planned the earliest public buildings dedicated to Christian worship.¹ Old liturgies which enjoin the deacon, at the period of the service when the Lord's Supper is about to be celebrated, to command the mothers to take their babies on their knees, bring² with them memories of these homely gatherings in private houses, which lasted down to the close of the second century and probably much later, except in the larger towns.³

It is St. Paul, in his *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, who gives us the most distinct picture of the meetings of the earliest Christian communities. The brethren appear to have had three distinct meetings—one for the purposes of edification by prayer and exhortation, another for thanksgiving which began with a

¹ Compare C. Dehio, *Die Genesis der christlichen Basilika in der Sitzensber. d. München. Akad. d. Wiss.* 1882, ii. 301 ff.

² In the so-called *Liturgy of St. Clement* there is the following rubric:—

"The order of James, the brother of John, the son of Zebedee.

"And I James, the brother of John, the son of Zebedee, command that forthwith the deacon say,

"Let none of the hearers, none of the unbelievers, none of the heterodox stay. Ye who have prayed the former prayer, depart. *Mothers, take up your children. Let us stand upright to present unto the Lord our offerings with fear and trembling.*" Neale and Littledale, *Translations of Primitive Liturgies*, p. 75.

The writer had the privilege of worshipping in a house-church in the Lebanon under the shoulder of Sunim in the autumn of 1888. The long low vaulted kitchen had been swept and garnished for the occasion, though some of the pots still stood in a corner. The congregation sat on the floor—the men together in rows on the right and the women in rows on the left. During the services which preceded the Holy Communion, babies crawled about the floor making excursions from mother to father and back again. When the non-communicants had left, and the "elements," as we say in Scotland, were being uncovered, the mothers secured the straggling babies and kept them on their laps during the whole of the communion service, as was enjoined in the ancient rubric quoted above.

³ The earliest trace we find of buildings set apart exclusively for Christian worship dates from the beginning of the third century (202-210): Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, vii. 5. Clement speaks of a building erected in honour of God, while he insists that it is the assembly of the people and not the place where they assemble that ought to be called the church.

common meal and ended with the Holy Supper,¹ and a third for the business of the little society.

1. In his description of the first the apostle introduces us to an earnest company of men and women full of restrained enthusiasm, which might soon become unrestrained. We hear of no officials appointed to conduct the services. The brethren fill the body of the hall, the women sitting together, in all probability on the one side, and the men on the other; behind them are the inquirers; and behind them, clustering round the door, unbelievers, whom curiosity or some other motive has attracted, and who are welcomed to this meeting "for the Word."

The service, and probably each part of the service, began with the benediction: "Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ," which was followed by an invocation of Jesus and the confession that He is Lord.² One of the brethren began to pray; then another and another; one began the Lord's Prayer,³ and all joined; each prayer was followed by a hearty and fervent "Amen."⁴ Then a hymn was sung; then another and another, for several of the brethren

¹ The best account of the *Agape* is in Keating's *The Agape and the Eucharist* (1901).

² St. Paul does not mention the benediction as forming part of the Christian worship, but the way in which it occurs regularly at the beginning of his epistles, preserving always the same form, warrants us in supposing its liturgical use in the manner above indicated. The invocation of Jesus as the Lord is made the test of all Christian public utterance for edification, and must have preceded the prophetic addresses if not the whole service: 1 Cor. xii. 3.

³ The use of the Lord's prayer is not mentioned but it may be inferred. "Paul nowhere mentions the Lord's prayer. But we may assume that we have a trace of it in Rom. viii. 15, and in Gal. iv. 6. In speaking of the right to call God Father, he gives the Aramaic form for father, in each instance adding a translation; and this is only to be explained by supposing that he had in mind a formula which was known wherever the Gospel had penetrated, and which, by preserving the original language, invested the name with peculiar solemnity, in order to maintain its significance unimpaired in the believer's consciousness." Weizsäcker, *The Apostolic Age*, ii. p. 258 (Eng. Trans.). According to the *Didache* the Lord's Prayer was to be said three times every day (*Did.* viii.).

⁴ 1 Cor. xiv. 16.

have composed or selected hymns at home which they wish to be sung by the congregation.¹ Several of these hymns are preserved in the New Testament, and one is embodied in one of our Scotch paraphrases:²—

To Him be power divine ascribed,
And endless blessings paid;
Salvation, glory, joy, remain
For ever on His Head.

Thou hast redeemed us with Thy Blood,
And set the prisoners free;

¹ 1 Cor. xiv. 26.

² If it be permitted, as I think it is, to believe that the author of the Apocalypse used the outline of the Christian worship of the earliest age as the canvas on which he painted his glorious prophetic visions, then we can disentangle many a short hymn used in the services of the apostolic Church and also get many a detail about that service. The paraphrase quoted above combines two of the songs given in Revelation (v. 9-13). We have another in xv. 3 f.:—

Great and marvellous are Thy works,
O Lord God the Almighty;
Righteous and true are Thy ways,
Thou King of the Ages.
Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy Name?
For Thou only art Holy;
All the Nations shall come and worship before Thee;
For Thy righteous acts have been made manifest;

and yet another in xi. 17:—

We give Thee thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty,
Which art and which wast;
Because Thou hast taken Thy great power and didst reign;
And the Nations were wroth,
And Thy wrath came,
And the time of the dead to be judged,
And the time to give their reward to Thy servants,
To the prophets and to the saints,
And to them that fear Thy Name,
The small and the great;
And to them who destroy the earth:

It is likely that the singing was antiphonal; there are alternate strophes in the hymns in the heavenly worship, and Pliny says that the Christians "carmen Christo quasi Deo dicere secum invicem" (Ep. 96 [97]).

Thou mad'st us kings and priests to God;
And we shall reign with Thee:

* * * * *
To Him that sits upon the throne
The God whom we adore,
And to the Lamb that once was slain;
Be glory evermore.¹

After the hymns came reading from the Old Testament Scriptures, and readings or recitations concerning the life and death, the sayings and deeds of Jesus.² Then came the "instruction"—sober words for edification, based on what had been read, and coming either from the gift of "wisdom," or from that intuitive power of seeing into the heart of spiritual things which the apostle calls "knowledge."³ Then came the moment of greatest expectancy. It was the time for the prophets, men who believed themselves and were believed by their brethren to be specially taught by the Holy Spirit, to take part. They started forward, the gifted men, so eager to impart what had been given them, that sometimes two or more rose at once and spoke together;⁴ and sometimes when one was speaking the message came to another, and he leapt to his feet,⁵ increasing the emotion

¹ *Scotch Paraphrases*, lxxv. 7-11.

² St. Paul does not mention the reading of Scripture in his order of worship; but it must have been there. In his epistles to the Corinthians, to confine ourselves to them, he implies such a knowledge of the Old Testament and of deeds and sayings of Jesus as could only be got from the continuous public reading of the Scriptures, and the reciting sentences about Jesus. He takes it for granted that the Old Testament Scriptures are known and known to be the law for life and conduct, in 1 Cor. vi. 16; ix. 8-13; xiv. 21; 2 Cor. vi. 16, 18; viii. 15; ix. 9. In the beginning of 1 Cor. xv. he clearly refers to formal statements, not yet perhaps committed to writing, which he himself had handed over as he had received them, and which recited the facts about the sayings and deeds of Jesus. The opening and reading from the book comes after the singing in the heavenly worship (Rev. v. vi.).

³ Instruction (*διδασχῆ*), teaching or doctrine includes the "wisdom" and "knowledge" of 1 Cor. xii. 8; "wisdom," (*λόγος σοφίας*) is described in 1 Cor. ii. 7; vi. 5; and "knowledge" (*λόγος γνώσεως*) in 2 Cor. x. 5; xi. 6; and perhaps the *πίστις* of 1 Cor. xii. 9, which may mean depth of loyal spiritual experience.

⁴ 1 Cor. xiv. 31.

⁵ 1 Cor. xiv. 30.

and taking from the edification. When the prophets were silent, first one, then another, and sometimes two at once, began strange ejaculatory prayers,¹ in sentences so rugged and disjointed that the audience for the most part could not understand, and had to wait till some of their number, who could follow the strange utterances, were ready to translate them into intelligible language.² Then followed the benediction: "The Grace of the Lord Jesus be with you all"; the "kiss of peace"; and the congregation dispersed. Sometimes during the meeting, at some part of the services, but oftenest when the prophets were speaking, there was a stir at the back of the room, and a heathen, who had been listening in careless curiosity or in barely concealed scorn, suddenly felt the sinful secrets of his own heart revealed to him, and pushing forward fell down at the feet of the speaker and made his confession,³ while the assembly raised the doxology: "Blessed be God, the Father of the Lord Jesus, for evermore.⁴ Amen."

¹ I have followed Weizsäcker's conception of what was meant by speaking "in a tongue." These things have to be noted about the phenomenon: It occurred in prayer only (1 Cor. xiv. 2, 14); it appeared like a soliloquy (1 Cor. xiv. 2); the speaker edified himself (xiv. 4), but seems to have lost conscious control over himself (xiv. 14); what was said was not intelligible to others (xiv. 2); it could be compared to the sound of a trumpet which gave no clear call (xiv. 7, 8); or to the use of a foreign and barbarous language (xiv. 10, 11); the speaker in a tongue ought to interpret what he has said, and that he may be able to do this he ought to pray for divine assistance (xiv. 13); that such speaking was not all of one sort—there were "kinds of tongues" (xii. 10). Upon the whole then we may conceive it to have been rapt ejaculatory prayer uttered during unrestrained emotion, where words often took the place of sentences. This enables us to see how brethren, who were sympathetic enough, could follow the obscure windings of thought and expression, and interpret. Our knowledge is exclusively derived from 1 Cor. xiv.; the two passages in Acts x. 46; xix. 6, and the references in the post-apostolic period do not enlighten us. Compare Heinrici, *Das Erste Sendschreiben an die Korinther*, pp. 376-393; Bleek, *Studien u. Kritiken* (1829), pp. 3-79; Hilgenfeld, *Die Glossolalie in der alten Kirche*, Leipzig, 1850. This "gift" of tongues is referred to by Irenaeus, v. 6, and Tertullian, *Adv. Marcion*, v. 8.

² 1 Cor. xiv. 27, 28.

³ 1 Cor. xiv. 25.

⁴ The other form of doxology common to St. Paul's epistles is "Unto

Such was a Christian meeting for public worship in Corinth in apostolic times; and foreign as it may seem to us, the like can be still seen in mission fields among the hot-blooded people of the East. I have witnessed everything but the speaking "with tongues" in meetings of native Christians in the Deccan in India, when European influence was not present to restrain Eastern enthusiasm and condense it in Western moulds.

The meeting described by the apostle is not to be taken as something which might be seen in Corinth but was peculiar to that city; it may be taken as a type of the Christian meeting throughout the Gentile Christian Churches; for the Apostle, in his suggestions and criticisms, continually speaks of what took place throughout all the churches.¹

It is to be observed that if the apostle finds fault with some things, he gives the order of the service and expressly approves of every part of it, even of the strange ejaculatory prayers.² He gives his Corinthian converts one broad principle, which he expects them to apply for themselves in order to better their service. Everything is to be done for the edification of the brethren, and the first qualification for edification is that all things be done "decently and in order," for God is not a God of confusion but of peace.³ He gives examples of his principle. The prophets were to restrain themselves; they were to speak one at a time, and not more than two or three at one meeting;⁴ and those who prayed "in tongues" were to keep silence altogether unless some one who could interpret was present, for it is better to speak five words with understanding than ten thousand in a tongue. The women too who had the gift of prophecy were to

God our Father, be glory for ever, Amen." These doxologies are found running through St. Paul's and other epistles in the New Testament. They are used to end a prophetic utterance, or an exposition of divine wisdom, and they occur in the description of the heavenly worship in the Apocalypse. ¹ 1 Cor. xiv. 33; xi. 16.

² 1 Cor. xiv. 39. The order of service is given by St. Paul in 1 Cor. xiv. 26; where the "psalm" includes the supplication and thanksgiving of xiv. 15. ³ 1 Cor. xiv. 33, 40. ⁴ 1 Cor. xiv. 29-33.

use it in private, and not start forward at the public meeting and deliver their message there. So far from finding fault with the kind of meeting described, St. Paul seems to look on the manifestation of these gifts of praise, prayer, teaching, and prophecy, within the congregation at Corinth, as an evidence that the Christian community there was completely furnished within its own membership with all the gifts needed for the building up in faith and works.¹

What cannot fail to strike us in this picture is the untrammelled liberty of the worship, the possibility of every male member of the congregation taking part in the prayers and the exhortations, and the consequent responsibility laid on the whole community to see that the service was for the edification of all. When we consider the rebukes that the apostle considered it necessary to administer, it is also somewhat surprising to find so few injunctions which take the form of definite rules for public worship, and to observe the confidence which the apostle had that if certain broad principles were laid down and observed, the community was of itself able to conduct all things with that attention to decency and order which ensured edification.

Our wonder is apt to be increased when we remember the social surroundings and conditions of these Corinthian Christians. They were a number of burghers, freedmen and slaves, who, as their names show, were mostly of Roman origin, gathered from the wealthiest and most profligate city on the Mediterranean. The population of Corinth was as mixed as that of Alexandria. At Cenchrea, on the eastern shore of the isthmus, the wealth of Asia and Egypt poured in, and was sent off to Rome and Italy from Lechaum, the western harbour. The flow of commerce brought with it the peoples, religions and habits of all lands. The religion of the city was a strange medley of cults Eastern and Western. Aphrodite and Astarte, Isis and Cybele, were among her deities; Romans, Jews, Egyptians and Phoenicians among her people. The familiar illustrations

¹ 1 Cor. xii. 4 ff.: cf. Eph. iv. 16.

which the apostle uses in his epistles indicate the habits of the population. He speaks of the arena and the wild-beast fights,¹ of the theatre,² of the boxing match and the stadium race,³ of the great idol-feasts and processions.⁴ The city, we know, was honeycombed with "gilds"—religious corporations for the practices of the Eastern religions, and trades unions for the artizans and the seamen. The Christian society was gathered from all classes; from the poor and the slaves,⁵ from the well-to-do like the city treasurer,⁶ and an elder from the Jewish Synagogue;⁷ it included ladies of rank like Chloe,⁸ and men of abounding wealth like Gaius.⁹ It was this heterogenous society, including so many jarring elements, that the apostle expected to develop into an orderly Church of Christ in virtue of the "gifts" of the Spirit implanted *within* it.

2. It is by no means so easy to get a clear picture of the second meeting of the Christian community—the meeting for thanksgiving—as it is to see what the meeting for edification was like.¹⁰ With the latter we have only to remove the blemishes which the apostle found, and the vision of the meeting as he approved of it stands clearly before us. But the abuses which had corrupted

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 32. ² 1 Cor. iv. 9; vii. 31. ³ 1 Cor. ix. 24-27.

⁴ 1 Cor. viii. 10. ⁵ 1 Cor. i. 26. ⁶ Erastus, Rom. xvi. 23.

⁷ Crispus, Acts xviii. 8; 1 Cor. i. 14. ⁸ 1 Cor. i. 11.

⁹ Rom. xvi. 23; 1 Cor. i. 14.

¹⁰ It is strange that, apart from the descriptions of the Last Supper in the Synoptic Gospels (and for obvious reasons they cannot be taken as descriptions of the way in which the Eucharistic service was celebrated in the Apostolic and post-Apostolic Church), we have no very clear account of how the Service of Thanksgiving was observed among the primitive Christians till the middle of the second century, when we have the statement of Justin Martyr in his *Apology*, i. 67. The earliest account, so far as I know, which gives as full a description of the Holy Communion as we have of the meeting for exhortation in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, is to be found in the *Canons of Hippolytus* (Gebhardt and Harnack, *Texte u. Untersuchungen*, VI. iv. pp. 118-22). Yet the whole line of the history of worship, of the organization of the local churches, and of the administration of ecclesiastical property follows the development of this part of the public worship of the Church. We can learn many details, but we have no complete account. In the account of the Last

the meeting for thanksgiving had so changed it, from what it ought to have been, that it could not serve what it was meant to do. The framework of the degenerate meeting and of the same gathering re-organized according to the apostle's directions can easily be traced. The members of the Christian community in Corinth assembled together in one place, where they ate together a meal which they themselves provided; and this meeting ended with the celebration of the Lord's Supper. The Holy Supper was the essential part. The common meal and what belonged to it were accessories, the casket to contain the one precious jewel, the body to be vivified by this soul. It was the Holy Supper that really brought them together; but their conduct had made it impossible for them to be the Lord's guests at His Table.¹ The apostle tells the Corinthians that their meeting could not be a Lord's Supper nor even a love-feast if each ate his own meal and one was hungry, while another drank his fill.² The common meal showed that all the brethren belonged to one living organism which was the Church in Corinth, of which the Lord was the Head. Nothing could so wound this thought as making the distinctions between rich and poor, which had been done. It banished the whole idea of fellowship, and sensuality was introduced where, above all places, it ought to have been absent.³ God had manifested His displeasure by sending sickness and death into the congregation.⁴ The apostle lays down a general principle, and gives instances of its application, which if followed out will make the common meal a fitting introduction to the Holy Supper, and then shows how the Lord's Supper itself is to be solemnly and fitly cele-

Supper, here in the Epistle to the Corinthians, in the *Didache* (x. 1), in the description of Pliny, in Clement of Alex. (*Paidagogos*, ii. 1), in Ignatius (*Ad Smyrnæos*, viii.), the celebration follows a common meal; in Justin it takes place during the meeting for exhortation; in the *Canons of Hippolytus*, the meeting for exhortation, the Holy Communion, and the Lord's day common meal are all separate from each other;

¹ 1 Cor. xi. 20.

² 1 Cor. xi. 21.

³ 1 Cor. xi. 22.

⁴ 1 Cor. xi. 30-32.

brated according to the commands of Jesus. If we take the principles which the apostle lays down and suggestions from other portions of the New Testament, with those which come from the earliest post-apostolic descriptions of similar meetings, we may perhaps venture to reconstruct the scene.

The apostle shows that this meeting for thanksgiving is to be a *social* meal representing the fellowship which subsists between all the members of the brotherhood, because they have each a personal fellowship with their Lord. They are therefore to eat all together, and if anyone is too hungry to wait for his neighbours he ought to eat at home. It is also to be a fitting introduction for the Lord's Supper, which both symbolises and imparts that personal fellowship with Christ which is the permanent basis of their fellowship with each other. This thought that the Holy Supper is to come at the end of it must dominate the meeting during its entire duration. From beginning to end the brethren are at the Lord's Table and are His guests.

The whole membership of the Church at Corinth met together at one place on a fixed day, the Lord's day,¹ for their Thanksgiving Meeting. The meeting was confined to the membership; even catechumens, as well as inquirers and unbelievers, were excluded. The partakers brought provisions, according to their ability. Some of the brethren, who belonged to that honoured number who were recognized to have the prophetic gift, presided.² The food brought was handed over to them, and they distributed so that the superfluity of the rich made up for the lack of the poor. They also conducted the devotional services at the feast and at the Holy Supper which followed. The presidents began with prayers of thanksgiving for the food prepared for them and before them;³ it was an

¹ The Lord's day: Acts xx. 7; *Didache*, xiv. 1; *Canons of Hippolytus* (*Texte u. Untersuchungen*, VI. iv. p. 105, cf. p. 183 n.).

² *Didache*, x.

³ The beautiful prayer given in the *Didache* is (x.): "We thank Thee, Holy Father, for Thy holy name, which Thou hast caused to dwell in our

evidence of the bounty of God the Creator; a pledge of His fellowship with them His creatures; a warrant for their continuous trust in His Fatherly care and providence; and a suggestion of the bounties of His redemption which were more fully symbolised in the Holy Supper which followed.¹ During the feast the brethren were taught to regard themselves as in God's presence and His guests; but this did not hinder a prevailing sense of gladness, nor prevent them satisfying their hunger and their thirst; God the creator had placed the food and drink before them for that purpose.² It did prevent all

hearts, and for the knowledge and faith and immortality which Thou hast made known to us through Jesus Thy Servant; to Thee be the glory for ever. Thou, Lord Almighty, didst create all things for Thy Name's sake, both food and drink Thou didst give to men for enjoyment, in order that they might give thanks to Thee; but to us Thou hast graciously given spiritual food and drink and eternal life through Thy Servant. Before all things we thank Thee that Thou art Mighty; to Thee be the glory for ever. Remember Thy Church, Lord, to deliver it from every evil and to make it perfect in Thy Love, and gather it from the four winds, the sanctified, into Thy Kingdom. Let Grace come and let this world pass away. Hosanna to the Son of David. Whoever is holy, let him come; whoever is not let him depart. Maranatha. Amen." This prayer was to be said at the close of the feast. "Now after ye are filled thus do ye give thanks" is the introductory sentence. It is also to be remembered that when prophets conducted the love-feast they were not confined to prescribed prayers. "Permit the prophets to give thanks as much as they will."

¹ The common meals which our Lord shared with His disciples were always looked upon as showing His intimate fellowship with them, and spiritual associations clustering round the thought were enhanced by His frequent comparison of the Kingdom of God to a common meal (Matt. xxii. 4; Luke xiv. 15 f.; Luke xxii. 30; cf. Rev. iii. 20). Those who had sat at meat with Him supposed that they had a claim upon Him (Luke xiii. 26); while the miraculous feeding was a picture of the providence of God which ought to awaken our continuous trust in Him. There are evidences of all these thoughts.

² The note of gladness is always marked. The brethren in the primitive Church at Jerusalem "breaking bread at home, did eat with gladness and singleness of heart." Acts ii. 46; cf. Acts xxvii. 33-35. "Both food and drink Thou didst give to man for enjoyment, in order that they might give thanks to Thee," *Didache*, x. "Edant bibantque ad satietatem, neque vero ad ebrietatem; sed in divina praesentia cum laude Dei," *Canons of Hippolytus* (*Texte u. Untersuchungen*, VI. iv. p. 107);

unseemly behaviour, all unbrotherly conduct in speech or action, and it insisted on the absence of all who were at variance with their neighbours until the quarrel had been put an end to.¹ During the feast hymns were sung at intervals, and probably short exhortations were given by the prophets.² Then when all was decently finished the Holy Communion was solemnly celebrated as commanded by the apostle.

3. It is to be remembered that the apostle regarded the community of Christians at Corinth as something more than a society for performing together acts of public worship, whether eucharistic or for prayer, praise and exhortation. It was a little self-governing republic. This made the third kind of meeting necessary. The common worship of the society, especially the eucharistic service, united it with the whole brotherhood of believers throughout the world, and showed it to be in the

¹ "But every one that hath controversy with his friend let him not come together with you until they be reconciled," *Didache*, xiv. In the special "Lord's day" love-feast which may be given to the poor, as set forth in the *Canons of Hippolytus*, it is said: "Ne quis multum loquatur neve clamet, ne forte vos irrideant, neve sint scandalo hominibus, ita ut in contumeliam vertatur qui vos invitavit, cum appareat, vos a bono ordine aberrare" (*Texte*, etc. VI. iv. p. 108). These love-feasts naturally became the means of helping the poor attached to the Christian congregations, as we can see in the primitive Church at Jerusalem (Acts vi. 1, 2), and from such ancient ecclesiastical manuals as the *Canons of Hippolytus*. Gentile Christians had been accustomed to pagan banquets and the more modest common meals of the "gilds," and could the more readily accommodate themselves to the Christian observance, but this familiarity with the heathen usages would the more readily lead to such corruptions as St. Paul censures in the Corinthian Church. Cf. W. Liebenam, *Zur Geschichte u. Organisation des Römischen Vereinswesens*, pp. 260-264. Liebenam thinks that the evidence goes to prove that the eating at these common meals of the confraternities was for the most part frugal and that the excess arose from over-drinking. He and Foucart (*Des associations religieuses chez les Grecs*, p. 153 ff.) have collected the evidence. The excesses at Corinth arose from the pagan associations connected either with these common meals of the confraternities or more probably with the temple banquets (1 Cor. x. 14-22).

² "Psalmos recitent, antequam recedant," *Can. Hipp.* (*Texte*, VI. iv. 106),

succession from the ancient people of God;¹ but it had a corporate unity of its own which manifested itself in actions for which the whole body of the Corinthian believers were responsible. This local unity took shape in the meeting of the congregation which is expressly called the "Church"² by the apostle, at which all the members apparently had the right of appearing and taking part in the discussion and voting—women at first as well as men.

This meeting had charge of the discipline of the congregation and of the fraternal relations between the community and other Christian communities. Letters seeking apostolic advice were prepared and dispatched in its name;³ it appointed delegates to represent the church and gave them letters of commendation,⁴ and in all probability it took charge of the money gathered in the great collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem.⁵ The whole administration of the external affairs of the congregation was under its control; and this was a work of very great importance, because it was this fraternal intercourse that made visible the essential unity of the whole Church of Christ.

It exercised the same complete control over the internal administration of the affairs of the congregation. It expelled unworthy members;⁶ it deliberated upon and came to conclusions about the restoration of brethren who had fallen away and showed signs of repentance.⁷ It arrived at its decisions when necessary by voting, and the vote of the majority decided the case.⁸ We hear nothing in the epistles of a common congregational fund for purposes common to the brethren; if such existed it was probably under the care of this meeting also.

All these things implied independent self-government; and the apostle asks the brethren to undertake another task which shows even more clearly how independent and autonomous he

¹ 1 Cor. x. 1-4.

² 1 Cor. xiv. 19, 34, 35; xi. 18.

³ 1 Cor. vii. 1. The epistle known as the *First Epistle of Clement* begins: "The Church of Rome to the Church of Corinth, elect and consecrate, greeting."

⁴ 2 Cor. iii. 1, 2; viii. 19.

⁵ 1 Cor. xvi. 1-2.

⁶ 1 Cor. v. 1-8;

⁷ 2 Cor. ii. 6-9,

⁸ 2 Cor. ii. 6,

expected the congregation to be. He censured Christians for bringing their fellow-believers before the ordinary law-courts should disputes arise between brethren; he urged that such matters should be settled within the congregation. He used stronger language about this than about any other side of the practical expression of their religious life. "Dare any of you," he says, "having a matter against his neighbour, go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints?"¹ To grasp the full significance of his meaning we must remember that the apostle is speaking to men living in the busiest commercial city of the age, and to a little community within it which included city officials, merchants, and artizans, as well as slaves. He is not addressing men belonging to a small rural village where life is simple and the occasions of dispute few and mainly personal. The Christians of Corinth lived in the grasp of a highly artificial and complicated commercial life, where the complexity of affairs offered any number of points at which differences of opinion might honestly arise between brethren

¹ 1 Cor. vi. 1: This advice of St. Paul passed into the ecclesiastical legislation of the primitive Church. We read in the *Apostolic Constitutions* (II. xlv. xlvii. xlviii. xlix.): "Let not therefore the heathen know of your differences among one another, nor do you receive unbelievers as witnesses against yourselves, nor be judged by them . . . but render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's . . . as tribute, taxes or poll-money. . . . Let your judicatures be held on the second day of the week, that if any controversy arise about your sentence, having an interval till the Sabbath, you may be able to set the controversy right and to reduce those to peace who have the contests one with another before the Lord's day. Let the deacons and the elders be present at your judicatures, to judge without acceptance of persons, as men of God with clear conscience. . . . Do not pass the same sentence for every sin, but one suitable to each crime, distinguishing all the several sorts of offences with much prudence, the great from the little. Treat a wicked action after one manner, and a wicked word after another; a bare intention still otherwise . . . Some thou shalt curb with threatenings only; some thou shalt punish with fines to the poor; some thou shalt mortify with fastings; others shalt thou separate according to the greatness of their several crimes. . . . When the parties are both present (for we will not call them brethren until they receive each other in peace) examine diligently concerning those who appear before you. . . ."

related as masters and servants, buyers and sellers, traders and carriers. It was men living in these surroundings whom the apostle ordered to abstain from going before the ordinary law courts for the purpose of settling disputes which might arise between them, and whom he commanded to create tribunals within the community before which they were to bring all differences. Have they not one single "wise man," he asks, among them who could act as judge?¹ We are apt to forget that Christianity came to establish a new social living as well as a religion, and that from the first it demanded that all the relations between man and man ought to be regulated on Christian principles. That means now that our national laws ought to conform to the principles of the Gospel; it meant then that all disputes were to be settled within the Christian community, and that nothing was to be taken before the heathen tribunals.

Such is the picture of a Christian church in the Apostolic age, as it appears in the pages of the Epistles of St. Paul to the Corinthians, and, although no such clear outline is given us of any other Christian community, still we are warranted, as we shall see, in assuming that the Church in Corinth did not differ much from the other churches which came into being through the mission work of the great apostle to the Gentiles.² We see a little self-governing republic—a tiny island in a sea of surrounding paganism—with an active, eager, enthusiastic life of its own. It has its meetings for edification, open to all who care to attend, where the conversions are made which multiply the little community; its quieter meetings for thanksgiving, where none but the believing brethren assemble, and where the common meal enshrines the Holy Supper as the common fellowship among the brethren embodies the personal but not solitary fellowship which each believer has with the Redeemer; its business meetings where it rules its members

¹ 1 Cor. vi. 5.

² Compare Weizsäcker's *The Apostolic Age*, ii. 246-290. Heinrici, *Das Erste Sendschreiben des Apostels Paulus an die Korinther*, passim.

in the true democratic fashion of a little village republic, and attaches itself to other brotherhoods who share the same faith and hope, trust in and live for the same Saviour, and have things in common in this world as well as beyond it. The meeting for thanksgiving represents the centre of spiritual repose, the quiet source of active life and service; the meeting for edification, the enthusiastic, eager, aggressive side of the life and work; and the business meeting, the deliberative and practical action of men who recognize that they are in the world though not of it.

We can see our brethren in the faith living, loving, working together, quarrelling and making it up again, across these long centuries, and all very human as we are.

The evidence for the independence and self-government of the churches to which St. Paul addressed his epistles is so overwhelming that it is impossible even to imagine the presence within them of any ecclesiastical authority with an origin and power independent of the assembly of the congregation, and the apostle does not make the slightest allusion to any such governing or controlling authority, whether vested in one man or in a group of men. The apostle was so filled with the sense of high rank to which all Christians are raised in being called to be "sons of God" through Jesus Christ, that in his view this sublime position makes all believers of equal standing no matter with what spiritual gifts and natural abilities particular individuals may be endowed.¹ It was a natural and practical consequence of this thought that all believers should share the responsibilities of control in the community to which they belonged. So we find it as a matter of fact in the churches to which St. Paul addressed his epistles. He did not write to ecclesiastical persons to whom the brethren owed obedience as to an authority different from, and superior to, the assembly of the congregation. He addressed his letters to the whole community, who, in his eyes, are responsible for the progress

¹ Gal. iii, 26-28; cf. 1 Cor. xii, xiii.

and good behaviour as for the misdeeds and decline of the society and of individual Christians within it. His letters are quite consistent with the existence of ministering officials who owe their position to the assembly and are responsible in the last resort to it; but they are not consistent with the existence within the community of any authority whose power comes directly from a source outside the brotherhood.

In his letters to the Church at Corinth, the apostle makes scant allusion to office-bearers of any kind. The meeting of the congregation is the one thing which gathers up the unity of administration within the community. The apostle appears to acquiesce in this state of matters, unless we consider the query as to whether there are no wise men within the society who can settle disputes within the brotherhood to be a suggestion that some kind of recognized officials are needed for the furtherance of the orderly life of the local church. In verses 3-15 of the last chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, whether these be a short letter addressed to the Church at Ephesus, as some think, or whether they be an integral part of the letter to "all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints," the apostle addresses Christians who appear to be living in an even less organized condition of Christian fellowship. They form a unity because of their common faith and love; but that unity does not appear to find expression even in one common congregational meeting. Little companies, to whom the apostle unhesitatingly gives the name of "churches," have gathered round prominent persons who appear to have been the first converts, or those who had placed their houses at the disposal of the brethren for holding meetings for worship, or those who had voluntarily done special services to their fellow believers. The same condition of things is to be found at Colossae and at Laodicea. The apostle sends greetings to persons of different sexes and positions in life, but never to office-bearers as such. Nor among his many exhortations does he allude to the need of organization under hierarchical authority, still less does he prescribe a form of

organization which was to be uniform throughout the whole Church of Christ.

We do, however, find traces of an organization within the Christian communities, if we use the word in the most general way, in the Epistles of St. Paul. The meeting of the congregation is almost as prominent in the Church of the Thessalonians as it is at Corinth; it exercises discipline;¹ it selects faithful men to accompany the apostle to Jerusalem with the money brought together in the great collection;² it evidently has all administrative powers in its hands. But besides this, we hear of men who are called "those who are over you in the Lord," and the brethren of Thessalonica are told to value them highly for their works' sake.³ In the Corinthian Church we hear of "gifts," of "helps" (*ἀντιλήψεις*), anything that could be done for the poor or outcast brethren, either by rich and influential brethren, or by the devotion of those who stood on no such eminence; and guidances or "governments" (*κυβερνήσεις*), men who by wise councils did for the community what the steersman or pilot does for the ship.⁴ These "gifts" were bestowed on members of the community for the service of all; and men who were recognized to be able to guide wisely as well as others from whom all kinds of subordinate service could be expected, were present within the Christian community at Corinth.⁵ Again the Corinthian Christians are told "to be in subjection" to Stephanas, the first convert, and others like him who have ministered to the saints and who have laboured among them, putting heart into their work.⁶ In the Epistle

¹ 1 Thess. v. 14. ² 2 Cor. viii. 19. ³ 1 Thess. v. 13.

⁴ Hort, *The Christian Ecclesia*, p. 159.

⁵ 1 Cor. xii. 28.

⁶ 1 Cor. xvi. 15, 16. The phrase "to minister unto the saints" (*εἰς διακονίαν τοῖς ἁγίοις*) corresponds with the *διακονεῖν τραπεζαῖς* of Acts vi. 2. This ministry to the saints, which is connected with leadership of some kind, is expanded in the Epistle to the Romans to include liberality, showing mercy and leadership (Rom. xii. 6-8); and these three heads read like a brief summary of the qualifications of the elder or episcopus enumerated in the First Epistle to Timothy (1 Tim. iii. 1-9). In the First Epistle to the Thessalonians the thought of ministry to the

to the Romans there is express mention of men who are over their brethren, and they are told to do their work diligently.¹ These references and others show us that there were men in these Christian societies who were recognized as leaders and who rendered continuous and valued services to their brethren by so doing. They may not have been office-bearers by election and appointment, but they were engaged in doing the work that office-bearers do in a Christian church.

Altogether apart, however, from the organization of the local churches, whether developed or undeveloped, we find a ministry which existed in all the churches of the Epistles of St. Paul, and indeed in all the churches of the New Testament. We meet everywhere with men who are called prophets, and who occupy a distinguished place in the primitive churches. St. Paul esteemed them highly. He placed them second to apostles in his enumeration of the "gifts" bestowed by God on the churches.² He exhorts the Corinthian Christians to cultivate the "gift" of prophecy, and the Thessalonian Christians are told to cherish "prophesyings." It becomes evident the more these epistles of St. Paul are studied, that teaching and exhortation, associated afterwards in a very special manner with the functions of rule and leadership, were in the hands of the prophets to a very large extent in the apostolic Church, and that no inquiry into the "ministry" of the primitive Church can omit the functions and position of prophets and prophecy.

This brings us to consider the "ministry" and organization of the churches in the apostolic age, a thing necessary to complete our conception of what a Christian society was like in these early times. The subject is interesting, but confessedly difficult. Yet we have light enough, from the writings of the New Testament and the earliest extra-canonic literature, to

saints includes the three heads of caring for the spiritual and bodily wants of the brethren, having oversight of moral behaviour, and leadership or presidency—*κοπιῶντες, νοουθετοῦντες, and προϊστάμενοι* (1 Thess. v. 12);

¹ Rom. xii. 8.

² 1 Cor. xii. 28.

show us that it was entirely unlike anything which has existed in any part of the Christian Church from the beginning of the third century downwards.

Before we begin to inquire what this ministry and organization were, it may be useful to note two things: first, it must be remembered that our Lord has clearly intimated that leadership within His Church was to have a distinctive character of its own; and secondly, there is from the very first beginnings of organization a clearly marked separation between two different kinds of ministry.¹

¹ If we examine the various uses of the words "minister" or "servant" or "deacon" (διάκονος), "he who ministers or serves" (ὁ διακονῶν) "ministry or service" (διακονία), and "to minister or to serve" (διακονεῖν) we have the following extensive application:—

1. The ordinary service which a hired servant renders to his master, such as waiting at table, etc., as in Luke xii. 37 and elsewhere.
2. Kindly personal attentions rendered to our Lord, as by St. Peter's mother-in law (Matt. viii. 15; Mk. i. 31; Luke iv. 39), by Martha (Lu. x. 40; John xii. 2), or by the women from Galilee (Matt. xxvii. 55; Mk. xv. 41; Luke viii. 3); or rendered to our Lord's followers and looked on as done to Himself (Matt. xxv. 44; Heb. vi. 10); or rendered to St. Paul by Timothy, Erastus and Onesimus (Acts xix. 22; Philem. 13; 2 Tim. i. 18).
3. The service of angels rendered to our Lord and to men (Matt. iv. 11; Mark i. 13; Heb. i. 14).
4. The service rendered by the O. T. economy (1 Peter i. 12; 2 Cor. iii. 7).
5. The work of our Lord Himself (Matt. xx. 28; Mark x. 45; Luke xxii. 26, 27; 2 Cor. iii. 8; v. 18; Rom. xv. 8).

6. WITHIN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH we find the following widely extended application:—

- a. Discipleship in general (John xii. 26).
- b. Service rendered to the Church because of "gifts" bestowed and specially connected with the bestowal and possession of these "gifts" (Rom. xii. 7; 1 Cor. xii. 5; 1 Peter iv. 10, 11).
- c. Hence all kinds of service, whether the "ministry of the Word" or ministry not distinctly of the Word (Acts vi. 2; Matt. xx. 26; xxiii. 11; Mark ix. 35; x. 43).
- d. Specifically the "ministry of the Word" (Acts vi. 4; Eph. iv. 12; 2 Tim. iv. 5); and most frequently the "Apostleship" (Acts i. 17; xx. 24; xxi. 19; Rom. xi. 13; 2 Cor. iii. 3, 6; iv. 1; vi. 3 f.; 1 Tim. i. 12; 1 Cor. iii. 5; Eph. iii. 7; Col. i. 23, 25).
- e. Service which was not a "ministry of the Word":—Feeding the

The distinctive character of leadership in the Christian Church is given in the saying of our Lord contained in Luke xxii. 26: "He that is greater among you let him become as the younger, and he that is chief as he that doth serve"; and this junction of service and leadership is maintained throughout the Epistles of St. Paul. The Corinthian Christians were to place themselves under the guidance of Stephanas and those like him who had served them and laboured among them. Those that are "over the Thessalonian brethren in the Lord" are the men who spend most labour upon them. Everywhere service and leadership go together. These two thoughts are continually associated with a third, that of "gifts"; for the qualifications which fit a man for service and therefore for rule within the Church of Christ are always looked upon as special "gifts" of the Spirit of God, or *charismata*.¹ Thus we have three thoughts:

poor (Acts vi. 1); providing, bringing and dispensing resources in the time of famine (Acts xi. 29; xii. 25); organizing, gathering and conveying the great collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem (Rom. xv. 25, 31; 2 Cor. viii. 4, 19, 20; ix. 1, 12, 13); to which we may probably add the service of the whole Church of Thyatira (Rev. ii. 19).

f. Services rendered by specially named men, and which probably included both the "ministry of the Word" and other kinds of service:—The ministry of Stephanas (1 Cor. xvi. 15), of Archippus (Col. iv. 17), of Tychicus (Eph. vi. 21; Col. iv. 7), of Epaphras (Col. i. 7), and of Timothy (1 Thess. iii. 2; 1 Tim. iv. 6).

g. Men who are office-bearers in a local church and are called "deacons" as a title of office (1 Tim. iii. 8-13); men who *may* be office-bearers but who *may* get the name applied to them not because of office but because of the work they do—a work which has not yet ripened into a permanent office as in Phil. i. 1, and as in Rom. xvi. 1 ("Phoebe, our sister, who is a deacon of the Church which is at Cenchrea," and who is also called "patroness").

7. The idea of "rule" is conveyed in Rom. xiii. 4, where kings are called the "deacons" of God; and in John xii. 26; Matt. xxv. 44; Heb. vi. 10, where it is said that those who serve are honoured of the Father, and where all service done to the Church or its members is said to be done to our Lord Himself.

¹ The "gifts" (χαρίσματα) are individual capacities or excellencies laid hold on, strengthened, vivified and applied by the Spirit to service

of qualification, which is the "gift" of God; the service to the Church of Christ which these "gifts" enable those who possess them to perform; and lastly the promise that such service is honoured by the Father,¹ and is the basis of leadership or rule within the Church of Christ.

The earliest evidence we have for the beginnings of the organization of a local church is given in Acts vi., where we are

within the community. They are the natural capacities which men possess apart from their own power of acquiring them and which come from the free bounty of God the Creator. Men are not all alike; their capacities and natural powers differ; and thus when the Spirit works through these powers there is nothing mechanical in the activities set in motion. These natural endowments are laid hold on by the Spirit, strengthened by His agency, and used, each of them, for a special service (*διακονία*) within the Christian society. They may be the natural capacities for teaching, for evangelization, for the vision, and utterances of spiritual truths, for ecstatic praise, for leadership of men, for organization, for duties to the poor and sick, for the performance of all the practical and social duties needed for the welfare of the community. These natural endowments are seized by the Spirit and so influenced that they become the specialized "gifts" of the Spirit, and fit the possessors for all kinds of service, so that as Chrysostom says, "*ἐνεργήματα καὶ χαρίσματα καὶ διακονίαι ὀνομάτων διαφοραὶ μόναι, ἐπεὶ πράγματα τὰ αὐτά*" (*Cat.* 233). Lists of these "gifts" are given, none of them being meant to be exhaustive. In 1 Cor. xii. 4-11 appear: the word of wisdom (*λόγος σοφίας*), the word of knowledge (*λόγος γνώσεως*), faith (*πίστις*) gifts of healing (*χαρίσματα ἰαμάτων*), prophecy (*προφητεία*), workings of powers (*ἐνεργήματα δυνάμεων*), testing of spirits (*διακρίσεις πνευμάτων*), kinds of tongues (*γένη γλωσσῶν*), and interpretation of tongues (*ἐρμηνεία γλωσσῶν*). In 1 Cor. xii. 28-31 appear: apostles (*ἀπόστολοι*), prophets (*προφῆται*), teachers (*διδάσκαλοι*), powers (*δυνάμεις*), gifts of healing (*χαρίσματα ἰαμάτων*), helps (*ἀντιλήψεις*), governments (*κυβερνήσεις*), kinds of tongues (*γένη γλωσσῶν*). In Rom. xii. 6-8 appear:—prophecy (*προφητεία*), service (*διακονία*), teaching (*διδασκαλία*), the liberal man (*ὁ μεταδιδούς*), the ruler (*ὁ προϊστάμενος*), and the merciful man (*ὁ ἐλεῶν*). And in Eph. iv. 11 we have: Apostles (*ἀπόστολοι*), prophets (*προφῆται*), evangelists (*εὐαγγελισταὶ*), pastors and teachers (*ποιμένες καὶ διδάσκαλοι*). To these we may add "a man's capacity for the married or celibate life" (1 Cor. vii. 7). The conception of "gifts" in their relation to the Christian society is given in its widest extent in 1 Peter iv. 9-11: "Using hospitality one to another without murmuring: each, as he hath received a 'gift,' ministering it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold bounty of God."

¹ John xii. 26.

told about "seven" men being set apart for what is called the "ministry of tables," and which is contrasted with the "ministry of the Word."¹ We have thus at the very beginnings of organization a division of ministry, or rather two different kinds of ministry, within the Church of Christ in the apostolic age. Harnack calls this division the "earliest datum in the history of organization."² The distinction which comes into sight at the very beginning runs all through the apostolic Church, and goes far down into the sub-apostolic period. It can be traced through the Pauline epistles and other New Testament writings, and down through such sub-apostolic writings as the *Didache*, the *Pastor of Hermas*, the *Epistle of Barnabas*, the *Apology of Justin Martyr*, and the writings of Irenaeus. It is also found in the Christian literature which does not belong to the main stream of the Church's history, among the Gnostics, the Marcionites and the Montanists.³ The distinction ceases to be an essential one or one inherent in the very idea of the ministry when we get down as far as Tertullian, but it does not cease entirely. Prophets are found long after Tertullian's time, but they no longer occupy the position which once was theirs.

The common name for those who belong to the first kind of ministry is "those speaking the Word of God," and this name is given to them not only in the New Testament, but also in the *Didache*, by Hermas, and by Clement of Rome. To the second class belonged the ministry of a local church by whatever names they came to be called, pastors, elders, bishops, deacons. We may call the first kind the prophetic, and the second kind the local ministry. The great practical distinction between the two was that the prophetic ministry did not mean office-bearers in a local church; while the local ministry consisted of these office-bearers. The one was a ministry to the whole Church of God, and by its activity bound all the scattered parts of the Church

¹ Acts vi. 2.

² *Expositor*, Jan.-June, 1887, p. 324.

³ The evidence has been collected by Harnack in *Texte u. Untersuchungen*, II, ii, pp. 111 f.

visible together ; the other was a ministry within a local church, and, with the assembly of the congregation, manifested and preserved the unity and the independence of the local community. In the apostolic and early sub-apostolic church the prophetic ministry was manifestly the higher and the local ministry the lower ; the latter had to give place to the former even within the congregation over which they were office-bearers.

But while this higher ministry can be clearly separated from the lower ministry of the local churches, it does not follow that these office-bearers did not from the first count among their number men who possessed the prophetic gift. Prophecy or the gift of magnetic utterance might come to any Christian, and St. Paul desired that it might belong to all.¹ The two ministries can be clearly distinguished, but no hard and fast line can be drawn between the men who compose the ministries. The "prophetic" gift of magnetic speech was so highly esteemed that it is only natural to suppose that when congregations chose their office-bearers they selected men so gifted, if any such were within their membership. This, we can see, was the case in later times. Polycarp was an office-bearer in the Church at Smyrna, but he was also a "prophet."² Ignatius of Antioch was a prophet.³ Cyprian and other pastors in North Africa had the same gift, which was a personal and not an official source of enlightenment.⁴ We have by no means obscure indications that what took place later happened in the earliest period. The "Seven," who were selected for the lower ministry in Jerusalem, did not confine themselves to the "service of tables," but were found among those who "spoke the Word of God" with power.⁵

¹ 1 Cor. xiv. 5.

² "The glorious martyr Polycarp, who was found an apostolic and prophetic teacher in our own time." *Epistle of the Smyrnaeans*, 16.

³ *Epistle to the Philadelphians*, 7.

⁴ *Epistles*, lviii. 5 (lii.) : lxvi. 10 (lxviii.);

⁵ Acts viii, 5, 40.