

## LECTURE VI

### APOSTOLICAL SUCCESSION

#### I

THE tension between community and individual is characteristic wherever life has made its appearance, and since thought began philosophy has struggled with the problem of the one and the many. Precisely parallel is the difficult question of authority and freedom, law and liberty. Progress, of the reality of which biology leaves us no doubt, seems to depend in some degree upon the management of this delicate relationship of complementary opposites. The general movement of things appears to be at once the establishment of order out of chaos, and the production of phenomena like personality and originality by processes involving the outbreak of chaos from order. History depicts action and reaction, movement and stabilisation, the conservative clinging to what has satisfied him, and the radical abjuring what has disgusted him in experience. Balance of obedience and self-assertion is necessary to any kind of attainment: one must submit to nature in order to its mastery. To be a great musician one must play scales till one is nearly dead: to be a great thinker one must yield to the alphabet; to be a revolutionary one must give in to being a vertebrate. The future needs the past as foundation, as the past demands the future by way of fulfilment.

Von Hügel<sup>1</sup> has pictured the Church as "both daring to the verge of presumption, and prudent to the verge of despair." Both elements in this tension are indispensable. For the moment we concentrate upon one of them, and consider the fundamental principle of authority, as ultimate as the instinct of self-preservation, as basic as the conception of permanence.

That the subject is very puzzling is proved by the story of the Garden of Eden; but ever since the beginning of things it has at least been plain that, historically, being comes before well-being, and the idea of security has consequently exercised enormous influence. A primitive tribe "will survive only by observing

customs and conventions, moral, social, and religious, which have come down to it wearing a halo of authority. The doctrine of the Divine Right of Kings, pagan stories of heavenly parentage, a Koran fallen straight from Heaven, commandments miraculously promulgated from a burning mountain, royal robes, symbolic vestments, even a doctor's expensive motor car, show the importance to human nature of a feeling of security produced by suggestions as to authority. Said Pascal:<sup>2</sup> "We cannot see a barrister in his robes, with cap on head, without an enhanced opinion of his ability." Of Jesus people said that "He taught them as one that had authority," and He was asked, "By what authority doest Thou these things?" When the Reformers broke with long-established Church tradition, they were obliged to provide their followers with some authority to take its place. At first they were content with the Bible itself as the Word of God; but very soon this had in practice to be superseded by an authoritative interpretation of the Bible in Confessions and Articles, or, in other words, a new Tradition. Always after an upheaval the feeling develops that:

*"The lightning has run masterless too long:  
He must to school."*<sup>3</sup>

The most violent changes become constituent elements in a new permanence. Luther and Calvin were as critical of "inquisitive curiosity" as the Council of Trent itself.

It is in this setting that the teaching with regard to Apostolical Succession must be studied, for it reveals one of the ways in which the Church has sought to further the redemption of mankind by providing a sense of security through a dogmatic claim to authority. The Jews at a certain stage in the development of their civilisation could naturally only be induced to accept laws that had authority because they could claim to be written by the finger of Jehovah Himself. Of course they were written by His finger; this took place through tribal experience crystallised in a leader; but it would have been impossible to impress the fact upon them save in anthropomorphic terms. A seventeenth-century Scot could be led to feel something of the authority of the Word of God when the writers of Scripture were described

to him as "the penmen of the Lord." Of course they were the penmen of the Lord; but that had in fact nothing to do with the verbal inspiration theory, which alone at that time seemed capable of conveying the impression. Similarly, behind the doctrine of Apostolical Succession is the motive to produce confidence in the ministry so that its official acts may have the stamp of validity, and its message the force of authenticity with a view to the advance of Christ's Kingdom. As Archbishop Frederick Temple has written: "The purpose of that succession is to make men feel the unity of the body as it comes down the stream of history, and if possible to touch their hearts with some sense of that power which the Lord bequeathed when He ascended up on high and gave gifts to men."<sup>4</sup> There is something primitive and superstitious about all this, and, of course, it is of no avail except among such as are prepared to accept the dogmatic assertions upon which alone it rests. To others it seems that validity and authenticity can be established quite as satisfactorily in the interests of religion without this particular support. T. M. Lindsay's verdict was: "Apostolic succession, in the dogmatic sense of that ambiguous term, is the legal fiction required by the legal mind to connect the growing conceptions of the authority of the clergy with the earlier days of Christianity."<sup>5</sup>

The assumption is (for, as Hort<sup>6</sup> and other scholars admit, there is nothing of it in the history recorded in Scripture) that Jesus Christ commissioned His Apostles to pass on authority or grace which he had given them, to bishops, and to pass on likewise the capacity to transmit this authority or grace. Bishop William Beveridge has thus stated the dogmatic theory: "The apostolical office hath been handed down from one to another, ever since the Apostles' days to our time, and so will be to the end of the world, Christ Himself being continually present at such imposition of hands, thereby transferring the same Spirit, which He had first breathed into His Apostles, upon others successively after them, as really as He was present with the Apostles themselves, when He first breathed it into them. Insomuch, that they who are thus ordained are said to be made bishops by the Holy Ghost himself, as well as the Apostles were. By which means the Holy Catholic Church always hath been, and still is, truly

Apostolical, as it is called in the Nicene Creed. And the several parts of the Apostolical office are now as effectually performed by their successors, and others ordained under them, as they were while the Apostles themselves lived.”<sup>7</sup>

The theory is that the power of celebrating sacraments is handed on, and thus the means of that grace without which the Church cannot live and its members cannot be saved, are entirely bound up with the charismatic priesthood, and would cease if there were a break in its continuity. The succession is essential to the existence of the Church, because it alone guarantees the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Body of Christ, a presence which dates from Pentecost, and without which the Body would lose its identity. The Church is the society, as members of which, and only as members of which, individual persons come into communion with Christ: this they do through the sacraments rightly administered by persons duly qualified by ordination at the hands of a bishop in orderly descent from the Apostles. The Church thus depends upon the ministry, and not *vice versa*. It is to be noted that there is no one view of Apostolic Succession universally accepted by Orthodox, Romanists and Anglicans. We must distinguish the opinions of early Fathers from those of Cyprian and of Augustine. Gore and Headlam took different positions: so do the present Bishops of Oxford and London. And within the Anglican communion Archbishop Whately of Dublin wrote strongly against the Catholic interpretation,<sup>8</sup> and T. W. Arnold could speak of it as “a mischievous superstition.”<sup>9</sup> We must also distinguish the continuous succession in office of bishops of particular sees, where of course a bishop plays no part in the consecration of his successor, from the later theory as to general succession by ordination, involving the transmission of whatever is transmitted, and making the individual priest representative of the whole Church. But all the theories are concerned to produce a conviction of authority in order to confidence and security.

The original stimulus for the development of such doctrine came from the earlier appearances of heresy and schism. The true Church had to be marked off from all false tendencies in belief and practice, and while the Gnostics might make claims as to

apostolic origin for their special teaching and also for their distinctive sacred literature; the lineal succession of the orthodox bishops was something for which they could not so easily produce a plausible parallel. Later contests with Montanism and Donatism strengthened the position of the orthodox episcopate. Latterly—for example, in England—it is assumed that one true Church can be recognised among the many institutional claimants to the name of Christian, and that to it is reserved the control of the means of grace, power to transmit the Holy Spirit, the right to designate the legitimate instruments for the celebration of the sacraments and the remission of sins.

## II

Protestants revolted from these theories as childish, historically unverifiable, born of sacerdotal arrogance, merely utilitarian in origin, a matter of priestcraft only too familiar in paganism, and no longer capable of achieving their purpose because unconvincing. Again and again the word "superstition" recurs in Calvin's works, and he and other reformers, as belonging to the world of the Renaissance, were apt to be contemptuous of what they called "games of little children,"<sup>10</sup> and perhaps only too confident and enthusiastic about what the new knowledge might supply in their stead, Apostolic Succession being included among the conceits and beguilements rejected.

That lineal succession historically from the days of the Apostles cannot be proved seems unanswerable save on the lines of Bishop Gore's evasion: "If we have reason to believe that Christ intended to institute a self-perpetuating ministry in His Church, He makes Himself responsible for its possibility, and His power is not limited by such material conditions."<sup>11</sup> It can only be accepted on that authority for whose establishment the evidence is itself required. Well may it be called "the slippery chain of episcopal anointments."<sup>12</sup> Doubts have been expressed as to whether the doctrine does involve "the delicate question of unbroken links which moved the ridicule of Lord Macaulay";<sup>13</sup> but W. E. Gladstone<sup>14</sup> considered the probabilities worth calculating. The highest claim that can be proffered from the historical and scientific point of view is probability, and where

security is the aim, the slightest element of doubt would appear to be fatal. The hypothesis cannot be classed with those of a natural science which may be rejected at any moment in favour of one that works better. It is either certain or not certain, and only if certain does it work at all. The more one knows of the details of history the more hesitant would one be as to even probability being capable of establishment in this matter of spiritual pedigrees. The Church in the course of the centuries has come through ice ages and bronze ages, deserts and jungles, and has had to adapt itself to many types of environment, and to do so under the guidance of many types of personality. The view of history that imagines an unbroken line of inheritance to have existed, much less to be susceptible of demonstration, involves a mechanical conception of the sequence of events, which the enchantment of distance has perhaps inevitably introduced, but which has little relation to the somewhat muddled, random, inconsistent, short-sighted, accidental, unpremeditated, opportunist activities of real mankind. Large masses of happenings are even now unprincipled, in the sense of having no conscious basis in law or reason. Strange things have happened in the way of irregularity, omission, carelessness, mistake, or through the influence of political or ecclesiastical disputes, and not least through private animosities or misunderstandings. The intimate story of Church Councils, or even a study of late eighteenth- or early nineteenth-century English history, would disillusion anyone who expected to find order and decency in events. A history of the American Episcopal Church casually remarks: "Bishop White was never confirmed, and it is doubtful if Bishop Seabury was."<sup>15</sup> That is typical of the kind of thing of which history is composed, since most people had no interest in technicalities, and standards such as those of legality have varied from time to time and from country to country. It was very early in Church history that Paul entered the apostolic circle on the sole authority of a visionary experience; and he wrote to the Corinthians: "If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you, for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord"—words that might be held to open very wide doors of recognition. Altogether it is not surprising to have John Wesley declaring—and millions of loyal Christians would agree with him: "The uninterrupted

succession I know to be a fable which no man ever did or can prove."<sup>16</sup>

It seems plain that at first there was no thought of Apostolic Succession in any modern sense, and, although want of consciousness of a fact cannot affect its reality, there is here no fact capable of verification, and the reason for the promotion of the idea was not devotion to history, but ordinary understanding of human nature. The company of the faithful had presently to give a reason for the faith that was in them, and thus came to require authoritative guarantors of the Apostolic tradition. It is the law of demand and supply. Ultimately the answer is not from history, but from faith, or possibly from faith's impersonation, wishful thinking. What may at once heartily be admitted and accepted is the general continuity of the Church as an organised Christian society with recognisable officers, a society existing in accordance with principles believed to have been laid down by Jesus Christ and his apostles, a society whereof Christ is Head and wherein are produced the fruits of the Spirit. C. C. Richardson of New York has written: "The succession of the Church's life is more than a dubious theory about bishops: it is the continuity of the Living Power of Christ through Christian history. New forms emerge, but in one way or another they are tied to the continuity of His Spirit."<sup>17</sup> Oliver Cromwell and his kind were less concerned about forms, and said simply: "The true succession is through the Spirit."<sup>18</sup> It might be pointed out how fully the authority of the ministry has been acknowledged in Scotland, where ecclesiastical machinery has neither been scrapped, nor permitted to assume control.

The doctrine of Apostolic Succession involves the sacerdotal conception of the ministry, not without analogy to the Jewish priesthood, and it may have been at this point as much as at any that it roused the ire of the Reformers. Hilaire Belloc was of opinion that the Reformation was in essence an attack upon the priesthood as well as upon the papacy, due, as he admits, to abuses. A priest is presumably one whose function is to act as an indispensable mediator between God and man, and who consequently belongs to a privileged and separate order or caste: Gore rightly notes that "an essential ministry" is a sacerdotal conception.<sup>19</sup> A particular sacramental doctrine is involved:

it is the prerogative of a priest to offer sacrifice. That is what Hebert seems to have in mind when he writes: "The Free Church ministries mean something different from the Catholic Ministry"; "It is not possible to bracket together the ordinary Presbyterian Sunday morning service with an Anglican high mass, as two forms of religion seeking to attain one end by different means."<sup>20</sup>

Such statements have a certain finality of judgment about them, and make one feel that perhaps too much deference has recently been paid to Anglo-Catholics in the Ecumenical Movement. One tends to defer to extremists as one does to eccentrics generally; but is it worth while discussing union with those who can only visualise this as the return of the prodigal? As far as the Church of England is concerned, there is indeed hope in the suggestion of James Martineau: "If Churchmen feel a generous pride in sheltering within their communion the contrasted apostolates of Simeon and Venn, of Pusey and Keble, of Robertson and Stanley, they are ready for a yet more capacious hospitality."<sup>21</sup> But the doctrine of Apostolic Succession as held by Anglo-Catholics is external, formal, legalistic, mechanical, throwing too much weight on the institutional side, and there can be small progress towards an understanding with them until they confess themselves to constitute an over-emphasis, until they realise that they embody the precise mistake which wrecked organised Judaism and which produced such a desperate state of emergency in the Christian Church as to necessitate the Reformation.

Calvin<sup>22</sup> professed that there would be no difficulty in accepting the succession if it actually existed, but he could not overlook the lack of truth and character in those who in the Reformation period bragged and boasted that they were the successors of the Apostles, "whereas there is nothing which appeareth to be more contrary." He was not prepared to admit a succession that had obviously been interrupted by failure in teaching and conduct, "as if the office were some hereditary possession which transmits alike to the worthy and the unworthy." Here he is opposed to what with Augustine in his Donatist struggles was the main point, the transmission of office in total independence of personal qualifications, admittedly the

only theory by which there can be any certainty as to validity, but a theory which turns the Church into a mere machine. Calvin<sup>22</sup> says: "We deny the title of successors of the apostles to those who have abandoned their faith and doctrine"; "If the Church resides in the successors of the Apostles, let us search for successors among those who have faithfully handed down their doctrine to posterity"; "Any man who by his conduct shows that he is an enemy of sound doctrine, whatever title he may meanwhile boast, has lost all title to authority in the Church"; "The pretence of succession is vain, if posterity do not retain the truth of Christ, which was handed down to them by their fathers, safe and uncorrupted, and continue in it"; "Nothing is more absurd than to disregard doctrine, and place succession in persons." He refers to the episcopal qualities demanded in 1 Tim. iii. 2, and claims that Roman priests have not in fact transmitted the truth as it was in Christ. Other utterances are as emphatic with regard to holiness, and he declares succession worthless "unless faith and integrity be joined therewithal." Speaking of those who in his day claimed the succession, he protests that "the chasm between them and the apostles is too deep to allow of any intercommunication of right."

The emphasis on Truth is characteristic of Calvin, but it is by no means confined to him. Irenæus had early stressed the same point, and Tertullian had laid it down that we judge persons from the faith and not the faith from persons.<sup>23</sup> The Bohemian Brethren<sup>24</sup> in 1535 declared: "This is the true Apostolic Succession which is founded, not on certain places or persons, but on the pure faith and teaching of the Apostles." The Presbyterians of London in 1654 held that the papists lacked the doctrinal succession, and therefore "they succeed the Apostles as darkness succeeds light."<sup>25</sup> Calvin as a systematic thinker did hold that unity in belief is a necessary preparation for unity of charity: like all in his day he was much more certain than we are as to exactly what constituted the faith and teaching of the Apostles; but he was never content with mere intellectual acceptance of doctrine or with less than the response of the whole man to the Gospel message. He would have appreciated Father Hebert's words that the Church is "constituted as the Church by the

Gospel message on which it stands,"<sup>26</sup> and he would have agreed that the essence of apostolicity, now as at the beginning, is simply Christian witness-bearing, and that it is a matter of life much more than of legal representation of an institution.

The Scottish position has shown something of the same attention to adherence to apostolic doctrine as the test of succession. John Knox was not interested in the idea of a lineal succession of persons, but claimed direct and lawful succession from the Apostles in that "we neither admit doctrine, rite or ceremony which by their writings we find not authorised."<sup>27</sup> He refers back to the faithlessness of the priests in ordinary succession in the Old Testament, and Isaiah's denunciation of their failure to teach the people of God, and he points to the false prophets who can only stand and shout at Jeremiah, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these." He writes to those "professing the truth in Scotland," and to "the professors of God's truth in England." Quintin Kennedy, the Romanist apologist, occupied similar ground in his defence, protesting that the Fathers "had ever the true faith, conform to the doctrine of the Apostles, descending from time to time, representing the universal Kirk of God."<sup>28</sup>

Principal Thomas Smeaton of Glasgow, writing in 1579, denounces those who when the issue is, what is true doctrine, take refuge in a list of persons, a series or roll of bishops.<sup>29</sup> John Menzeis of Aberdeen, a somewhat violent controversialist, declared in 1675 that that succession cannot be proved true that is but personal and local and not also doctrinal;<sup>30</sup> and Samuel Rutherford claimed that the Church of Scotland recognises only succession to the true and apostolic doctrine.<sup>31</sup> William Jameson mentioned that in Scotland "there was a succession of the same doctrine delivered by fathers to children from the Apostles."<sup>32</sup> Dr. George Campbell, a moderate authority later in the eighteenth century, placing the essence of Christianity in doctrine and duty, cannot credit that those can only come through a minister in a certain succession: "This is placing the essence of religion not in anything interior or spiritual . . . but in an exterior circumstance."<sup>33</sup> But the most interesting supporter of such views is Bishop Patrick Forbes, the inspirer of the "Aberdeen Doctors,"

that famous group of Scots Episcopalians, who thus quotes with approval Gregory of Nazianzus: "The succession of piety is properly to be holden succession, for who professeth the same doctrine of faith he is partner of the same chair, but who embraceth a contrary faith, he ought to be accounted an adversary, albeit even sitting in the chair, and this indeed hath the name, but the other hath the substance and truth of succession."<sup>34</sup> In modern times the same conception is to be found in such writers<sup>35</sup> as Dr. Donald Macleod, Principal R. H. Story, and also in one of a very different school, H. Bavinck.

J. L. Ainslie notes the early appearance of this conception in Scotland, and concludes that "this kind of Apostolic Succession is not vulnerable as those of the other succession theories can be shown to be."<sup>36</sup> Resort to the idea of a doctrinal succession, however, may arise mainly from the desire for a compromise in this whole matter of succession. When examined, it does not prove so very helpful. Dr. Burn-Murdoch's remarks on "notional"<sup>37</sup> as compared with "organic" succession seem pertinent. If by doctrinal succession were meant simply common acknowledgment of early creeds it might be pointed out that this is a form and degree of unity which has always generally subsisted and in spite of which the present discreditable disunity has developed, while certain bodies which would claim to be orthodox and so to be in the succession do not use the creeds. In any case, there is probably behind the suggestion of doctrinal succession an obsolete view of Christian truth as a "deposit." Neither are we perhaps sufficiently informed as to what amount of agreement there actually is among Christians and Christian Churches with regard to even the most fundamental doctrines: we can only say that all the theological positions presently held had their origin in Christ, and have been evolved in the course of the Church's history, which means little more than that we are all, white, black, and yellow, descended from Adam. It should also be noted how many of the Churches have relaxed their theological formulæ in recent times. Besides which, the intellectual bond should not be permitted to displace the spiritual.

## III

Hebert states,<sup>38</sup> and attempts to answer, various objections which he says are offered to the view that Episcopacy is of the *esse* of the Church, and the first with which he deals is that the Apostolate ended with the death of the last Apostle: but he goes on to put into the mouth of the objector the words, "Therefore all subsequent forms of the ministry are of purely human ordinance," which is by no means an obvious deduction, and would not be accepted as such by either Orthodox or Presbyterian. He admits that as a witness to Christ and His Resurrection, the office of Apostle did cease, but he emphasises "an element in the Apostolic Commission which must continue," and which he assigns to the Episcopate.

There is no need to dwell on the point, but it seems necessary to insist both that the Apostolic period must be distinguished from all that followed, and at the same time, that in spite of the cessation of the strictly apostolic, there was continuity of divine spiritual influence, and no sudden transfer to the "purely human." The election of Matthias raises some interesting questions, and seems to show that the Apostles regarded themselves as a group apart, although apparently the Church afterwards took a different line of procedure. If we are to speak of transmission, the Apostles might be described as transmitting certain of their powers, excluding the distinctively apostolic, as a bishop is said to pass on to an ordinand only his own priestly, and not his peculiarly episcopal, inheritance.

The Church recognised the difference between the apostolic and the post-apostolic in the standard which it set in connection with the canon. The call of the Apostles came from Jesus Himself, and not as in the case of the bishops and priests later, both from Himself and from Church, congregation, people. The Apostles are credited with special gifts, not apparently inherited by the Episcopate, though Rhind,<sup>39</sup> a Scots episcopalian controversialist (1712), makes much of supposed miracles by Irenæus and Gregory Thaumaturgus, and uses this as proof that the Apostolate survived the Apostles. The Apostles also had a universal commission of their own, which was not shared by their successors in the leadership of the Church. And it should

not be overlooked that, in fact, the title of apostle was allowed to lapse. The idea of succession finds no place in the original charter. There was a difference, and as Professor Boulgakoff<sup>40</sup> has put it: "the actual transition from one epoch to the other eludes observation"; "There was a hiatus between the pre-hierarchical and hierarchical period of Church History"; "the dignity and office of the Holy Apostles . . . is not transferable." Have we not then some over-emphasis in Hebert's statement: "that which is of the *essse* of the Church is the essential core of the Ministry—namely, the Apostolic Commission, which the Bishop alone holds in its fullness and is empowered to hand on"?<sup>41</sup> To question the word "fullness" as here employed seems inevitable; but in any case the alternative to all such claims is not the reduction of the ministry of succeeding generations or of Protestant times to the "purely human." In the early days ecclesiastical arrangements followed closely recent Jewish tradition and contemporary Roman secular administrative schemes; but that is matter and not form, and there is sufficient Biblical warrant for holding the ministerial commission to be of Apostolic origin. Appointments in the Church are guided by the Holy Spirit. Thus in the Church of Scotland no one is admitted to the ministry unless he is believed to be called thereto by God, unless he is accepted by the appropriate Church authorities, and unless his ministrations are definitely sought for some charge. A merely mechanical test for the presence of the Holy Spirit does not suffice, nor, on the other hand, is there any interest in a self-appointed ministry.

The Ministry has always in Scotland been regarded as of divine origin, Scripture to that effect being plain enough. Calvin<sup>42</sup> pronounced that "the Church cannot do without an ordinary ministry"; "Christ has so ordered in his Church, that if it is removed the whole edifice must fall." To abolish the ministry, he declared, would be to destroy the Church, "for neither are the light and heat of the sun, nor meat and drink, so necessary to sustain and cherish the present life, as is the apostolic and pastoral office to preserve a Church in the earth."

David Dickson<sup>43</sup> in Scotland regarded the calling of the Apostles as proof of the concern of Jesus "to provide ministers for his Church," and was explicit that ministers "do not derive

their power and authority from any under heaven, but from Christ." For James Durham<sup>44</sup> the ministry is "a standing and perpetual and necessary office" and "of great concernment to the safety of the Church," while for Samuel Rutherford teachers, doctors and elders are the eyes, ears and hands and so "integral parts" of the Church.<sup>45</sup> Alexander Nisbet,<sup>46</sup> writing in 1694, speaks of the Truth as conveyed "through His sent messengers to His people," wherefore none should undertake its proclamation save "they who are given to the Church from Him." Robert Baillie, George Gillespie and William Jameson might be quoted to the same effect, while at a later period John Erskine very modestly upholds the ministry from another point of view: "When from the Press and from the stage; when, in taverns, in coffee-houses, and in almost every place of public resort, ministers of Satan are every day exerting their utmost zeal and address to discourage others from walking in the good ways of God: one would think it could not seem evil in the eyes of any who wish well to religion, that, one day in seven, some are employed publicly to recommend it."<sup>47</sup> Knox's *Form and Order of Election of Superintendent* (1560) afterwards used at Ordinations, includes these phrases: "I acknowledge myself bound to obey God calling by them"; "this office to the which God hath called you"; "the vocation of God to bear charge within this Church"; "God . . . hath called thee to the office of a watchman over His people."<sup>48</sup>

The Standards of the Church of Scotland in general confirm this view of the ministry as "of divine institution," and in the nineteenth century Principal George Hill<sup>49</sup> reaffirmed the position: "We Presbyterians join with the Church of Rome and the Church of England in holding that the persons vested with Church government derive their powers, not from the people, but from Jesus Christ by His ministers," and later writers echo the words of Leo the Great to similar effect.

This very important aspect of doctrine may, however, be overstated, and would seem to be thus overstated in *The Apostolic Ministry*, where the "given" nature of the ministry is stressed and we read that the Apostles received their commission from Christ and "it was by virtue of that commission (and not through any powers bestowed on them by the Church) that they

transmitted it in full measure to their successors who exercised the same plenitude of power in turn—looking back to Christ as its source, not by way of “the Church,” but by way of the apostolic line of descent”; and there follows later a passage noting the separation between priestly offices received by apostolic commission from the Lord and “those functions which it can rightly accept as devolved on it from the Christian community.”<sup>50</sup> The suggestion in this part of Bishop Kirk’s paper appears to be that there is a clerical caste, self-propagating, and with an authority in matters spiritual that is entirely independent of the lay membership of the Church, a supernaturally endowed self-contained community with exclusive control of the means of grace; and that the function of the Christian congregation or individual within this arrangement is as the earthly to the heavenly, as relatively passive under the sacrament of orders as is the recipient in Baptism or Eucharist according to the *ex opere operato* conception. This, the Protestant feels, is to reduce the clergy to the level of the medicine-man. Nor does he fall into the opposite error of *ex opere operantis*, for, however much personality and training may count, it is always God who is Operator. The Calvinist is not to be outdone in admitting that all is of grace, but this is balanced by his doctrine of faith; the recipient is a participant, and the relationship is one of active response to revelation, of acceptance to offer, what happens being looked at, not so much according to the greatness and littleness of the respective sources, as according to the vital necessity of each to the completion of the act. Thus although the overruling fact in the appointment of a minister is the call of God, Protestants must resist any minimising of the part of the Christian community. Gore’s wording would be acceptable: “The sacred ministry receives indeed its authority from above, and acts in God’s name, as God’s representative: but the man who is to minister is the elect of the people, and is their representative also.”<sup>51</sup>

The usual High Anglican over-emphasis on the divine sending reveals itself in some tendentious scholarship that has centred on the word *shaliach*: “The apostle . . . is the plenipotentiary (the *shaliach*) of his Master—the accredited representative of the ascended Lord.”<sup>52</sup> Following Scripture, Robert Riccaltoun<sup>53</sup>

(1771) had said: "He hath appointed an order of men whom the apostle calls ambassadors for God, whose office it is to beseech and pray sinners, in Christ's name and stead, to be reconciled to God." This is a usual way of speaking, but another Scot, the Covenanting preacher, Alexander Jameson<sup>54</sup> (1677), states the point even more interestingly: "The prerogative of Jesus Christ, whose right it is, as King of His Church, to constitute and send ambassadors in His own name; if there be anything that is the proper right of sovereignty this is one which is the native consequent of it, without which it cannot be: shall we allow this in point of right to earthly sovereigns, and deny it to Christ, the only Head." But there is more than this in the minds of Anglo-Catholics, for the excitement about *shaliach* is due to the idea that the word indicates "a plenipotentiary not only 'in the name,' but 'in the person' of his principal, so that the envoy's action unalterably committed the principal."<sup>55</sup> This may or may not be sound Old Testament exposition, but it is surely a perfectly preposterous interpretation of the relationship between Christ and his messenger, and in fact brings us into that world of magic, where the magician can compel the deity to perform his will. We are never far from this realm of superstition when we are dealing with these priesthood notions.

The Scottish Church preferred to speak of a double call—"called of God and duly elected by men"; "Besides the calling of God, and inward testimony of a good conscience, has the lawful approbation and outward judgment of men."<sup>56</sup> The Holy Spirit, of course, is at work not only upon the aspirant, but upon the electors. Election and ordination are quite distinct, the former consisting of choice by those in authority and the latter of the separation of the selected person to God and His Church, the ceremony of ordination involving the imposition of hands by others similarly ordained. At times in Scotland very special emphasis has been laid upon the rights of the people in the matter of election, and as a result patronage was abolished. The reason for this attitude, the refusal to be content with any formal right of consent, lay simply in the different qualities required in a priest and in a minister. No spiritual robot could supply the people's spiritual needs.

That the Church of Scotland placed some value on the

conception of succession is obvious from the uninterrupted practice of ordination. The Reformers were antagonistic to the hierarchical system which seemed to them to have developed into a mass of abuses, and in the excitement of the revolution they were consequently inclined to go far in order to be rid of it. But there was nothing objectionable to them in the idea of continuity, so long as it did not imply that reformed clergy inherited the sad infirmities of their predecessors. Calvin wrote: "We deny not that there has been an uninterrupted succession of the Church from the beginning of the Gospel to our day."<sup>57</sup> The *Scots Confession* and similar documents refer to continuous Church life down the centuries.

Sometimes the succession idea, though present, cannot be said to be regulative, as, for example, when T. J. Crawford writes that "In their general character, indeed, as ministers of Christ, empowered to preach the Gospel and to administer the Sacraments, the Apostles have successors in all those who, to the end of the world, are appointed to discharge the like ministerial duties, by whatsoever names or titles they may be distinguished."<sup>58</sup>

There was, it is true, at times considerable hesitation about acknowledging any connection with such a scandalous lot as the pre-Reformation clergy. Calvin said: "It is certain that that which they have is neither from Christ, nor His Apostles, nor the Fathers, nor the Early Church."<sup>59</sup> Knox and his followers generally, and later writers such as Bishop Patrick Forbes and John Napier of Merchiston, the inventor of logarithms (died, 1617), regarded the Church of the Papacy as fallen definitely under the control of Antichrist,<sup>60</sup> so that the Reformation involved not mere amendment, but conversion. Napier taught that during the long reign of Antichrist God preserved His Truth in an invisible Church of a few godly persons, who handed it down to Reformation days. The Old Testament remnant was exactly Napier's invisible Church: the few, not the institutional official body, were the true Israel.

Jesus sought no recognition from the Church authorities of His day. And the whole matter of succession was raised when He said: "Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our Father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these

stones to raise up children unto Abraham." This attitude would find a parallel to the Reformation in the change-over from the Old Covenant to the New with its combined elements of continuity and revolution.

Some of the Reformers—for example, Farel—laid stress upon a prophetic call direct from God, and Calvin admitted the possibility of such extraordinary ministries. The French Confession of 1559 makes allowance for the same thing, while the Synod of Gap in 1603 judged that the authority of their first pastors should be founded on "their extraordinary vocation, whereby they were by an inward powerful impulse from God raised up and commanded to exercise their ministry, rather than to charge it upon the sorry relics of a corrupted call and ordination in the Romish Church."<sup>61</sup> Bishop Patrick Forbes and Samuel Rutherford, two contrasted types, were of one mind on this matter of the prophetic call, but it fits in more naturally with Independent ideas of the ministry than with those which came to prevail in the Church of Scotland, and is particularly well stated by Robert Barclay, the Scots Quaker: "If an estate is entailed to a certain name and family, when that family weareth out, and there is no lawful successor found . . . then by the law of nations the inheritance devolved unto the Prince as being *ultimus haeres*, and he giveth it again, immediately, to whom he sees fit."<sup>62</sup> Considered from this position, it is the Apostolical Succession that appears to be the "purely human" invention and the other the "given" ministry; and one is tempted to think of Montaigne's remark that the real clown can make us laugh by his art, while others must whiten their faces and assume ridiculous posturés to convince us that they are funny.

In Scotland it was the ineffectiveness of the pre-Reformation ministry that gave rise to hesitation, rather than any concern about validity. It was quite clear that the mere fact of valid ordination did not qualify anyone to be a minister of the Gospel in the Reformed Church; and when the *Scots Confession*<sup>63</sup> stated: "Their ministers are no ministers of Christ Jesus," it was expressing no opinion about orders, but a very strong opinion about doctrinal and spiritual fitness. The emphasis was transferred from the sacraments to the Word, a change of ministerial function which demanded a radical change in the matter of

training. Persons who had been in orders before the Reformation were not regarded as *ipso facto* qualified for the ministry as reorganised, and so the General Assembly<sup>64</sup> in December, 1562, decreed that "all persons serving in the ministry" must be tried and examined and appointed by a superintendent before their position was acknowledged, and there was the case of the former Bishop of Galloway, who was granted permission "to admit ministers, exhorters and readers," in connection with which Calderwood the historian remarks: "Here we may see that the bishops converted from Popery were not suffered to exercise jurisdiction ecclesiastical by virtue of their episcopal office." In Holland, according to Brandt, priests who wished to become ministers of the Reformed Church had not only to give up Romish doctrine, but to renounce their orders.<sup>65</sup> The French Huguenots were likewise particular as to the qualifications of the monks and priests whom they admitted to their ministry. Calvin had written in 1554 that "whosoever is a Popish priest cannot, till he abjure the title, be a servant of Christ."<sup>66</sup>

But in addition to this matter of life and doctrine, with regard to which all the Reformed Churches were rightly cautious, there is the separate point of validity of orders, and it was not ignored, for, on this point, as distinct from the question of character and education, we find Calvin<sup>67</sup> writing: "Whatever authority and dignity the Holy Spirit confers on priests or prophets or apostles or successors of apostles, is wholly given not to men themselves, but to the ministry to which they are appointed." Baptism even by ignorant or impious persons may be valid: "they did not baptise us into a fellowship with their ignorance or sacrilege." Most important of all, Calvin agreed that even at its worst the Church did not wholly perish, and that "we deny not to the papists those vestiges of a Church which the Lord has allowed to remain among them amid the dissipation"; God was pleased "that amid the devastation the edifice should remain though half in ruins." Various Scots apologists made similar admissions, regarding the Roman Church as miserably corrupt, but still a Church.

## IV

In the seventeenth century there does not seem to have been any difference of opinion in Scotland between Episcopalians and Presbyterians on the matter of succession. All took the succession from the pre-Reformation Church for granted as an obvious fact. It was the Independents who twitted them with this popish relationship, and they did not deny it, but, by way of reply, George Gillespie<sup>68</sup> asked them whether they were prepared to refuse the Bible because it had come down by way of the papists, and, insisting that the perpetuity of the true Church was sound Protestant doctrine, he suggested that it was a case of pure water from a pure fountain having contracted impurity from a filthy channel. John Menzeis<sup>69</sup> used the argument that "a leprous man may beget children: he is a man, though not a sound man." Bishop Patrick Forbes went so far as to publish in 1614 a *Defence of the Lawful Calling of the Ministers of the Reformed Churches*. Samuel Rutherford<sup>70</sup> was without doubt as to the succession from the old Church: "Though Luther and Zwingli had their whole calling from the Pope and his clergy, yet think we not that calling no calling, but that it hath that which essentially constituteth a minister." He discusses the whole question of validity both with regard to baptism and to ordination, and finds no difficulty in accepting the succession. The ministry of an anti-Christian prelate he admits, and says: "These who are ordained pastors by them are not re-ordained."

This has remained the Church of Scotland view, and it was perhaps on the basis of this general fact that John Macpherson, in his *Doctrine of the Church in Scottish Theology* (1903), wrote of our Scottish Reformers: "They did not raise the question as to the validity of the orders of the priests of Rome." Dr. J. L. Ainslie, however, in his *Doctrines of Ministerial Order* (1940), takes a different view, and while agreeing that there was a general belief in the Church's continuity and some insistence upon doctrinal succession, has been triumphantly accepted by H. Burn-Murdoch as providing evidence that the Calvinist Reformers deliberately and thoroughly cut off all organic continuity with the unreformed Church.

The only period with reference to which Burn-Murdoch's

conclusions need be considered is the moment of the Reformation. The *Scots Confession* (1560)<sup>71</sup> has a scornful reference to lineal descent, which is seized upon as a deliberate rejection of organic continuity; but if the whole passage in the *Confession* is read, it is plain that the point of it is simply that the Church of Rome is not necessarily the true Church though it is old and has many members and priestly succession, for the Old Testament Church had all these, and yet was rejected by God in favour of the Christians, who were new and few and had no priesthood descended from Aaron, just like the Reformed. The *Scots Confession* was an effective manifesto; the analogy it draws is one upon which Anglo-Catholics might well reflect, and the Church of Scotland would still assert, though perhaps in milder terms, that there are more important notes of the true Church than apostolic succession.

*The First Book of Discipline* (1561) was another document forged in the heat of revolution; it was never the law of the Church, nor could its proposals on many points be brought into effect. It did, however, express the strong opinions and high hopes of Knox and his circle. Burn-Murdoch<sup>72</sup> quotes *The First Book of Discipline* as saying: "The papistical priests have neither power nor authority to minister the Sacraments of Christ Jesus"; but he fails to continue the quotation: "because that in their mouth is not the sermon of exhortation," a clause which shows that it is not the orders of the priest that are questioned but his qualification to conduct an effective sacramental service. Ainslie is equally at fault in taking this sentence to express "disregard for any validity in the papal priesthood."<sup>73</sup>

John Knox may be presumed to have been in priest's orders. There is no complete evidence of this, but he held posts which would normally have been open only to one fully ordained.<sup>74</sup> He may not have been proud of his orders, and when he was apparently excommunicated in 1556 it is possible (as Winzet<sup>75</sup> suggests) that he may have spoken of them as null in any case. If orders are indelible he retained them. The Mass had been rejected, and with this disappeared a certain conception of the priesthood and concern for qualifications associated with the performance of essentially priestly duties. But what was uppermost in Knox's concern was not validity; it was effectiveness. This is the

point also in the passage quoted by Ainslie<sup>76</sup> from the General Assembly of December, 1562; all who are taking charge of parishes, whether former bishops or any others, are to be tried, examined and appointed—Ainslie unfortunately says “admitted,” which is not in the text. The ordination of these men is not being questioned; but, of course their fitness for a new and exacting task has to be investigated. Reformed Church people in those days were not thinking about validity, and merely assumed that things in this respect went on as before as far as was needed, the responsible authorities taking any necessary steps in each case. The real issue was that fresh and additional demands were being made of those who were to be ministers, and these thrust the question of validity into the background. There was new stress on knowledge (with which faith was closely associated) and there was new stress on conduct, as the attention to discipline makes clear. Where the Truth bulks so largely, and preaching is so prominent in public worship, the educational qualifications of the minister matter very greatly; it is no longer sufficient that the representative of God be capable of muttering the correct words and making the prescribed gestures. He must himself understand, and he must be able to teach.

Also it was not now enough that he go through the mechanical process of hearing confession, and making the appropriate casuistic pronouncements, and uttering the expected formula of absolution. He must be a person whom the people respect, and would like to resemble, and who is suited by character for his ambassadorial function of reconciling men to God according to the more personal standards now being set up, and the new content of the word salvation. Knox pointed out that God had chosen as His instruments, not angels, but men. These, however, with all their human weakness were expected to be no automata, but leaders and examples, pastors to care for and protect and nourish the sheep. The idea of spiritual, moral, and intellectual fitness had thus risen to prominence in connection with the ministry, and the question was no longer first and foremost, as in the case of a mere priest, has he the necessary technical and official recognition, but is he a man of God, a man of prayer, well-seen in the Bible, and of consecrated manhood? And that was what they were anxious about in the case of those

former bishops and others whose services were at their disposal. The personality of the minister counts in a pastor and preacher as it does not necessarily do in a priest, and while religious people had put up with ignorant and immoral priests, they could not conceivably tolerate ignorant and immoral ministers. This removal of qualification (at least to some extent) from the realm of symbol to that of character is what we find everywhere as civilisation deepens: it is more difficult to be a minister than to be a priest, and it was a minister that the man of that new age required. The number of places in Calvin's writings where the word "superstition" occurs shows how desperately unreal religion had become under pre-Reformation conditions, and how urgent the Reformers felt it to be that Christianity should be saved from this particular danger.

Coadjutors of Knox on the clerical side at the Reformation included several who were already in orders: John Willock, a Franciscan friar belonging to the Convent at Ayr; John Wynram, sub-prior of the Augustinian Priory of St. Andrews, and Vicar of Dull, a Doctor of Theology; John Row, a Doctor of Laws of Padua, for some years agent at Rome for the Scottish clergy; John Douglas, who was Principal of St. Leonard's College, St. Andrews, and conformed; Alexander Arbuthnot, Principal of King's College, Aberdeen, who was in priest's orders at the Reformation; John Craig, a graduate of St. Andrews and a Dominican friar; besides men like William Harlaw of St. Cuthbert's, Edinburgh, Christopher Goodman of St. Andrews, and John Spottiswoode, afterwards one of the Superintendents, who were in English orders. Hew Scott's *Fasti*<sup>77</sup> provides abundant evidence that priests and monks accepted the Reformation in large numbers as in England, and were given employment as ministers, or in a probationary position as exhorters or readers. Relatively few seem to have had such spiritual and intellectual capacity as immediately won for them full charge of a parish. The Church of Scotland declined to content itself with the low standards of the recent past, so that in 1574 there were still only 289 ordained ministers, with 715 readers in temporary office in other parishes. Readers who made good were promoted. The policy laid down at the start was followed: "The lack of able men shall not excuse us before God,

if by our consent unable men be placed over the flock of Christ Jesus."<sup>78</sup>

Examples from different parts of the country may be given as evidence of the fact that some at least who were ordained in the pre-Reformation Church became ministers of the Reformed Church of Scotland, and may be held to have carried with them any powers which their ordination had bestowed. Thus we read of parishes under the care of vicars or readers who are described as: one of the monks of Dunfermline Abbey; formerly a monk of Scone; parson in 1541, conformed; last pre-Reformation Vicar and first Protestant minister of the parish; pre-Reformation Rector in 1550, continued as parson in 1560; Vicar of the parish adhered to the reformed faith and became exhorter; Augustinian Canon at St. Andrews; having embraced the Reformation, he retained the living, later placed in an obscure congregation, according to the measure of his gifts; Archdean of Glasgow in the pre-Reformation Church, conformed to Protestantism; mentioned as Rector of the parish in 1545, apparently joined the Reformers and continued here as first Protestant minister. There is record of a very large number of such cases.<sup>79</sup> Calvin wrote to Knox in 1559 about monks and priests who might be fit for employment as ministers, but evidently thought that the number of those adequately equipped would be small.<sup>80</sup> Many, however, seem to have been able for minor posts. The General Assembly of 1573 decreed that "Seeing the most part of the persons who were canons, monks and friars within this realm, have made profession of the true religion, it is therefore thought meet that it be enjoined to them to pass and serve as readers at the places where they shall be appointed."<sup>81</sup> If the Church had been anxious to collect proofs of succession from the pre-Reformation Church, there would obviously have been no lack of evidence.

## V

The view is sometimes maintained that "the continuity of the National Church through the presbyterate . . . is as unbroken as that of the Episcopacy through the Episcopate."<sup>82</sup> We find this strongly maintained by English Presbyterians in 1654.<sup>83</sup> Bannerman in the mid-nineteenth century refers to the theory,

and admits that descent through presbyters is quite as possible as through prelates, but adds that "few or no Presbyterians have ever asserted such a claim."<sup>84</sup> Such a doctrine is, however, carefully stated by Dr. Charles Warr: "The Church of Scotland insists on the Order of Presbyters as the one essential ministry within the Catholic Church, through which, and from the time of the Apostles, the full ministry of the Word and Sacraments has been transmitted throughout the Catholic Church in a regular and valid succession, even during those eras when the Church was episcopal in government, since the bishop, in ordination, merely exercises the apostolic prerogative of the presbyters, which for purposes of ecclesiastical administration, have been reposed in him."<sup>85</sup> Principal Story, in his Baird Lectures (1897), had said: "The episcopate, being a mere post-apostolic development from the presbyterate, could have no exclusive claim to appropriate a right of which the presbyterate was the original depositary, and to exercise a power which presbyters had exercised before bishops, as distinct from presbyters, had been heard of."<sup>86</sup> Similar views are expounded by Dr. Donald Macleod in his Baird Lectures (1903).<sup>87</sup>

Perhaps the Reformers did not think quite so clearly about these points as has been suggested by our authorities, and uninterrupted historical succession would be as difficult to prove in one Church as in another. It would seem as if those who, under the new conditions, found themselves responsible for work formerly committed to bishops simply did the work without discussing the precise rights of the matter. A superintendent or a presbytery took over certain functions, as Kirk Sessions or town councils had undertaken others. There was no break in the continuity of need. Discipline had to be administered; ministers had to be ordained. Theories came later. The striking thing is how little they appear to have worried about such questions, until someone outside began to criticise. But in so far as thought turned to the problem of succession, solution must have been sought either in some such statement as Dr. Warr has formulated, or on the lines of the view acceptable to the Aberdeen Doctors<sup>88</sup> that, while want of bishops for ordination constituted a defect, it did not destroy the reality of the Church, and that there was excellent authority in Ambrose and Augustine for holding that

Scottish ministers were true successors of the Apostles. The general Church of Scotland position may be expressed in the words of George Hill: "The right of performing all the ministerial functions which were intended to be perpetual in the Christian Church is conceived to be conveyed by the act of ordination, so that every person who is ordained is as much a successor of the Apostles as any teacher of religion can be."<sup>89</sup>

Calvin's *Ordonnances* of 1541 required that what was first demanded of candidates for ordination was submission to examination in life and doctrine; and so it was in Scotland. There, as at Geneva, the ecclesiastical authorities and the local congregation must approve, and then follows the public admission to the Ministry of Christ's Church and to the particular charge, and the mutual responsibilities of minister and people are expounded and impressed upon all concerned.<sup>90</sup>

The laying on of hands Calvin admitted to be Biblical, but he thought it a custom open to misunderstanding, and, in order to avoid any suggestion of superstition, he recommended that it be at least temporarily omitted. Clearly, as various allusions show, Calvin did not think the omission of this ceremony affected the reality of the ordination. His hesitation was imitated in the Reformed Churches of Holland and France; but these Churches later found that they could safely return to the biblical mode of procedure. Knox took a similar view, and accordingly *The First Book of Discipline* recommends omission of laying on of hands, it being plain that this was nowhere regarded as casting doubts upon succession, the universal conviction being that imposition of hands was not of the substance or essence of ordination. The Church of Scotland at no time officially abandoned the laying on of hands, and in 1566 expressed official approval of the *Second Helvetic Confession*, which prescribed imposition of hands, taking no exception to this but only to the celebration of Christmas which the *Confession* allowed. It is certain that the laying on of hands was customary in Scotland in 1570, and it was decreed without discussion in *The Second Book of Discipline* drawn up in 1577. At all times it was regarded as a sign of something already accomplished by God, as in Num. xxvii. 18 and 23: "Take thee Joshua, the son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay thine hand upon him . . . and he laid

his hands upon him and gave him a charge." John Welch, Knox's son-in-law, wrote in 1602: "It was a sign of the presence of God's Spirit in them who was lawfully ordained."<sup>91</sup>

At the present time in Scotland a candidate for the ministry will be expected to have satisfied himself that he has a call from God, and this will be judged by the competent Church authority from his character and suitability as revealed in personal interviews and by the confidential statements of referees, after which he will have the customary extended course of instruction, theological, practical and devotional, following on a full university arts course. Thereupon he will be examined and licensed by the presbytery under whose spiritual supervision he has been throughout his years of preparation. Thereafter he will in due course be called by some congregation or to some Church office, whereupon the Moderator of Presbytery at a solemn service will "by prayer with laying on of hands, in which all the ministers present join" ordain him to the Holy Ministry, the prayer including such words as these: "We humbly beseech Thee, send down the Holy Spirit upon this Thy Servant, whom we in Thy name, and in obedience to Thy most blessed will, do now by the laying on of our hands, ordain and appoint to the office of the Holy Ministry in Thy Church, committing unto him authority to dispense Thy Word and Sacraments, and to bear rule in Thy flock." The candidate is then inducted to the charge and officially welcomed. Although the Church court charged with ordination is the presbytery, constituted of ministers and elders in equal numbers, only "those preaching presbyters to whom it doth belong" take part in the imposition of hands. "The preaching presbyters orderly associated are those to whom the imposition of hands doth appertain."<sup>92</sup>

Left-wing sections of the Church of Scotland, in revolt from Roman or Anglican practice, and in sympathy with English Independent views, especially groups belonging to the Seceder tradition, have inclined to minimise the distinction between clerical and lay, regarding the minister as an elder to whose function of ruling the function of teaching has been added. Thus the present small United Free Church,<sup>93</sup> consisting of those who stood out from the Church Union of 1929, ordains not only ministers but elders, with laying on of hands, and permits elders

to take part in laying hands upon ministers at ordination, and to perform on occasion certain other ministerial duties. It holds ordination to be recognition of gifts, and reception into office.

Early Scots standards do not refer to the Church as apostolic: the word is not Biblical, and is not applied to the Church in the Apostles' Creed. But John Knox writing in 1566 declared that the purpose of the Reformation was the restoration of "the reverend face of the primitive and apostolic Church,"<sup>94</sup> and the Church of Scotland has always believed itself continuous with the Church of the first Christians, and based upon the testimony of the Apostles, Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone. The distinctive Catholic conception of Apostolical Succession, however, appears to modern Scotland, as it appeared to our Reformers, to have singularly little to offer in the way of security or confidence. We feel more confident and secure without it; and when we pronounce these words "without it" we do so in the full consciousness that we include the whole sacramental system from which it ultimately derives, and for which it is indispensable. Besides which, there are higher ideals than safety first.

Perhaps, however, in all this discussion we have adopted too readily the traditional backward look. The word "apostolic" in the early days referred not more to general authority than to definite commission. The Apostles were "sent" as their title indicates. The minister to-day must not only have proper credentials, but he must do the work of an Apostle. His succession is in duty even more than in office. But it must farther be recalled that in the Nicene Creed it is the Church, and not merely the clergy, to whom the word "apostolic" is applied. The people of God are chosen to bear witness and to serve. The word has a most decided forward intention for both ministers and laity.

Dr. Samuel Johnson was at Iona in 1773, and his visit inspired a famous sentence: "That man is little to be envied whose patriotism would not gain force upon the Plain of Marathon, or whose piety would not grow warmer among the ruins of Iona."<sup>95</sup> If, like him, we turn our thoughts to St. Columba, two separate points should occur to us: Columba's name carries us back to the beginnings of Christianity as our established national

religion: institutional continuity with the past, our apostolic origins; but his name must also suggest fervent missionary zeal, tireless journeyings, ceaseless proclamation of the gospel, the **care of all the Churches, hands** stretched out in blessing: spiritual continuity for the future, the apostolic spirit, a spirit that **belongs** to no one century more than another, a spirit that has **animated a** great succession, separately and together continuing the **ministry** of Christ, doing the Will of God, building up the Kingdom, a spirit that was never needed more amongst us than it is needed to-day.