

CHAPTER VI

THE FALL OF THE PROPHETIC MINISTRY AND THE CONSERVATIVE REVOLT

THE prophetic ministry of the apostolic and immediately sub-apostolic times passed away in the course of the second century, and its overthrow was a much greater alteration of the organization of the churches than the institution of a three-fold ministry, important as that was. The difference may be seen from two extracts. "Every prophet," says the oldest ecclesiastical manual, "who speaketh in the Spirit, ye shall neither try nor judge; for every sin shall be forgiven, but that sin shall not be forgiven."¹ That comes from a time when the prophetic ministry was the great controlling power. "Wretched men," says Irenaeus, "who wish to be false prophets . . . holding aloof from the communion of the brethren"; and the test of being in communion with the brethren is "to obey the elders who are in the Church."² That comes from the end of our period.

The change between the time when the prophet was not to be judged, but to be obeyed, and when disobedience to his commands was believed to be "an unpardonable sin"; and the time when the test of a true prophet was obedience to the office-bearers of the local church, whose superior he had once been, amounted to a revolution. It was so, and the overthrow of the supremacy of the prophetic ministry rent the Church in twain.

¹ *Didache*, xi. 7.

² Irenaeus, *Contra Haereses*, III. xi. 9 and IV. xxvi. 2.

It was inevitable. The more close and firm the organization of the local churches became the less room remained for the exercise of the prophetic ministry, which in the nature of things claimed at once freedom for itself and the power of ruling in some indefinite way over the churches which admitted its exercise among them. A careful examination of the scanty records of the second century reveals that the early prophetic ministry was active within the churches down till the Montanist revolt, and that in the churches which shared in that movement it was continued, and its place within the Church became accentuated. It is also possible to show in what way the office-bearers of the local churches could gradually come to take the place of the prophetic ministry, and how with the great body of Christians this could be done naturally and without any strong feeling that there was a real breach with the past.

In St. Paul's summary of the gifts which the Spirit bestows, and which when manifested within a community of Christians make it a Church, it can be seen that all these gifts may be divided into two classes—those which enable their possessors to edify the brethren by speaking the word of God, and those which fit them for serving the community in many practical ways. Two of these practical gifts, “piloting” (*κυβερνήσεις*) and “aids” (*ἀντιλήψεις*) foreshadow in the abstract the concrete offices of overseer and servant; and from them the office-bearers of the local churches derive their origin. The task of edifying by speech belonged primarily to the first class of gifted persons, and the work of edifying by wise counsels and all manner of brotherly services belonged to the two branches of the second class out of which the local office-bearers developed. Edification by the Word of God was the most important need of the churches, and if the “gifted” apostles, prophets and teachers failed any community their services had to be supplied somehow.

The *Didache* shows us the transition stage, and explains how this need was supplied in an ordinary way when the extraordinary means failed. “Appoint, therefore, for yourselves

bishops and deacons worthy of the Lord, men that are meek and are not covetous, upright and proved; *for they also render you the service of the prophets and teachers. Therefore neglect them not, for they are your honoured ones, together with the prophets and teachers.*” These words in italics show us at once the point of junction between the prophetic and the local ministry, and indicate how the latter could fulfil the duties of the former. They also reveal the possibility of the abolition of the prophetic ministry as a permanent part of the organization (to use the word in its widest sense) of the local churches. When the wave of spiritual enthusiasm and illumination which came with the earliest proclamation of the Gospel had somewhat spent itself, there was need to supply through the ordinary office-bearers of the churches that exhortation and instruction which in the earliest times had been left to the inspiration of those gifted with the power of speaking the Word of God. Hence the *Didache*¹ counsels the community to select men for its office-bearers in the knowledge that they may be called upon to supply this need. But when once the local churches began to have their spiritual needs satisfied within their own circle and the bands of association grew stronger, it is easy to imagine that the power

¹ “The peculiar value of the *Didache* consists in this, that it reveals to us the process in the moment of transition. It brings down the bird as it were upon the wing. The sentence italicized explains why the permanent officials of the Christian Churches did not possess at first all the functions which they possessed later. They did not possess them because the more prosaic duties which they themselves discharged were supplemented by that extraordinary wave of spiritual exaltation which swept over the whole primitive Church. In that age the wish of Moses was well-nigh fulfilled, that ‘all the Lord’s people were prophets.’ The difficulty was not to incite to the attainment of such gifts, but to regulate and control them. One by one they became rarer, and disappeared. The apostolate was the first to go. Prophecy lasted until it was finally discredited by Montanism. The class of teachers survived still longer into the third century; indeed, it would hardly be wrong to regard the Catechetical School of Alexandria as a systematizing of this office, with learning and philosophy substituted for the primitive enthusiasm.” Sanday, *Expositor* (1887, Jan.–June), p. 17.

216 THE FALL OF THE PROPHETIC MINISTRY

of the office-bearers grew strong enough to withstand the members of the prophetic ministry unless the prophets were content to take a secondary place. The very fact that the office-bearers could "render the service of the prophets and teachers" inevitably tended to place them, the permanent officials of the local churches, permanently in the position of the exhorters, instructors, and leaders of the public worship of the communities. Hence, while we can trace the presence and the power of the prophetic ministry during a great part of the second century, we can also see that complaints against false prophets became more and more common, and that there was a tendency to make the test of true prophecy subordination on the part of the prophets to the control of the permanent office-bearers of the churches.¹

We can see that the transition from the time when the prophets were supreme to the days when they were expected, if true prophets, to be subordinate to or at least deferential towards the office-bearers of the community, was the more easily effected when we remember that it is highly probable that some men among those chosen to lead the brethren by their gifts of governing had also the power of exhortation and instruction. This was probably the case from the earliest times. The *προϊστάμενοι* of 1 Thessalonians v. 12, not only laboured among the brethren but "admonished"; and to "admonish" (*νουθετεῖν*) seems to imply more than mere leading. Whatever be the date of the Pastoral Epistles, it is clear that by the time they were written, the functions of instruction and leadership were conjoined; and few critics, even among those who dispute the Pauline authorship, will be inclined to place them as late as Harnack does.² Then, as before remarked, those office-bearers

¹ Perhaps the earliest trace of this is to be found in Clement, 1 *Epistle*, xlviii. 5:—"Let a man be faithful, let him be able to expound a deep saying, let him be wise in the discernment of words, let him be strenuous in deeds, let him be pure; so much the more ought he to be lowly in mind, in proportion as he seemeth to be greater; and he ought to seek the common advantage of all, and not his own."

If leadership implied instruction in the earliest times (1 Thessalonians)

who stand forth most clearly in these ancient times were almost all men who had the prophetic gift. We have already seen how the divine afflatus descended on Ignatius while he was preaching in Philadelphia, and made him cry forth words which the Spirit put in his mouth. The prophetic gift was to be found among the office-bearers of the local churches before the conflict of jurisdictions arose, and the office-bearers who possessed it had all the divine authority which was supposed to belong to the prophetic order.

All these circumstances have to be taken into account in attempting to describe the great change in the ministry which the second century witnessed; and the last-mentioned is useful in enabling us to see how, while the overthrow of the prophetic ministry was sufficient to provoke a disruption of the Church, it could nevertheless be accepted by the great mass of the Christian people.

We have no specific information in the documents of post-apostolic Christianity to tell us how and by what steps the great revolution was brought about; but the conditions and needs of the time enable us to put ourselves to some extent in the place of the men who carried out the change.

Several distinct sets of circumstances require to be kept in mind.

In the first place, the second century was a time of great fermentation in the world of intellectual paganism. In the east of Europe and among the Greek inhabitants of Asia Minor the old religions had lost almost all their real power. The same may be said of the people of Italy also, and especially of the more cultured classes of Rome. It is something pathetic to learn that the only one of the ancient Greek deities whose cult was still practised with something of the old reverence and fervour was Esculapius, the god of bodily health, and that he was called Soter, the Saviour, as if men had despaired of salvation of soul the fact that in the Pastoral Epistles leadership involves instruction does not imply that these epistles are late.

and could hope for no more than the health of the body. On the other hand, worships strange to Greek or Roman, coming from the far East, with painful initiations and purifications for those who felt the power of sin or the fickleness of imperfection within them, and weird philosophies for the cultured, spread far and wide, counting their votaries by thousands and permeating all classes of society.

Among them were systems of cosmical speculation and mystic theosophy, curiously similar to what we find in Hinduism, and possessing that strange power of absorbing and assimilating religious ideas foreign to themselves, which is still such a feature of Oriental speculation. Votaries of these theosophies were attracted towards the doctrines of Christianity, caught at the Christian conceptions of redemption and of the Person of Christ, and tried to find room for them among the medley of their fantastic beliefs. They set redemption within the circle of their thoughts about the inherent evil in matter, and the Person of Christ found its place among the doctrines of emanation. Christianity attracted them as it still attracts cultivated Hindus. The Brahma Somaj, the Prathana Somaj, the Arya Somaj, strange attempts to absorb some features of Christianity into Hinduism in the nineteenth century, had their parallels in some of the Gnostic speculations of the earlier centuries.

Strange as it may seem to us, those weird speculations had an attraction for many cultivated persons who had embraced the Christian faith; for if the whole phenomenon of Gnosticism was, as it seems most likely to have been, a scheme of thought essentially pagan, trying to assimilate some leading Christian ideas, there were sides to the movement which show us men who were really Christians attempting to make use of these speculations as the metaphysical framework on which to stretch their Christian thoughts and to give them the shape of a rationalized theology. These metaphysics of "wonderland," where the categories of Aristotle and the ideas of Plato assumed bodily shapes, married and begot a fantastic progeny, filled the in-

tellectual atmosphere of the times, and were the air which thinkers breathed. The Church was face to face with the danger of seeing its historical verities dissolve into the shadowy shapes of a metaphysical mythology. For when Gnosticism entered into the Christian societies, and claimed to be a philosophical Christianity, the very life of the Church was threatened.¹

Nor were these the only difficulties of intellectual speculation which the Church of the second century had to face. We are apt to think that the apparent contradiction between an Almighty Maker of all things and the miseries of life is the peculiar property of our own age. That is not so. Men felt keenly the contrasts which trouble modern minds. They lived in a civilization as intellectually trained as our own. How could the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Mercies and the God of all Love, inspire the Old Testament, where the Jews were ordered to exterminate their enemies and threaten and practise all kinds of cruelties? How can creation, groaning and travailing in pain, be the work of that God Who has manifested Himself in Jesus Christ? Nature is not merciful. It seems hard and pitiless. The mystery of pain broods over it and in it. History is full of battle and pestilence, of turmoil and misery.

Among men who had ideas like these Marcion was a leader. His solution of the problem was that the God of the Old Testament and the Creator of the Universe were very like each other and very unlike the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Being who had created scorpions and sent venomous creeping things into the world was not unlike the God Who had commanded the slaughter of the Amalekites and had inspired the imprecatory Psalms. An old world Count Tolstoy, Marcion said that Christ's Christianity had nothing to do with any part of the Old Testament, nor with much of the New. The New

¹ Compare Hatch, *The Organisation of the Early Churches* (1881), pp. 91, 92.

Testament had indeed come from Jesus Christ, but it had been sadly corrupted by the votaries of the God who created the Universe. He constructed a Canon of Scripture for himself and for his disciples, and into his Scriptures no portion of the Old Testament was admitted, and from them much of the New was excluded. He went back to the Pauline Epistles, the earliest literary creations of the Christian inspiration, to seek in them the purest records of the teaching of that Saviour, Who, unheralded, as he thought, by any partial anticipations, had come suddenly to reveal to the world the hitherto absolutely unknown God of Love and Mercy. Marcion was a man of deep and genuine religious character, of an intensely practical nature, and without any tendency to speculation. He stood forth in that age of mixed faiths, of eclectic paganism and Gnostic Christianity, as a teacher who had mastered a clear and definite, if narrow, creed. His sincerity, his piety, his energy and his wonderful powers of organization, created not merely bands of devoted followers, but a church which, according to the ideas of those who belonged to it, was a reformation and a purification of the existing Christianity. Within it asceticism was practised in a manner hitherto unknown within Christianity. No married persons could ever rise to be more than catechumens, and members were required to abstain from all sexual relations; rigid laws about meats and drinks were laid down and enforced; martyrdom was to be welcomed, not shunned, and the hatred of the great mass of their fellow-Christians was an additional burden to be endured. Wherever Christianity had spread the followers of Marcion appeared, formed themselves into separate churches, with the same ceremonies of worship, the same ecclesiastical organization, or one very similar, the same, if not greater, strictness of moral living, and an intenser joy in martyrdom. The dogmatic unity of the Church, if it ever had been truly and thoroughly one, was broken. Other bodies of Christians, with separate organizations, appeared standing between the Marcionite and the parent churches, and pagans could

sneer at a divided Christianity and ask the Christians which God, they who preached His Unity, really worshipped? ¹

Can we wonder then, that in face of these anxieties the leaders of the Christian churches felt the need for a closer fellowship and a firmer grasp of what they believed to be the verities of the faith? Irenaeus voiced the clamant need of the Church. His rallying cry is familiar enough. It is one which has arisen always in such crises. It was practically this: "Back to the Christ of history; back to the fixed verities of the Christian faith."

But how was it possible to get back to these fixed verities of the Christian faith, and by a path that all could tread? All the more important writings of the New Testament were already recognized as Scripture in the West, but the prevailing attitude of mind was towards allegorising, and the Epistle of Barnabas shows how unhistorical this mystical interpretation could become. If Barnabas could find a text and proof for the Cross and for Baptism in Psalm i. 3,² the Gospels might be drawn upon for proofs as satisfactory for the Gnostic metaphysical mythology. Tertullian confesses as much, and naïvely remarks that he does not risk contradiction in saying that the Scriptures were "even arranged" by the will of God in such a manner as to furnish materials for heretics.³ The bent of the philosophy of the day was to dissolve facts into theories, and the Platonists in their expositions of Homer had taught orthodox Christian and Gnostic alike their elusive methods of exegesis. Then, apart from the impossibility of using a sound exegesis which

¹ Compare especially Origen, *Contra Celsum*, v. 59-64.

² "Again He saith in another prophet, 'The man who doeth these things shall be like a tree planted by the courses of waters, which shall yield its fruit in due season; and his leaf shall not fade, and all he doeth shall prosper. . . . Mark how He has described at once both the water and the cross. For these words imply, Blessed are they who, placing their trust in the cross, have gone down into the water; for, says He, they shall receive their reward in due time: then He declares, I will recompense them.' " *Epistle of Barnabas*, xi.

³ *De Praescriptione Haereticorum*, 39; cf. 19.

yielded a common method of interpretation, the question of what was the canon of the New Testament Scripture was one of the matters in dispute between the organized Christian Church and those believers in Christ who were outside its pale. Marcion had a canon of his own, as we have already seen; the various Gnostics had theirs, not always the same—for what we call the apocryphal Gospels and Acts were received by many. Nor could an appeal be made to any short common creed. There was none as yet common to all Christendom, although what lies at the basis of the *Apostles' Creed* was received throughout the Church and had become fixed in a form of words in the West.¹ Various Gnostics had their creeds differing from each other, and to them they appealed.² Disputes also existed about the true apostolic tradition; whether Jesus had or had not entrusted His apostles with a secret doctrine in addition to what He openly taught, and whether that "secret teaching" had been communicated to any by the apostles, and if so to whom.³

¹ The Apostles' Creed in its earlier form, the old Roman Creed, can be traced as far back as 150 A.D.

² We can reconstruct the creed of the Gnostic Apelles from Hippolytus (*Refutation of all the Heresies*, vii, 26); "We believe, That Christ descended from the Power above, from the Good, and that He is the Son of the Good; That He was not born of a Virgin and that when He did appear, He was not devoid of flesh; That He formed His Body by taking portions of it from the substance of the universe, i.e. hot and cold, moist and dry; That He received cosmical powers in the Body, and lived for the time He did in the world; That He was crucified by the Jews and died; That being raised again after three days He appeared to His disciples; That he showed them the prints of the nails and (the wound) in His side, being desirous of persuading them that He was no phantom, but was present in the flesh; That after He had shown them His Flesh He restored it to the earth; That after He had once more loosed the chains of His Body He gave back heat to what is hot, cold to what is cold, moisture to what is moist and dryness to what is dry; That in this condition he departed to the Good Father, leaving the Seed of Life in the world for those who through His disciples should believe in Him." Cf. Tertullian, *Adversus Marcion*, i. 1 (Marcion's *regula fidei*); *De Praescriptione Haereticorum*, 42; Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*. III. xi. 3.

³ *The Pistis Sophia*, the only complete Gnostic treatise which has descended to us, has a great deal to say about this secret teaching of our

Amidst this medley of beliefs and assertions Irenaeus assured the faithful that it was easy to know what the simple and fixed verities of the Christian faith really were. They are everywhere the same. Ask Christians of the most different classes, whether cultured inhabitants of centres of civilization or nomade Scythians roaming over the steppes in waggons and unable to read or to write, and the answer will be everywhere the same. He describes what the answer will be, and gives a short string of sentences resembling the *Apostles' Creed*.¹ The Church, he says, though scattered throughout the world, preserves this creed, "as if it were some precious deposit in an excellent vessel."² Varieties of language do not interfere with the meaning of the truths of the faith; "the churches which have been planted in Germany do not believe nor hand down anything different, nor do those in Gaul, nor those in the East, nor those in Egypt."³ He declares that the sentences which he gives as containing the simple verities of the Christian belief can be proved to be what he has said, because there are in the Christian Church successive generations of men who go back to the time of the apostles who were the companions of Jesus. His argument is always: I know a man who knew a man who knew an apostle.⁴

There are in the various churches scattered throughout the world successions of men who have been taught generation by

Lord and how it was given and transmitted and was the teaching which the author of the book accepted. The book has been translated into English by G. R. S. Mead (1896). Compare Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, III. ii. 1.

¹ *Against Heresies*, I. x. 1; cf. III. iv. 2.

² III. xxiv. 1; elsewhere, "The apostles, like a rich man in a bank lodged in the hands (of the Church) most copiously all things pertaining to the truth: so that every man, whosoever will, can draw from her the water of life" (III. iv. 1).

³ *Against Heresies*, I. x. 2.

⁴ The sentence condenses his argument; but it is interesting to remember that he uses the words himself:—"I have heard from an aged elder who had heard it from those who had seen the apostles, and from those who had been their disciples" (IV. xxvii. 1).

generation what the fixed verities of the Christian faith are. In some of these churches the successions go back to the times of the primitive apostles themselves, who taught the first generation of believers. If questionings arise, if speculations trouble, if plain men are bewildered by the gorgeous phantasy of Gnostic theosophy or by the sincere if narrow logic of Marcion, if the canon of New Testament Scripture is doubtful or if the original documents have been tampered with, if the allegorising exegesis makes the whole of Scripture of doubtful interpretation, there is a common-sense remedy for all these evils and one which has been constantly used. Apply to the men who are in the best position for knowing what the apostles really taught, what words they used, and what meaning they attached to these words. "If there arise a dispute about any ordinary question among us, should we not have recourse to the most ancient churches with whom the apostles held constant intercourse, and learn from them what is certain and clear with regard to it?"¹ This is no new means of arriving at the truth, he urges. It is what is constantly done. There are believers in Christ who cannot read, who cannot make use of any written documents which the apostles have left, but who "have salvation written in their hearts by the Spirit, without paper or ink," and who have received orally the ancient tradition, and have become very wise in doctrine, morals, and tenor of life.²

Irenaeus proposed to give to this old and much used method of finding out what were the primary and fixed verities of the Christian faith the sanction of an ecclesiastical usage. Here we meet for the first time, outside the Roman Church, the thought of a succession from the apostles in the office-bearers of the local churches; but it is a very different thing from the "gigantic figment" of an Apostolic Succession which dominates the Anglican and is a law in the Roman Church of the present day. It is meant to be a simple and clear way to find out what the real faith of the Church is in a time of more than usual

¹ *Against Heresies*, III. iv. 1. ² *Ibid.* iv. 2.

perplexity. This is evident from the application Irenaeus makes of his principle, and it is also clear from the manner in which Tertullian, who adopts the principle, illustrates the use to be made of it. "Run over the apostolic churches, in which the very chairs (*cathedrae*) of the apostles still guard their places (*suis locis praesident*), where their own unmutated (*authenticae*) writings are read, uttering the voice and representing the face of each of them individually. Achaia is near you; you find Corinth. You are not far from Macedonia; you have Philippi; you have the Thessalonians. You are able to cross to Asia; you find Ephesus. You are close upon Italy: you have Rome."¹ In all these churches apostles once taught; to all these churches they sent epistles which are to this day read; their voices are still living there, and their very presence seems still to haunt them. From their days until now, such is the argument, men with the gifts of leadership and of wisdom had been office-bearers in these communities and in others founded, if not by apostles, by "apostolic men";² each generation had been carefully trained in the apostolic doctrine by their predecessors, and they were able to judge what the simple verities of the Christian faith were. What Irenaeus proposes is that the office-bearers who are in the succession are to be made the judges of what wholesome Christian teaching is. It is the fact of an uninterrupted succession of responsible men that is the natural and historical guarantee that the doctrines once transmitted to the fathers have been retained in the memory of the sons. For some generations it is probable that individual men had presided at the head of the Christian communities, and Irenaeus might have simply spoken of a succession of bishops, but he does not; it is the whole body of elders and bishops that Irenaeus has in view. This can be seen only when all his allusions to the matter are read. They will be found in the footnote.³

¹ Tertullian, *De Praescriptione Haereticorum*, xxxvi. ² *Ibid.* xxxii.

³ "When we refer them to that tradition which originates from the apostles and which is preserved by means of the successions of elders in C.M.

Tertullian, who is twenty years later than Irenaeus, always speaks of successions of bishops or chief pastors.¹ In both cases, however, the main thought is that there are in the various local churches actual successions of men who, because these successions go back to the actual times of the apostles, can be

the Churches," Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, III. ii. 2. "It is therefore within the power of all, in every Church, who may wish to see the truths to contemplate the tradition of the apostles manifested throughout the whole world; and we are in a position to reckon up those who, by the apostles, were instituted bishops in the Churches, and the succession of these men to our own times," III. iii. 1. Irenaeus then gives the succession of bishops in Rome, and proceeds: "In this order and by this succession, the ecclesiastical tradition from the apostles and the preaching of the truth have come down to us," III. iii. 3. "Wherefore it is incumbent to obey the elders who are in the Church—those who, I have shown, possess the succession from the apostles; those who, together with the succession of the oversight (episcopate) have received the charisma of truth according to the good pleasure of the Father; but to hold in suspicion others who depart from the primitive succession and assemble themselves together in any place whatsoever," IV. xxvi. 2. "It behoves us to adhere to those, who, as I have already observed, do hold the doctrine of the apostles, and who, together with the order of the presbyterate (presbyterii ordine), display sound speech and blameless conduct for the confirmation and correction of others," IV. xxvi. 4. "Such elders does the Church nourish, of whom also the prophet says: 'I will give thy rulers in peace, and thy bishops in righteousness,' . . . where therefore the gifts of the Lord have been placed, there it behoves us to learn the truth—from those who possess that succession of the Church which is from the apostles," IV. xxvi. 5. "As I have heard from a certain elder, who had heard it from those who had seen the apostles and from those who had been their disciples," IV. xxvii. 1. "Then every word shall also seem consistent to him, if he for his part read the scriptures diligently in company with those who are the elders in the Church, among whom is the apostolic doctrine, as I have pointed out," IV. xxxii. 1. "Agnitio vera est apostolicorum doctrinae, et antiquus ecclesiae status in universo mundo et character corporis Christi secundum successiones episcoporum quibus illi eam, quae in unoquoque loco est, ecclesiam tradiderunt: quae pervenit usque ad nos custoditione sine fictione scripturarum tractatio plenissima, neque additamentum neque ablationem recipiens," IV. xxxiii. 8. Eusebius quotes Irenaeus (*Ecclesiastical History*, V. xx. 4) addressing a friend, Florinus, who had lapsed into Valentinianism, "These opinions, those elders who preceded us, and who were conversant with the apostles did not hand down to thee."

¹ Tertullian, *De Praescriptione Haereticorum*, 32, 36.

said to have known men who knew apostles or apostolic men, and who are therefore able to know what the apostles really meant to teach. With both writers the succession they speak of as a guarantee of the correctness of the Church's creed and as a pledge of her dogmatic unity, is an historical succession, and the conception is a matter of fact and not of dogma.

Yet with both something is added to this purely historical conception of the succession. There is an addition, the thought somewhat indefinitely formulated that these men who are office-bearers in the succession have a *charisma veritatis* because of their official position.¹ The thought is not very strongly

¹ *Against Heresies*, IV. xxvi, 2:—"certum veritatis charisma." In IV. xxvi. 5, Irenaeus speaks of the "gifts" of God bestowed upon the Church in the apostles, prophets and teachers, i.e. the old prophetic ministry always believed to have been specially charismatic, and then adds, "where therefore the 'gifts of the Lord' have been placed, there it behoves us to learn the truth from those who possess that succession of the Church which is from the apostles"; and in the preface to Book III. he applies to the apostles, and presumably to those who are in the succession from them, the words of our Lord in addressing the Seventy, "He that heareth you, heareth Me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth Me and Him that sent Me" (Luke x. 16; cf. Matt. x. 40). At the same time it is very doubtful if the thought of an official *charisma veritatis* is definitely and distinctly before the minds of either Irenaeus or Tertullian in the sense of something which belongs to the office-bearers exclusively and as something coming to them from their office. Both writers were too strongly possessed with the idea that the whole Church is the sphere of the Spirit to limit the action of the Spirit of Truth to the office-bearers, and the idea that a *charisma* was something which was given to the individual and not to the office was powerfully felt not only in their time but much later. Irenaeus says expressly: "'For in the Church,' it is said, 'God hath placed apostles, prophets and teachers,' and all the other means through which the Spirit works; of which all those are not partakers who do not join themselves to the Church, but defraud themselves of life through their perverse opinions and infamous behaviour. For where the Church is there is the Spirit of God; and where the Spirit of God is there is the Church and every kind of grace; but the Spirit is truth" (III. xxiv. 1). The Spirit of Truth was in the whole Church and not confined to any class in it; and it is possible to argue that according to Irenaeus the special charisma of those in office was the advantage that their position in the succession gave them of knowing the truth transmitted. Both Irenaeus and Tertullian asserted that members within the Church might

dwelt on by Irenaeus ; but it is present in one or two passages quoted in the note below, and in the second it is plain that whatever use he makes of it with reference to office-bearers what he has in his mind is the "gift" which in earlier days was exclusively associated with the prophetic ministry.¹

It is evident that this new official task of guaranteeing the true apostolic teaching, which is laid upon the office-bearers in general, and on the pastors or bishops in particular, must have had a very restraining effect upon the prophetic ministry, and on the unlimited freedom of exhortation which characterized the churches in the first century and in many decades of the second century. The office-bearers who were in the succession

and did possess the "gift" of true prophecy (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, I. xiii. 4 ; II. xxxii. 4 ; xxxiii. 3 ; III. xi. 9 ; V. vi. 1), and Tertullian's so-called Montanist period is simply his recoil from where he perceived this theory of an official *charisma veritatis* was leading him (cf. specially his *De Pudicitia*). Even in Cyprian's days this idea of an official inspiration was not accepted without some misgivings ; and although the bishops at his North African Councils in recording their votes gave their opinion and that of the Holy Spirit, the idea that the inspiration was after all personal is evidenced in the part which dreams and visions play (*Epist.* lvii. 5).

¹ This indefinite thought (for with Irenaeus it is indefinite) that in addition to the natural means of knowing the true Christian doctrine which comes from being in the regular succession of office-bearers in places where the apostles themselves taught, there is a *charisma veritatis* which is official, is the germ of the Romanist doctrine of tradition ; and although the road may be long between the *certum veritatis charisma* and the utterance of Pope Pius IX., "Io sono la tradizione," the milestones may be marked. Some Anglicans make much of the thought that there is a *charisma veritatis* attached to the succession of office-bearers (they say bishops), and put a great deal more into it than Irenaeus ever intended ; but it is somewhat dangerous for their own theories to do so. It is part of the conception of Irenaeus that the Church which has the surest claim to know what are the verities of the Christian faith is the Church in Rome, and he insists that every other Church ought to agree with the Christian society in the capital city. "It is a matter of necessity," he says, "that every Church should agree with this Church *propter potiore principalem*" (III. iii. 2), and however the words *propter principalem* be translated the idea in the mind of Irenaeus is the simple historical one that the two greatest apostles both taught there and that their teaching had been remembered by means of the succession of office-bearers ; place the dogmatic instead of the historical idea and you have papal infallibility.

were now made the judges of what ought to be taught to the people in exhortation and in instruction ; and they were therefore set in the position of judging all who undertook the function which was the peculiar work of the prophetic ministry. Besides, it was suggested that the peculiar *veritatis charisma*, the "gift" which gave them their unique and distinguished position, belonged to the office-bearers of the churches as well as the "gift" of government. The indications are that the suggestion of Irenaeus had been acted on long before he placed it on record. Whenever it came to be the accepted rule in the Church the revolution became an accomplished fact ; and the men who had been supreme (the prophets), and whom to disobey had been accounted an unpardonable sin, became the servants of the office-bearers whose superiors they once had been.

The need for some authority to express the dogmatic unity of the Church, and the idea that this authority lay in the office-bearers of the churches, must have placed the prophetic ministry in an inferior position and tended to destroy it altogether. For though the position assigned to the heads of the churches meant practically that they were to be the judges of what the proper instruction was, and did not necessarily mean that they were in every case to take the instruction in their own hands, still that was bound to come out of the idea in the end. The office-bearers, and especially the bishops, would inevitably become the instructors as well as the judges of the instruction that was given.

Another set of circumstances was working for the downfall of the prophetic ministry. The Rescript of the Emperor Hadrian to Minucius Fundanus, who was Proconsul of Asia sometime about 124 A.D., was rightly regarded by the Christians as the beginning of an era of comparative toleration.¹ The

¹ On this Rescript of Hadrian's compare Ramsay, *The Church in the Roman Empire* (1893), pp. 320 ff. ; Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers : S. Ignatius, S. Polycarp* (1885), i. pp. 460-4 ; Mommsen, *Der Religionsstreit nach römischen Recht* in the *Histor. Zeitschrift*, vol. lxiv. (xxviii.), pt. iii.

character of the great Emperor, his curiosity, half cynical half hopeful, about all kinds of religious faiths, made them expect great things from him. Christian literature struck a bolder note. The writings of the apologists began to appear, who demanded on behalf of their brethren to be treated like their fellow-subjects, free to live, so long as they did not transgress against the laws of morality, under the shelter of the wide-spreading *pax Romanorum*. Christianity found a voice and demanded to be heard, pleading for the toleration which was granted to all other religions. The earliest of these writers was probably Quadratus. Aristides, Justin Martyr, Miltiades, Melito, Tatian, Athenagoras and others followed in succession. From our modern standpoint these documents are but feeble expositions of the Christian faith; Tertullian alone, with his lofty elevation of sentiment and his stern moral enthusiasm, seems to be an apologist for all time. But if these writings are looked upon, as they ought to be, in the light of pleas for some way of living quietly and peaceably under the imperial rule,¹ they are very interesting documents. They almost invariably take the same line of argument. Christianity, they say, can have no quarrel with good government; its morals are purer than those of paganism, and are therefore a better protection to the State; Christians cannot pray to the Emperor, but they always pray for him; they are and they mean to be loyal citizens of the great commonwealth to which they belong. It is strange to observe an undertone of admiration for the imperial rule under which they live, and a conviction that all would be well if the emperors could only learn what Christianity really is,²

i.: 389 ff.; Harnack, *Die Chronologie der altchristlichen Literatur* (1897), p. p. 256, n. 6. These authors all believe in the genuineness of the Rescript. Keim and others reject it on very superficial grounds. The Rescript itself is to be found at the end of the *First Apology* of Justin Martyr.

¹ "Grant us the same rights, we ask for nothing more, as those who persecute us," Athenagoras, *Plea for the Christians*, 3.

² Athenagoras, *Plea*, etc., 37; Theophilus, *To Autolycus*, i. 11; Tertullian, *Apology*, 1; "If in this case alone you are ashamed or afraid

and to notice how they almost invariably distinguish the imperial ruler from those who persecute them. Tatian seems even to discern that there is a universal humane aim in the imperial rule, that it has proclaimed in some shadowy way the brotherhood of mankind, that there is a measure of resemblance between the empire and Christianity, and that the two ought to be allies and not foes.¹ They all look forward to a possible accommodation between the imperial government and the Christian societies. Tertullian indeed pleads that the Christian churches ought to be allowed to enrol themselves as associations for practising a lawful religion.

But the more thoughtful and politic among the leaders of the Christian societies could not help seeing that if there was to be any accommodation with the empire there must be some change on the part of the Christian societies, and that Christians must to some extent change their habits of life if they were to mingle more freely with their fellow-men who were not Christians. In the earlier times Christianity was held to be a "mode of life," to use the expression of Tatian; ² Christians were men and women who had little or nothing to do with this world; who were not to conform themselves to it in any way, and were not to mingle in its pursuits nor in its pleasures. They were little separate secluded societies, awaiting on the threshold the opening of the new heavens and the new earth. The earliest Christians were content with this, and asked for nothing more.

The middle of the second century, however, witnessed a change which may be best indicated by saying that the Christian faith was attracting to it multitudes of people drawn from all classes and ranks in society—imperial officials, merchants,

to exercise your authority in making public inquiry with the carefulness which becomes justice."

¹ The design of Christianity is to put an end to slavery and to "rescue us from a multiplicity of rulers and from ten thousand tyrants" (*Address to the Greeks*, xxix.); "there ought to be one common polity for all" (xxviii.). ² Tatian, *Address to the Greeks*, xlii.

lawyers, men of culture and leisure; It was gathering round it men from the camp and from the court, men who were in the midst of the bustle of life and who meant to remain there. Tertullian might prove that no soldier could be a Christian, and collections of ecclesiastical canons of a still later date might corroborate him,¹ but he himself gives evidence that there must have been many Christians in the army.² He speaks of the way in which the Christians mingled with their pagan neighbours. "We sojourn with you in the world, abjuring neither forum, nor shambles, nor bath, nor booth nor workshop, nor inn, nor weekly market, nor any other place of commerce. We sail with you, we fight with you, and till the ground with you; and in like manner we unite with you in your traffickings."³

A question of the utmost gravity faced the leaders of the Christian societies. Should all the new classes of converts be permitted to remain in their callings, and—for this was the question involved—should the Church accept the new condition of things, and begin to adapt itself to the forms and conditions of the world around it? Should it, as far as conscience permitted, respect the amenities of life, or should it remain what it had hitherto been—a communion of persons who hoped for nothing from existing society, and who lived altogether apart from it? Much could be said on both sides. On the one hand, it could be urged that Christianity had a world-wide mission, and that if it could lay hold on the organization of the empire and use it for the extension of the knowledge of its Lord, it was only taking the path which Providence had plainly marked out for its progress. On the other hand, many Christians discerned the temptations which lay in accepting this view of the Church's duty.

¹ *De corona militis*; *Canons of Hippolytus*, can. xiv. (Riedel, *Die Kirchenrechtsquellen des Patriarchats Alexandrien*, p. 207).

² *Apology*, 5:—"The letters of Marcus Aurelius, that most grave of Emperors, in which he bears his testimony that that Germanic drought was removed by the rains obtained through the prayers of the Christians who happened to be fighting under him." ³ *Apology*, 42.

In the end the leaders of the Christian societies seem to have spontaneously and gradually come to see that it was their duty to bring their followers into what accommodation was possible with the conditions of existing society. It was this feeling that rendered the writings of the apologists possible. The time of enthusiasm had passed away for the great majority of Christians. Unimpassioned conviction took the place of the earlier almost unrestrained passion of faith. One can scarcely fancy Ignatius of Antioch writing in the tone of cool argument which characterises the apologists.

The change of moral and intellectual atmosphere did not suit the prophetic ministry, which had been the enthusiastic element from the beginning, and had become the element of asceticism. It was unavoidable that it should lose its old place and its ancient power. Pleasant things continued to be said about prophets, provided only they accepted a position under the office-bearers of the local churches. Curious regulations appear in some of the ancient canons, enjoining the people to respect their utterances. In the ancient Syrian collection known as the *Testamentum Jesu Christi*, for example,¹ those who despise prophecy are debarred from coming to the Holy Supper, but the prophets were no longer the superior ministry in the churches.

There is also evidence leading us to believe that the prophetic ministry had been deteriorating. From the very beginning men had claimed to be included within its ranks who were not true prophets. Warnings against such persons are to be found within the New Testament writings,² and they occur, and with increasing strength, in writers of the second century. We have

¹ *Testamentum Jesu Christi*, edited by Rahman (1899), p. 37. Among the proclamations made by the deacon before the Eucharistic service is: *Si quis prophetas despicit, semet segreget*. The *Testament* also says:—*Si quis autem verba prophetica dicit, mercedem habebit*, p. 79.

² Matt. vii. 15; xxiv. 11, 24; Mark xiii. 22; Acts xiii. 6; 2 Peter ii. 1; 1 John iv. 1-3; Rev. ii. 2, 14, 15, 20.

seen them in the *Didache*.¹ Justin Martyr cites their presence in the Church as a proof that Christianity is the true development of Judaism, because the Christians have among them false prophets as well as true ones like the ancient Israel.² Hermas has given expressive pictures of the true and the false prophets.³ All this was a sign of the times.

¹ Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 82; Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, I. xiii. 3; III. xi. 9; Eusebius, *Hist. Eccles.* V. xvii. 1-4; *Apostolic Constitutions*, VII. xxxii.; VIII. ii.; *Didache*, xi. 1, 2, 8.

² *Dialogue with Trypho*, lxxxii.:—"For the prophetic gift remains with us even to the present time. Hence you ought to understand that the gifts formerly among your nation have been transferred to us. And just as there were false prophets contemporaneous with your holy prophets, so there are many false teachers among us, of whom our Lord forewarned us to beware; so that in no respect are we deficient, since we know that He foreknew all that would happen to us after His resurrection from the dead and ascension to heaven. For He said that we would be put to death and hated for His Name sake; and that many false prophets and false Christs would appear in His name and deceive many; and so it has come about. For many have taught, too, and even yet are teaching those things which proceed from the unclean teaching of the devil and which are put into their hearts."

³ Hermas, *Pastor, Mandata*, xi.:—"He showed me some men sitting on a seat, and one man sitting on a chair. And he says to me, 'Do you see the persons sitting on the seat?' 'I do,' I said. 'These,' he says, 'are the faithful, and he who sits on the chair is a false prophet, ruining the minds of the servants of God. It is the doubters, not the faithful, he ruins.' . . . 'How then, sir,' I say, 'will a man know which of them is the prophet, and which is the false prophet?' 'I will tell you,' he says, 'about both prophets, and then you can test the true and the false prophet according to my directions. Test the man who has the Spirit of God by his life. For he who has the Divine Spirit proceeding from above, is meek and peaceable and humble and refrains from all iniquity and the vain desire of this world and contents himself with fewer wants than those of other men, and when asked he makes no reply; nor does he speak privately, nor when a man wishes the Spirit to speak does the Holy Spirit speak, but it speaks only when God wishes it to speak. When, then, a man having the Divine Spirit comes into an assembly of righteous men who have faith in the Divine Spirit, and this assembly of men offers up prayer to God, then the angel of the prophetic Spirit, who is destined for him, fills the man; and the man being filled with the Holy Spirit, speaks to the multitude as the Lord wishes. Thus then the Spirit of Divinity becomes manifest. Whatever power therefore comes from the Spirit of Divinity

These various influences combined to help forward the revolution which excluded the prophetic ministry from its earlier position of supremacy and installed the local official ministry in the supreme place of rule. They worked slowly and surely during the second century, and especially during the first half of the period.

But while this movement was going on, and its effects on the prophetic ministry were gradually manifesting themselves, protesting voices were raised. This movement fostered by the official ministry of the local churches was a departure, it seemed to many, from the traditions of the Church which they had in reverence; and it was accompanied by a relaxation of the stern rule of Christian life under which the earlier generations had lived and died. The prophetic ministry had always been considered as the direct gift of God to the Church. *It was the ministry from above.* It had been placed by St. Paul second only to the apostolate. Souls had been won from heathenism through its ministrations. The lives of believers had been braced by it to endure the hardships and persecutions which their Master had foretold them would fall upon them, and which they had been taught to regard as their blessed lot while this life lasted. They saw that with the neglect of the prophetic ministry

belongs to the Lord. Hear then,' he says, 'in regard to the Spirit which is earthly and empty and foolish and powerless. First the man who seems to have the Spirit exalts himself, and wishes to have the first seat, and is bold and impudent and talkative, and lives in the midst of many luxuries and many other delusions, and takes reward for his prophecy; and if he does not receive rewards he does not prophesy. Can then the Divine Spirit take rewards and prophesy? It is not possible that the Spirit of God should do this, but prophets of this character are possessed of an earthly spirit. Then it never approaches an assembly of righteous men but shuns them. And it associates with doubters and the vain, and prophesies to them in a corner and deceives them, speaking to them, according to their desires, mere empty words. . . . This then is the mode of life of both the prophets. Try by his life and by his deeds the man who says that he is inspired. But as for you, trust the Spirit which comes from God, and has power; but the spirit which is empty and earthly trust not at all, for there is no power in it; it comes from the devil.'"

there went hand in hand an attempt at conformity with the world and a relaxation of the more rigid rules of the Christian life. It was by no means the worst kind of Christians who called upon the Church to halt in this rapid approach to the usages of the world, in this relaxation of the severer maxims of the Christian life, in this neglect or undervaluing of the prophetic ministry, and in this exaltation of the office-bearers of the local churches. They grew increasingly alarmed and uneasy in the presence of the silent movement above described. It was taking from them some of their most precious possessions. They began to feel that there was no room for them in the Church which had hitherto sheltered them. All this was felt most strongly, as was to be expected, in the regions more remote from the great centres of public life, where the pressure of coming to some terms with the State was lighter. The standard of revolt was raised in the mountainous region of Phrygia—a land not thoroughly incorporated within the Roman administration. The movement was headed by a presbyter or elder, called Montanus, and became known as Montanism. It was natural that the crisis should emerge in these regions of Asia. No portion of the empire was so peopled by Christians. Christian prophecy had flourished in the neighbouring regions. The daughters of Philip had lived in the great city of Hierapolis. The Christian prophets Quadratus and Ammia had belonged to Philadelphia.¹ Attalus of Pergamos had been taught in visions.² Polycarp, the most distinguished Christian of the whole of Asia, was a prophet. Ignatius had exhibited his prophetic gifts in Philadelphia.³ On the other hand, if the country had produced many Christian prophets, its churches had been the earliest to organize themselves under the three-fold ministry. The prophetic and the local ministries confronted each other there as they did nowhere else.

This Phrygian movement was the centre and exaggeration

¹ Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, V. xvii. 3. ² *Ibid.* V. iii. 2.

³ *Epistle to the Philadelphians*, 7.

of a wide-spreading revolt and separation from the great Church of the second and third centuries. It has been represented as an attempt at innovation on the old usages and habits of primitive Christianity. This is a mistaken view. At the same time if we confine our attention to the actions and claims of Montanus himself and the circle of Phrygia immediately surrounding him, there was much that was entirely new. Montanus' idea seems to have been that he had been commissioned by God to gather all true Christians into a community, which would be ready by its renunciation of all the claims that social life presented and by an absolute self-surrender to the requirements of the higher Christian life, to meet the Lord Who was about to come and inaugurate His millennial kingdom in the immediate future. He seems to have believed that the Church had reached its final term of existence in the world. He and his fellow prophets therefore represented the last stage of prophecy, and consequently possessed an inspiration such as none of their predecessors could lay claim to. They in their own persons and with their special prophetic gifts, were the literal fulfilment of the promise given by our Lord in the Gospel of St. John, that the Father and the Son would take up their abode in true believers, and that the Paraclete had come to abide with them.¹ Hence when they spoke under the influence of the divine afflatus it was not they, but the Spirit, that uttered the words. So entirely were the prophets separated from the Spirit, who made use of their organs of speech, that the oracles were uttered in the first person,² and the Spirit, speaking through the mouth of a woman, used the masculine forms of speech.³ All this was new.

¹ Compare *St. John's Gospel*, xiv. 16-26; xv. 7-15. It ought to be remembered that the most strenuous opponents of the Montanists denied the authenticity and authority of the *Gospel of St. John* and also of the *Apocalypse*.

² Compare the prophetic utterances as collected by Bonwetsch in his *Geschichte des Montanismus*, pp. 197 ff., Oracles 1, 3, 4, 5, 12, 18, 21. It ought to be remembered however that this applies only to some of the utterances.

³ Compare oracle 11; it is from Epiphanius, *Heresies*, xlviii. 13.

On the other hand, if the Phrygian movement be connected, as it must be, with the strenuous action of Christians in Gaul, North Africa, and indeed throughout most parts of the empire, these novelties were toned down in such a way that very little that was new remained. We may mis-read the Montanist utterances which belong to its earliest period if we interpret them as Tertullian and others did;¹ but there is no misreading the feelings, thoughts and strivings of that great mass of Christians that welcomed the movement as something which encouraged them to resist that secularising of the Church which was being pressed forward by the heads of so many of the more powerful Christian communities.

When Dr. Salmon² says that the bulk of what Tertullian taught as a Montanist he probably would equally have taught if Montanus had never lived, the statement, thoroughly correct, shows that Tertullian and the conservative Christians he represented saw in the Montanist movement something which was no innovation, but a strong assistance in preserving the old condition of the Church with its prophetic ministry, its rules for daily life, its separation from the world, and its expectation of the nearness of the coming of the Lord to found His millennial kingdom. The real question between these conservative Christians and the majority of their brethren was not about the government of the local churches. They all accepted the three-fold ministry, and both parties professed to accept and to honour prophecy. But the advanced party, which in the end triumphed, would subject the prophets to the official ministry; while the conservatives insisted that prophecy should be free as in the old days, and specially free to interfere with and rebuke the

¹ Harnack, whose view of Montanism is very much his own, insists strongly upon this. Compare his *History of Dogma*, ii. 95 n. 2 (Engl. Trans.). On the other hand it must be remembered that the Montanist sayings recorded have all, save those which have come to us from Tertullian, been transmitted by their bitter enemies who may have exaggerated.

² *Dictionary of Christian Biography*, iii. 943b.

growing desire for conformity with the world and for coming to terms with the State.¹

A conservative reaction can scarcely avoid exaggerating the phases of Church life or organization for which it contends and perhaps suffers. This was probably true of the reaction in the second and in the beginning of the third centuries; but the conception that Montanism in the larger sense of the word (i.e. in the sense which includes Tertullian) was an innovation, and that the party in the Church which it attacked were carrying on the old line of Church life and usages, is untenable and in face of all the facts of history. The distinctive features of Montanism: its appreciation of the prophetic ministry, its conception of the Gospel as the new law, its refusal to entrust the office-bearers of the local churches with the restoration of those who had lapsed into grievous sins unless on the recommendation of a prophet speaking in the Spirit, and its views about the near approach of the millennial kingdom of the Lord, were all characteristic of the earlier Christianity.

The question of prophecy may be taken as an example:

It is true that *after* the separation between the Montanists and the "great" Church, Christian theologians vehemently opposed the Montanist theory of the nature of prophecy, and especially protested against the idea that true prophecy was ecstatic. But this was an afterthought for the purpose of discrediting the Montanist movement and claims. This can be shown by a comparison of the statements made about the prophecy which existed and was honoured within the Christian Church before the Montanist movement arose and while the earlier stages of the antagonism lasted.² The nature of the

¹ Compare Ramsay, *The Church in the Roman Empire*, p. 435.

² For Montanism compare:—Ritschl, *Die Entstehung der altkatholischen Kirche* (1857), 2nd ed. pp. 462-554; Bonwetsch, *Geschichte des Montanismus* (1881); also article in the *Zeitschrift für kirchliche Wissenschaft und kirchliches Leben* (1884) on *Die Prophetie im apostolischen und nachapostolischen Zeitalter*; Renan, *Les Crises du Catholicisme Naissant*, *Revue des Deux Mondes* (1881), Febr. 15; also in his *Marc Aurèle* (1882), pp. 208 ff.;

Christian prophecy remains the same down to the time of Irenaeus, whose descriptions are not different from those of Justin Martyr. Justin declares that prophetic gifts existed in the Church in his time. "For one receives the spirit of understanding, another of counsel, another of healing, another of strength, another of foreknowledge, another of teaching, and another of the fear of God."¹ "The prophetic gifts remain with us even to the present time,"² he says. They abide in fulfilment of the Old Testament promise quoted by St. Peter on the day of Pentecost.³ Irenaeus declares that prophecy existed in the Church in his days. "For some (believers) do certainly cast out devils, so that those who have thus been cleansed from evil spirits do frequently both believe and join the Church. Others have knowledge of things to come; they see visions and utter prophetic expressions."⁴ He goes on to say that these things come about not by performing incantations, but by praying to the Lord in a pure, sincere and straightforward spirit. Tertullian has given us a vivid picture of what this kind of prophecy was like. He says:⁵ "We have now among us a sister whose lot it has been to be favoured with sundry gifts of revelation, which she experiences in the Spirit by ecstatic vision amidst the sacred rites on the Lord's Day in the Church. She converses with angels and even with the Lord. She both sees and hears mysterious communications (*sacramenta*). Some men's hearts she understands, and to them who are in need

Voigt, *Eine verscholl ne Urkunde des antimontanistischen Kampfes* (1891); articles on Montanism in the *Dictionary of Christian Biography* by Salmon, in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* by Harnack, and in *Herzog's Real-Encyclopædie* by Möller; Harnack's *Das Monchthum, seine Ideale und seine Geschichte* (1886), 3rd ed.; and his *History of Dogma* (1896), ii. pp. 94-108 of the Engl. Transl. The monograph of Bonwetsch is the most complete. He has collected in an appendix (p. 197) all the recorded utterances of the Montanists, and an elaborate statement of all our sources of information appears on pp. 16-55.

¹ Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 39.

² *Dialogue with Trypho*, 82.

³ *Ibid.*, 39, 82.

⁴ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, II. xxxii. 4, 5.

⁵ Tertullian, *De Anima*, 9.

she distributes remedies. Whether it be in the reading of the Scriptures, or in the chanting of Psalms, or in the preaching of sermons, or in the offering up of prayers—in all these religious services matter and opportunity are afforded to her of seeing visions. . . . After the people are dismissed, at the conclusion of the sacred services she is in the regular habit of reporting to us whatever things she may have seen in vision—for all her communications are examined with the most scrupulous care that their truth may be probed."

Besides, the theory of the nature of prophecy ascribed to the Montanists was the theory of the second century. Prophecy was described as ecstatic. It is difficult, perhaps, to understand exactly what was meant by the word. This, however, is clear, that it meant that what came from the prophet was something given him, and was not the result of his ordinary powers of intelligence; also that the prophet could not prophesy at will, but had to wait for the divine afflatus, which might come quite unexpectedly or in answer to prayer. If this be all that is meant by ecstasy it is plain that the Church of the second century believed that its prophecy was ecstatic. Hermas declares that in true prophecy the spirit "speaks only when God wishes it to speak," and that the "man filled with the Spirit of God speaks to the multitude as the Lord wishes."¹ The statements of Irenaeus about true prophecy are exactly the same. He says that the gift of prophecy comes from the grace of God alone, and "that only those on whom God sends His grace from above possess that divinely-bestowed power of prophesying." Prophets "speak where and when God pleases."² We have seen how the prophetic afflatus came upon Ignatius when preaching to the Philadelphians, and how he cried out, speaking things quite unpremeditated which he felt had been given him to speak.³ It was afterwards maintained that the Montanist theory of prophecy meant more than this, and the famous

¹ Compare p. 234 n. ² Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, I. xiii. 4.

³ *Epistle to the Philadelphians*, 7. Compare pp. 189 n., 129.

dictum of Montanus is continually quoted to mean more and to be repudiated. Montanus has said: "Behold the man is as a lyre, and I sweep over him as a plectrum. The man sleeps, and I wake. Behold it is the Lord who estranges the souls of men from themselves and gives them souls"; and the metaphor suggests that man is a merely passive instrument in the hands of God.¹

But even if we are to argue from a metaphor (always a dangerous kind of reasoning), it should be remembered that the same or similar metaphors were used to describe non-Montanist prophecy. Athenagoras speaks of the Spirit of God moving "the mouths of the prophets like musical instruments," and of the Spirit making use of the prophets as "a flute-player breathes into his flute."² The author of the *Cohortatio ad Gentes* uses the famous metaphor of Montanus and speaks of the "divine plectrum descending from heaven and using righteous men as an instrument like a harp or lyre," in order to reveal to men things divine and heavenly.³ It is impossible to say that Montanist prophecy was a new thing, and that Montanism in exalting the prophetic ministry was not thoroughly conservative in its endeavour.⁴

The same result is reached when we consider the Montanist discipline. The whole movement was a protest against that growing conformity with the world which the Church of the second century had felt constrained to attempt, under the leadership of the office-bearers of the local churches. Like all conservative reactions, it exaggerated the characteristics it had arisen to conserve, but that was the only great difference.

It is probable that the movement in Phrygia had continued

for some years before there was any break with the "great" Church: and after the separation did take place efforts were made to bring the leaders on both sides together again. The Martyrs of Lyons wrote urging peace, and the Roman Church had serious thoughts of interfering on the side of unity.¹ Such attempts would probably have been unsuccessful. The separation came; and in Phrygia at least, the great proportion of the Christian people sided with the party of Montanus. It became the Kataphrygian Church (the Church-according-to-the-Phrygians), and continued so for long. When the Emperor Constantine recognized the Christian religion the Marcionite and Montanist Christians did not share in the peace of the Church. The persecutions against them were rather intensified. The Phrygian Montanists, however, were not overwhelmed; but according to Sozomen Montanists disappeared elsewhere.² Penal laws of increasing severity were enacted against them by Christian emperors. Their churches were confiscated; a rigorous search was made for their religious writings, which were destroyed when discovered; the ordination of their clergy was made a penal offence; the power of disposing of their property by will was denied them, and their nearest Catholic relatives were allowed to seize their possessions—and still they remained true to their church and to the prophetic ministry.³ At last in the sixth century the Emperor Justinian resolved to stamp them out, and the historian Procopius tells us that in their despair the Montanists gathered themselves, with their wives and

¹ Eusebius, *Eccles. Hist.* V. iii. 4; Tertullian, *Adversus Praxean*, 1:—"For after the bishop of Rome had acknowledged the prophetic gifts of Montanus, Prisca and Maximilla, and, in consequence of the acknowledgment, had bestowed his peace on the Churches of Asia and Phrygia (i.e. had declared himself in communion with them), Praxeas, by importunately urging false accusations against the prophets themselves and their Churches and insisting on the authority of the bishop's predecessors in the see, compelled him to recall the pacific letter which he had issued, as well as from his purpose of acknowledging the said gifts."

² *Eccles. Hist.* ii. 32; cf. vii. 12.

³ Imperial edicts of 398 A.D. and 415 A.D.

¹ Bonwetsch, *Geschichte des Montanismus*, p. 197.

² *Plca for the Christians*, 7, 9.

³ Pseudo-Justin, *Cohortatio ad Gentes*, 8.

⁴ It may be said that this second century theory of prophecy abandoned St. Paul's great principle that the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets, and perhaps that is so. But the point here is that the Church and Montanism had to begin with the same theory of prophecy.

children, into their churches, and setting fire to the buildings perished in the flames¹ rather than submit to the bishops' Church which had urged the persecution through all these centuries, and had forbidden the members to have any communion with Montanists, even when confined in a common prison for a common faith. All this bitterness and all this bloodshed because some Christians would insist that the prophetic ministry should be kept in the position assigned to it by St. Paul, and should not be subject to the rule of the elders "who are in the Church—those who possess the succession from the apostles."

The "Great Church," as it then began to be called, separated from her daughters, the Marcionite and the Montanist churches, went forth to her task of subduing the Roman world under the guidance of a three-fold ministry which ruled in every Christian community within the Empire. In its efforts to do its work thoroughly the organization of the great Empire, and especially its religious organization, became, as we shall afterwards see, a study growing in attractiveness and presenting points for imitation by the leaders of the society.

In this changed organization of the second and third centuries the old prophetic ministry was completely abandoned, and the local or congregational ministry had now no superiors to interfere with them and to supersede them in exhortation, in the dispensing of the Holy Supper, and in prescribing how Christians ought to live in the fear of God. The revolt against the changes made had ended in the conservatives, zealous for that ministry which had come down from apostolic days, and which St. Paul had placed at the head of the gifts bestowed by God upon His people, being driven out of the Church, and in their forming separate societies. The ministry which remained is what represented the "helps" and "piloting" which God had placed in the Church. It was the spontaneous creation of the individual local churches. The ministry "from above" had

¹ Procopius, *Historia Arcana*, 11.

disappeared; but what remained was not the less divine because it had been the creation of the congregation, for it was based on the possession and the recognition of "gifts" of service and rule which God had bestowed according to His promise upon His worshipping people.

Pictures of this ministry which ruled in the end of the second and in the earlier part of the third century, have been preserved for us in early ecclesiastical manuals. Perhaps the *Canons of Hippolytus* may be most fitly selected to furnish them.¹ These canons are thoroughly representative. They were the work of a western ecclesiastic, and they form the basis of almost all the later ecclesiastical discipline of the Eastern Church. They are also especially interesting, because they contain the clearest description of Christian public worship which we have between the Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians and the much later *Apostolic Constitutions*.

The Christian society consisted of believers and their children; with a fringe of catechumens or candidates for baptism, and those who were still only inquirers into the truths of the Christian faith. The community was sharply divided into clergy and laity,² with a number of persons who stood between the two

¹ *Texte und Untersuchungen*, VI. iv., *Die ältesten Quellen des orientalischen Kirchenrechts, erstes Buch, Die canones Hippolyti*, Dr. Hans Achelis (1891). Riedel, *Die Kirchenrechtsquellen des Patriarchats Alexandrien* (1900), pp. 193-230;—*Die Canones Hippolyti*. Compare Funk, *Die Apostolischen Constitutionen* (1891), pp. 265-80; Wordsworth, *The Ministry of Grace* (1901), pp. 18-42; de Lagarde in Bunsen's *Analecta Ante-Nicaena*, ii. 37; Sohm, *Kirchenrecht*, i. 287 n. 20. Achelis gives in parallel columns extracts from Ludolf's *Ethiopic Statutes*, from the Coptic *Heptateuch* (a new translation made by Steindorf), and from the eighth book of the *Apostolic Constitutions*.

² The division of the congregation into clergy and laity and the common mode of making the difference apparent in daily ecclesiastical life were both borrowed from the usages of the civil society round them. The laity were called *plebs* and the clergy the *ordo*—the names applied to the commons and the senate of the Italian and provincial towns. As the members of the senate or the *ordo* had a special bench, called the *consessus*, in the basilica or court-house, so the clergy had special seats in church. "It is the authority of the Church," says Tertullian, "that

sections, and who were specially honoured for their services or character—the confessors, the widows (honoured for their abundant prayer and for their nursing the sick),¹ and celibates and virgins. The office-bearers included the pastor (now invariably called the bishop), elders, deacons, readers, and, perhaps, subdeacons. At the head of all stood the bishop, in whom the whole congregational life centred. He was chosen by the whole congregation, who assembled in church for the purpose. The people were taught to recognize that God was with them while they selected their pastor. When they had made their choice known and had clearly intimated the man whom they had elected, they were enjoined to say, “Oh God, strengthen him whom *Thou* hast prepared for us.”²

It was the rule, when the bishop was set apart to his office, that the neighbouring bishops should be present; but this was not essential. The congregation possessed within itself the power and authority to carry out the ordination of their chief office-bearer. When all things were ready, and the whole congregation had assembled in Church, one of the bishops or one of the elders of the congregation, was selected to perform the act of ordination, which consisted in laying his hands on the head of the bishop-elect and praying over him.³ The beautiful prayer of consecration is given.⁴ God was asked

makes the difference between the ordo and the plebs—this and the honour consecrated by the special bench of the ordo” (*De Exhortatione Castitatis*, 7).

¹ “Viduis propter copiosas orationes, infirmiorum curam et frequens jejuniū præcipuus honor tribuatur,” Can. ix.

² “Episcopus eligatur ex omni populo . . . dicat populus: nos eligimus eum. Deinde silentio facto in toto grege post exhomologesin omnes pro eo orent dicentes: O Deus, corrobora hunc, quem nobis preparasti,” Can. ii.

³ “Deinde eligatur unus ex episcopis et presbyteris, qui manum capiti ejus imponat, et oret dicens,” Can. ii.

⁴ “O Deus, Pater domini nostri Jesus Christi, Pater misericordiarum et Deus totius consolationis . . . Respice super N., servum tuum, tribuens virtutem tuam et spiritum efficacem, quem tribuisti sanctis apostolis per dominum nostrum Jesum Christum, filium tuum unicum; illis, qui

to fill the bishop with the Spirit possessed by the apostles who founded the churches everywhere; to bless him in permitting him to rule a blameless flock; to make him a pattern in all holy living; to make him powerful in prayer; to give him grace to declare the pardon of sins; and to make him able to break the chains in which the evil spirits held any of his flock. The prayer makes us see what the duties of the bishop were. He led the public devotions of his people; he presided over the exercise of discipline; he had the care of the poor and of the sick; he was to drive out the evil spirits who troubled the bodies and the souls of members of his flock. The congregation was a Church of Christ because they were endeavouring to live the life of new obedience to which their Lord had called them, and the man at their head, their representative, was expected to be the saintliest man among them. If he had not learning, the reader was there to read and expound the Scriptures; if he possessed few administrative gifts the elders and the deacons were beside him to aid him; but a man of prayer and of holy life he *must* be—there could be no substitute for that.

Nothing is said about the election of elders, and it is impossible to say whether they were chosen by the people or nominated by the bishop or co-opted by the session. But we have two interesting bits of information which show from what classes of men the elders were often drawn. Martyrs and confessors were to be made elders. The martyr was one who, for

fundaverunt ecclesiam in omni loco ad honorem et gloriam nominis tui sancti. Quia tu cognovisti cor uniuscujusque, concede illi, ut ipse sine peccato videat populum tuum, ut mereatur pascere gregem tuum magnum sacrum. Effice etiam, ut mores ejus sint superiores omni populo sine ulla declinatione. Effice etiam, ut propter præstantiam illi ab omnibus invidetur, et accipe orationes ejus et oblationes ejus, quas tibi offeret die noctuque, et sint tibi odor suavis. Tribue etiam illi, O Domine, episcopatum et spiritum clementem et potestatem ad remittenda peccata; et tribue illi facultatem ad dissolvenda omnia vincula iniquitatis daemonum, et ad sanandos omnes morbos, et contere Satanam sub pedibus ejus velociter, per dominum nostrum Jesum Christum, per quem tibi gloria cum ipso et Spiritu Sancto in sæcula sæculorum. Amen.” Can. iii.

the faith's sake, had stood before the civil tribunal and had been punished. He became an elder at once; "his confession was his ordination." If a man had made a confession before the court and had not suffered, he was to be made an elder by the bishop, and the same was to be done to a Christian slave who had confessed and had suffered. Only, the bishop in these two cases was to omit the petition for the bestowal of the Holy Spirit.¹ The other case is even more interesting. Those men who possess the "gift" of healing are to be ordained presbyters after careful investigation be made that the "gift" is really possessed and that the cures do really come from God.² The leaders of the churches seem to be anxious to enrol within the regular ministry of the congregation, and to prevent them overshadowing its authority, all who are possessed of "gifts," or whom Christ has honoured by permitting them to be witnesses for Him. The elder was ordained by the bishop, who used the same prayer of consecration which was employed in the ordination of bishops, substituting only the word *presbyteratum* for *episcopatum*, for according to the theory of the Canons the elder was the equal of the bishop in all things save a special seat

¹ "Quando quis dignus est, qui stet coram tribunali et afficiatur poena propter Christum, postea autem indulgentia liber dimittitur, talis postea meretur gradum presbyteralem coram Deo, non secundum ordinationem quae fit ab episcopo. Immo, confessio est ordinatio ejus. Quodsi vero episcopus fit, ordinetur. Si quis confessione emissa tormentis laesus non est, dignus est presbyteratu; attamen ordinetur per episcopum. Si talis, cum servus alicujus esset, propter Christum cruciatus pertulit, talis similiter est presbyter gregi. Quamquam enim formam presbyteratus non acceperit, tamen spiritum presbyteratus adeptus est; episcopus igitur omittat orationis partem, quae ad spiritum sanctum pertinet," Can. vi.

² "Si quis petitionem porrigit, quae ad ipsius ordinationem pertinet, quod dicit: Nactus sum charisma sanationis, non prius ordinetur, quam clarescat ea res. Imprimis inquirendum est, num sanationes, quae per eum fiunt, revera a Deo deriventur," Can. viii. We see in this an echo of the verse in the Epistle of James:—"Is any one among you sick? let him call for the elders of the Church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith shall save him that is sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, it shall be forgiven him" (v. 14, 15).

in the church and the right to ordain elders and deacons.¹ The elder was therefore to be filled with the spirit of the apostles; to be an example to the flock; to be powerful in prayer; to care for the sick; to attend to discipline. The elders assisted the bishop in the conduct of public worship; they placed their hands on the offerings while the bishop prayed the prayer of thanksgiving; they stood on either side of the catechumens when they were baptized, and they introduced them into the congregation.² The visitation of the sick, the power to drive out by means of prayer the evil spirit which was believed to produce disease, the care of the young and the exercise of discipline, were the peculiar duties of the elders, as they appear in these Canons.

The deacon, on the other hand, is the official who does the subordinate services. He is told to remember that he is the servant of God, the servant of the bishop and the servant of the elders. The deacons visit the congregation, report cases of sickness to the bishop and to the elders; they have special charge over the poor, especially of the "secret poor," widows, orphans and strangers. They undertake the instruction of the catechumens and report to the bishop when they are ripe for baptism.³

Not much is said about the duties of the "widows" and the "virgins," but they seem to look after the women and the girls as the deacons care for the men. The "widows" are the sick-nurses of the community, and are to be honoured for these loving services and for their prayers for the whole congregation.

¹ "Si autem ordinatur presbyter, omnia cum eo similiter agantur ac cum episcopo, nisi quod cathedrae non insideat. Etiam eadem oratio super eo oreitur tota ut super episcopo, cum sola exceptione nominis episcopatus. Episcopus in omnibus rebus aequiparetur presbytero excepto nomine cathedrae et ordinatione, quia potestas ordinandi ipsi non tribuitur," Can. iv. It should be noted however that a martyr or one who has confessed the Lord and suffered for his confession and who *ipso facto* becomes an elder does not become a bishop unless by regular ordination; and the equality in theory is not one of fact.

² Canon xix.

³ Canons v., xvii.

The picture of the Christian community presented in these Canons is that of a single congregation ruled by a pastor or bishop with his session of elders, who, theoretically of the same ecclesiastical rank as himself, are in practice his assistants. The laity are in the position of loving subordination which Ignatius contemplated and urged. The brotherhood of the members of the community is expressively shown in the way in which newly baptized catechumens, introduced formally by the elder, are greeted with the kiss of welcome and received with expressions of joy;¹ in the care for the sick and the poor; in the provisions for nursing suffering women by the "widows" and the "virgins"; and in the thought that it is the duty of the widows to pray for the whole congregation.

The little society is thoroughly self-governing and independent. It contains within itself the power to perform all ecclesiastical acts from the selection and ordination of its bishop² to the expulsion of offenders;³ but it nevertheless belongs to a wide society or larger brotherhood, and this is expressed in the usual but not essential practice of associating neighbouring bishops with its elders in the ordination of its bishop.⁴

The acts of worship are described with greater detail in these Canons than in any earlier Christian document save the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians. St. Paul has given us more information about the meeting for Exhortation; these Canons tell us more about the meeting for Thanksgiving—indeed, they present us with the earliest complete description of this crowning act of Christian worship. As in apostolic times, we find two separate meetings for public worship—the meeting for Exhortation and the meeting for Thanksgiving—but the latter is no longer associated with a common meal. No forms of prayer are given for use at the former, but there is a set form of service prescribed for the latter. Both are held on the Lord's

¹ "Jam cum toto populo orant, qui eos osculentur gaudentes cum iis cum jubilatione," Can. xix.

² Canon ii.

³ Canons i. xi.-xvi.

⁴ Canon ii.

Day—the meeting for Exhortation early in the morning, and the Eucharistic service in the afternoon.¹

The exercises at the meeting for Exhortation were prayers, singing of psalms and hymns, reading portions of Scripture and exhortation in sermon and address.² No details are given us about the order of the service save that there was a prayer between the reading of each portion of the Scripture. The early freedom of worship no longer existed. The reading, prayers, and exhortation were all in the hands of the clergy. The people shared in the singing only. It was expected that they should join heartily in this part of the service, for one of the questions put to candidates for baptism was whether they had sung heartily in the service of praise.³ This service was held not only on the Lord's Day, but on every day of the week. It was the daily worship of the great Christian family. The Canons order that the elders, deacons, readers and people are to come to church at cock-crow (*quo tempore canit gallus*), and to consecrate the day by a service of prayer, praise, and reading the Word. All the clergy, save the bishop, are strictly ordered to be present. Only sickness or absence on a journey are to be taken as excuses. The catechumens,⁴ whose instructions in the faith by the deacons seems to have been given just before the service began, were

¹ It must have been in the afternoon: for although the rule was that the whole service must end before sundown, there was often an *Agape* or *Supper* afterwards and it had to be finished before darkness had come. Can. xxxii.

² "Congregentur quotidie in ecclesia presbyteri et diaconi et anagnostai omnisque populus tempore gallicinii, vacentque orationi, psalmis, et lectioni scripturarum cum orationibus. . . . De Clero autem qui convenire negligunt, neque morbo neque itinere impediti, separantur," Can. xxi. "Porro autem tempore, quo canit gallus, instituendae sunt orationes in ecclesiis," Can. xxvii.

³ Catechumenus baptismo initiandus si ab iis, qui eum adducunt, bono testimonio commendatur, eum illo tempore, quo instruebatur, infirmos visitasse et debiles sustentasse seque ab omni perverso sermone custodisse, laudes cecinisse, numque oderit vanam gloriam, num contempserit superbiam, sibi que elegerit humilitatem," Can. xix.

⁴ "Quando vero doctor quotidianum pensum docendi terminavit, orent separati a christianis," Can. xvii.

required to be present, and had a special place assigned to them. If any members of the congregation were unable to be present at this morning worship they are enjoined to read the Scriptures at home, so that the first thing that the sun sees when it shines into their windows in the morning may be the long roll of Scripture unfolded on their knees.¹

The Eucharistic service is described at much greater length, and the details have to be collected from instructions scattered throughout the Canons.² It had three parts—an introductory service, the actual Holy Supper, and the receiving and distributing the thankofferings. Most of the details are clearly enough stated, but it is impossible to say with any certainty whether a sermon was part of the introductory service. It was so in the time of Justin Martyr,³ and his account is so like an outline whose details can be filled in by what is directed in these Canons, that it is improbable that this very important portion of the service had fallen into disuse. It may be, however, that the sermon, which must have been given at the morning service on the Lord's Day,⁴ was considered to suffice, and that

¹ "Quocunque die in ecclesia non orant, sumas scripturam, ut legas in ea. Sol conspiciat matutino tempore scripturam super genua tua," Can. xxvii. 1.

² The canons have been carefully analyzed and the information they convey on the services and organization brought together by Dr. Achelis in his admirable edition. I have made full use of his labour. In one rather important point, however, I fail to follow his arguments. He believes that the bishop alone was entitled to conduct the eucharistic service when it took place on a Sunday, and that the provisions for an elder or a deacon presiding refers only to week-day celebrations. The statements made in the Canons are not distinct and our conclusions are only inferences. The reasons for the delegation seem to me to be the necessary absence of the bishop and the necessary absence of the elders; and apply equally well to the Sunday as to other celebrations. It was natural that provision should be made where Christian congregations were scattered and far from each other.

³ Justin's order of service is:—Prolonged reading of the scriptures, sermon by the pastor or bishop, prayer, the Bread and Wine brought in. *Apology*, i. 67.

⁴ Compare Canon xli.

the service described by Justin had been divided into two parts.

The Eucharistic service, held in the evening or in the late afternoon,¹ began by the readers, placed at an elevated desk, reading portions of Scripture one after another, the readers taking turns and relieving each other. This went on for some time while the congregation were gradually assembling.² If there was a sermon by the bishop it would be delivered after the reading was over and all had taken their places. A prayer including confession of sins followed. The bishop stood behind a table, called the "Table of the Body and Blood of the Lord," the elders on his right hand and on his left. The elements, bread and wine, which had been furnished by intending communicants, were then brought in by the deacons,³ and were placed on the Table before the bishop. The elders, deacons and readers were all dressed in white—the colour of festival times.⁴ Then the bishop and the elders placed their hands on the bread and on the cup, and the bishop began the responsive prayers:—

The bishop . . . *The Lord be with you all.*

The congregation . . . *And with Thy spirit.*

The bishop . . . *Lift up your hearts.*

The congregation . . . *We have, to the Lord.*

The bishop . . . *Let us give thanks to the Lord.*

The congregation . . . *Worthy and righteous.*⁵

The bishop then prayed over the elements (no form of prayer being given).⁶ The bishop himself distributed. He stood by

¹ The whole service had to be over before sundown; and there was frequently a common meal late in the evening.

² "*Etiam anagnostai habebant festiva indumenta, et stent in loco lectionis et alter alterum excipiat, donec totus populus congregetur,*" Can. xxxvii.

³ Canons iii. xix.

⁴ "Quotiescunque episcopus mysteriis frui vult, congregentur diaconi et presbyteri apud eum, induti vestimentis albis pulchrioribus toto populo potissimum autem splendidis. Bona autem opera omnibus vestimentis praestant," Can. xxxvii.

⁵ Canon iii.

⁶ It is probable that this prayer was extempore; no form is prescribed

the "Table of the Body and Blood of the Lord." The people came one by one to the bishop, who first gave the Bread, saying, "This is the Body of the Lord," and then the Cup, saying, "This is the Blood of the Lord," and the people answered "Amen."¹ At the celebration at which the newly baptized communicants partook, the elders who stood beside the bishop had cups of milk and honey in their hands, and the communicants partook of these also from the hands of the elders to show that they had become as little children and fed on the food of infants;² but whether this ceremony accompanied every celebration of the Holy Supper is uncertain. The deacons who brought in the elements were required to sing a psalm as they entered, and the sound of the singing is compared to the tinkle of the bells on the robes of Aaron.³

After the celebration the faithful, who all remained in the church, came forward to the "Table" and presented their offerings, the firstfruits. These consisted of all kinds of useful things—oil, wine, milk, honey, eatables of all kinds, the fruit of trees and the fruit of the ground (apples and cucumbers being specially mentioned), wool, cloth and money. They were all placed at or on the table.⁴ The bishop prayed the prayer of

in the Canons, and many forms for other parts of the service are given in the text; the prayer of consecration was extempore in the time of Justin Martyr (*Apology*, i. 67:—"The president offers prayers and thanksgivings according to his ability").

¹ "Communicat populum stans ad mensam corporis et sanguinis Domini . . . Deinde porrigat illis episcopus de corpore Christi dicens: Hoc est corpus Christi; illi vero dicant: Amen; et ei, quibus ille calicem porrigit dicens: Hic est sanguis Christi, dicant: Amen," Can. xix.

² Canon xix.:—"Et presbyteri portant alios calices lactis et mellis ut doceant eos, qui communicant, iterum eos natos esse ut parvuli, quia parvuli communicant lac et mel."

³ Canon xxix.:—"Et sint illis psalmi pro tintinabulis, quae erant in tunica Aaronis."

⁴ This offertory or collection in *kind*, which the records of the early centuries bring vividly before us, can be seen in village churches in India at present. The offerings there include many things not mentioned in the text. Great baskets are deposited in which the people place small parcels of all kind of grain, the produce of their fields, fruits, cooked food.

thanksgiving over the gifts and the givers—a special thanksgiving being said over the oil, probably because it was so much used in ecclesiastical services. The bishop then pronounced the Benediction, and the people responded with the Doxology: Glory to Thee, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for ever and ever.¹

This did not end the service, however. The offerings had to be distributed before the going down of the sun. The poor, the widows and the orphans rose from their places, and came to the bishop, who distributed to them the offerings which had been received, and also the bread and wine which had remained after the Communion.² Portions were no doubt reserved for those in prison, for strangers who might arrive during the week, and for the sick who were unable to come to church.³ The Canons forbid any of these offerings being reserved for the clergy, as was the custom in later times, and those of them who required assistance were reckoned among the poor.⁴

It was the custom for one of the wealthier members of the congregation to give a supper on the evening of Sunday to the poor of the congregation. Members who had come from a distance, as Justin Martyr tells us they did, were doubtless included.⁵

eggs, flasks of oil and live poultry. I once saw a portion of the offertory running away with the beadle! It was a lively young sheep, and when the beadle tried to hold it, it pulled him round the corner of the church. Missionaries from Ceylon have assured me that the Christian matrons are accustomed to put aside every tenth handful of the rice or other things to be cooked and thus collect during the week what is given on Sunday. They say that when the people were heathen they did the same in order to present offerings to their priests; and they carry the practice over into Christianity. It was probably the same in heathen antiquity, and this is no doubt the reason why in the Canons the bishop is called "priest" *in connexion with receiving these offerings and not in connexion with his presiding at the Holy Supper* (Canon xxxvi.). The title "priest" (*sacerdos*) is given to the bishop alone and that only when he performs the two functions of exorcising the sick (Canon xxiv.), and of receiving and blessing the offerings (Canon xxxvi.); both actions done by the heathen priests with which the early converts from paganism were quite familiar.

¹ Canon iii.

² Canon xxxii.

³ Canon v., cf. also Justin, *Apology*, i. 65, 67.

⁴ Compare above, p. 201.

⁵ *Apology*, i. 67.

The bishop presided, and the clergy (one deacon at least) were present. The bishop prayed for the host and for the guests, and the prayer of thanksgiving which was said during the Communion service was repeated. When it became dark the deacon had the charge of lighting the lamps, but the supper came to an end before it got very dark. The president generally gave the guests a short address, which he delivered sitting, and which was "for their benefit and for his own." The people were told to eat their fill, but not to drink to excess; not to speak too much; not to shout; and above all not to bring disgrace on their host by indulging in mischievous gossip.¹

It is pleasant to learn that occasional suppers were given to the widows of the congregation. The poor bodies, who are elsewhere praised for their fasting,² seemed to have enjoyed a good supper, where they could eat and drink *ad satietatem neque vero ad ebrietatem*, and to have been inclined to prolong the feast as much as possible, for they need to be warned thrice over within four short sentences that they are to end their supper by the going down of the sun.³ These suppers are called *Agapae* by Dr. Achelis. Dr. Riedel, on the other hand, refuses to translate the word in this way.⁴ This is to be said, however, in justification of Dr. Achelis' translation that the entertainments

¹ Canons xxxii.-xxxv. ² Canons xxxii. ix.

³ "Si quis viduis coenam parare vult, curet, ut habeant coenam et ut dimittantur, *antequam sol occidat*. Si vero sunt multae, caveatur, ne fiat confusio neve impediatur, quominus *ante vesperam dimittantur*. Unicuique autem earum sufficiens cibus potusque. *Sed abeant antequam nox advesperascet*," Can. xxxv.

⁴ Compare Riedel, *Die Kirchenrechtsquellen des Patriarchats Alerandrien* (1900), p. 221 n. He thinks that they correspond with feasts which are still the custom among the Christians of the Levant, and quotes Wansleben:—"Ils ont encore la coutume de faire des Agapes ou des repas de charité après les Bâtêmes, et les enterremens, pour tous ceux qui veulent s'y trouver; donnant à un chacun un plat de bouillie, avec un morceau de viande dedans, et du pain autant qu'il en peut manger; et ces repas se font ou dans l'église même ou sur le toit de l'église, qui est, selon la coutume des Levantins, toujours plat, et capable de contenir un grand nombre d'hommes."

have all a religious significance, that there seems to have been a symbolical breaking of bread at all of them, that one of them, which was a memorial feast in honour of a martyr, was preceded by the celebration of the Holy Supper, and that at all of them the prayer of thanksgiving which was included in the Eucharistic service was recited.¹ The Lord's Day supper, at any rate, has all the appearance of the older Agape, separated from the Holy Supper, and coming after it instead of preceding it.

It is very interesting to observe that there is nothing in the Canons which implies that the Holy Supper has any special and unique sacrificial conceptions attached to it. Such ideas are markedly absent. The word *altar* occurs in the Canons; but in those portions which refer to the act of celebrating the Lord's Supper, the phrase used is "Table of the Body and Blood of the Lord."² The term *offering* is certainly used of the Bread and the Wine in the Holy Supper, but it is equally employed to denote the firstfruits given to the bishop by the people.³ The term *priest* is never found in connexion with ordination or with the celebration of the Holy Supper. It occurs in two references only, and is used of the bishop when he is described as receiving the firstfruits and as exorcising the sick; and since both of these acts were performed by the pagan priesthood it is easy to conjecture why the word is applied to the bishop in these acts.⁴

Reverence in all the actions of public worship is carefully inculcated. The Church is the house of God and the place of prayer with fear; women are not to come there in gaudy apparel,

¹ These memorial feasts were called *Anamneseis*; the custom of celebrating the birthday of an honoured martyr with a memorial feast was one of the usages of primitive Christianity which gave the early Christian societies a superficial resemblance to the pagan *collegia*; compare above p. 126.

² *Altar* occurs in the Canon which tells the clergy to keep the vessels clean, etc. (Canon xxix.); *mensa* is used when the act of communicating is described (Canon xix.).

³ Canons xvii. xxxii. xix.

⁴ Canons xxxvi. xxiv.

and they are not to laugh nor chatter there. A worthy matron was made an "inspectress," to see that the women and girls behaved themselves properly.¹ The clergy are to see that the communion elements are kept with care from all impurity, and specially that flies do not get into the wine of the sacrament. Great care is also to be taken that no drop of the wine nor crumb of bread falls to the ground while the elements are partaken of by the communicants. In short, the Canons contain many a little suggestion, familiar to all missionaries, for the purpose of teaching that reverence in worship which is almost always lacking in heathen religious rites.

These early Christians were men of their generation, however. They believed that the air around them was full of evil spirits bent on their discomfiture, whose malignity had to be guarded against;² but while the traces of such superstitions appear, one cannot fail to see how the attempt is continually made to wean the Christians from pagan superstitions which they have brought over with them into Christianity. To take only one example, sick persons are prohibited from continuing beyond the hours of prayer in the Church or from sleeping there.³ When it is remembered that sick folk were taken to the heathen temples in order that the dwelling in a sacred place might cure them, it is easy to see what the meaning of the prohibition is. One can perceive the doors by which pagan ideas might enter into Christian worship, but the sorry mixture of paganism and Christianity which was to follow Cyprian's conceptions of priesthood and sacrifice were still in the future.

¹ "Mulier libera ne veniat veste variegata . . . neve crines demittat solutos, habeat potius capillos complexos in domo Dei, neve faciat cirros frontales in capite quando vult participare in mysteriis sacris (Canon xvii.). It is one of the marks of a good woman that if she excels male beings in knowledge she does not let any one see that she does!

² The fear of demons appears most strongly in the exorcisms at baptism, in exorcising the bread at the feasts, and in the reason given why no drop of wine or crumb of bread was to be allowed to fall to the ground: the demons might get hold of it. Compare Canons xix. xxix. xxxiv.

³ Canon xxiv.

Such were the ordinary services, and such the organization of a Christian Church in the earlier decades of the third century, before accommodation to imperial points of view and imitation of pagan organization had invaded the Church of Christ.

Perhaps a brief comparison of this organization of the ministry with modern types may bring it more distinctly before us. It had some relation with all modern types of ecclesiastical organization, and was identical with none.

The organization had a certain resemblance to modern Congregationalism, for the vast majority of communities called churches were simply self-governing and independent congregations. The bishop was the pastor of the congregation, and in him, as in a modern congregationalist Church, all the ecclesiastical life centred. On the other hand, this does not apply to all these primitive churches; for the independent unity was the community large or small, and before the close of the second century the larger communities must have included several congregations, and all were served on the collegiate principle by the one bishop and his body of elders and deacons—the *one* pastor or bishop representing the unity of the community. These primitive independent churches all cherished the essential idea that they belonged to, and were portions of, a common visible Church—the Great Church it was called, to distinguish it from the Marcionite and Montanist Churches; but they had not yet discovered the way to express this idea of a visible catholicity in a definite political organization. We have the beginnings of the polity in the common though not universal custom that all the neighbouring bishops assisted at the ordination of a bishop.

The organization had a much greater resemblance to what is commonly called the Presbyterian, and ought properly to be called the Conciliar, system of Church government. The points of agreement are very many. There is common to both the conception of the three-fold ministry of pastor or bishop, elder or presbyter, and deacon, and both have the theoretical equiva-

lence of the offices of bishop and elder (save only a special seat in the Church and the right to ordain elders and deacons), while in practice the bishop or pastor is the real head of the whole of the ecclesiastical life. In both there is the idea that the unit of organization is the Christian community of the place, and the conception that the unity can be preserved by a collegiate administration.¹ Both have the thought that the whole congregational activity centres in the bishop or pastor, who is the leader in public worship and who celebrates the sacraments. Both believe strongly that each congregation is a portion of the visible Catholic Church, that catholicity can best be reduced to a polity by means of representative councils with gradually widening areas of control, and that the ordination of a bishop or pastor is to be performed by the pastors or bishops of the bounds as representatives of the Church Catholic.² The two great differences are: that the modern system of organization insists that the bishop or pastor cannot, of his own authority, delegate to a presbyter or to a deacon the right to celebrate

¹ This characteristic has almost faded out of most English-speaking portions of the great Presbyterian Church, but it remains in the Dutch-speaking parts. The traces remaining in Scotland are the almost forgotten, but still existing, "General Kirk-Sessions" of the larger towns.

² Dr. Sanday has said (*Expositor*, Jan.-June, 1887, p. 113) that in the earlier centuries "every town of any size had its bishop; and if there were several churches, they were served by the clergy whom the bishop kept about him: they were in fact like our (Church of England) present 'chapels of ease,' and the whole position of the bishop was very similar to that of the incumbent of the parish church in one of our smaller towns. The tendency at first, as Ignatius shows, was towards complete centralization: the whole serving of the *paroikia* was directly in the hands of the bishop. The parish system in the later sense, with an extended diocese, and a number of more or less independent clergy circling round the bishop, did not grow up until the 6th-9th centuries, when it took shape mainly in France under the Merovingian and Carolingian kings. In some respects the Nonconformist communities of our own time furnish a closer parallel to the primitive state of things than an Established Church can possibly do." This is all true so far as it goes; but it takes no account of the three-fold ministry, which is not exhibited in an English parish. The primitive three-fold ministry appears however as soon as the Border is crossed into Scotland or over into Holland.

the sacraments, and that the bishop or pastor of the early centuries had almost unlimited control over the ecclesiastical finances and property of the congregation. This characteristic of primitive Christian organization arose from the fact that at first the sole property was the firstfruits given to the bishop at the close of the Holy Supper and distributed afterwards by him, and it was strengthened when the churches were able to hold buildings and burial places by the Roman laws regulating the property of corporations.¹

The modern episcopal system, apart from the retention of the name "bishop," has fewest points of resemblance to what we find in the ancient ecclesiastical manuals we have been studying; but the germs of the mediaeval and modern episcopacy are there in the power which the primitive bishop possessed of delegating functions which were peculiarly his, such as baptizing and celebrating the Holy Communion, to his elders and even to his deacons.

¹ Compare Ramsay, *The Church in the Roman Empire*, p. 431. Many illustrations of the legal principles and their effects on the tenure of Church property laid down by Professor Ramsay may be found not only within the Turkish Empire, but in the Tributary Indian States, such as the Nizam's Territories, where the Mohammedan law rules.