

authority today in and through the Christian Scriptures, the Church's all-sufficient Book of Discipline and Rule of Faith and Practice (Rom. 10:6-15).

2. The Ministry of the Apostles

A word or two is in order, at this point, regarding the character of the apostolic ministry.

In the first place, the Apostles were *ambassadors* of Christ to the world and to all ages; they were Ministers Extraordinary with Divine portfolio. *Their office was a special office which was fulfilled in them and never duplicated thereafter.* 2 Cor. 5:18-20: "But all things are of God, who reconciled us unto himself through Christ, and gave unto us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses, and having committed unto us the word of reconciliation. We are ambassadors therefore on behalf of Christ, as though God were entreating by us. we beseech you on behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled to God." Eph. 6:19-20: "The mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains."

In the second place, the Apostles were *witnesses* of Christ, that is to say, they were witnesses—eye-witnesses, if you please—of the facts that He had died on the Cross, that He had been buried, and that He had been raised from the dead. *The Apostles were men who could testify to what they had seen with their own eyes: they had seen Jesus die on the Cross, and especially they had seen Him and conversed with Him after His resurrection.*

[No fact is emphasized more than this, in the New Testament; it is stated again and again. Hear the testimony of Jesus Himself, John 15:27]: ye also bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning. [Luke 24:45-48]: Then opened he their mind, that they might understand the scriptures; and he said unto them, Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. *Ye are witnesses of these things.* [Acts 1:8]: But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you: *and ye shall be my witnesses* both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. [Acts 2:32—here Peter said, to his Pentecost audience]: This Jesus did God raise up, *whereof we all are witnesses.* [Luke says, Acts 4:33]: *And with great power gave the apostles their witness of the resurrection of*

THE BAPTISMAL (OVERWHELMING) MEASURE OF SPIRIT-POWER

the Lord Jesus. [Acts 3:14, 15]: But ye denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted unto you, and killed the Prince of Life; whom God raised from the dead: *whereof we are witnesses* [Peter's words, to the crowd gathered in Solomon's Porch.] [Acts 10:38-43, the words of Peter, to Cornelius in his household]: Even Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the country of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom also they slew, hanging him on a tree. *Him God raised up the third day, and gave him to be made manifest, not to all the people, but unto witnesses that were chosen before of God, even to us, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.* And he charged us to preach unto the people, and to testify that this is he who is ordained of God to be the Judge of the living and the dead. To him bear all the prophets witness, that through his name every one that believeth on him shall receive remission of sins. [How could language be any plainer than this?] [Again, Paul said, in his sermon delivered in the synagogue at Antioch of Pisidia, Acts 13:30, 31]: God raised him from the dead: and he was seen for many days of them that came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem [*i.e.*, the Eleven], *who are now his witnesses* unto the people. [And it will be remembered that Peter, at the very beginning, in calling for the election of a successor to Judas in the apostolic office, had said]—Of the men therefore that companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and went out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, unto the day that he was received up from us, *of these must one become a witness with us of his resurrection* [Acts 1:21-22].

The appearance of the risen and glorified Lord to Saul of Tarsus, before the gates of Damascus, was a Divine act necessary to qualify the latter for the Apostleship. It would not have done, in this case, to send another Apostle to preach to Saul, as in the case of the Apostle Peter and Cornelius (Acts 10). Nor would it have sufficed merely to send an evangelist, as Philip was sent to preach to the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8). Here was a man who was to be commissioned to the Apostleship, who was to be qualified as an eyewitness of the fact of the Resurrection of Jesus. As a witness, he would have to be able to say to the world, "I have seen the risen Lord." Hence, to accomplish the Divine purpose in this particular case, it was necessary for the Lord Himself to come down from Heaven and manifest Himself to Saul; and this is precisely what happened.

[Paul himself testifies that the glorified Lord said to him, at His appearance on the Damascus road, Acts 26:15-18: But arise, and stand upon thy feet: for to this end have I appeared unto thee, to appoint thee a minister and a witness both of the things wherein thou hast seen me, and of the things wherein I will appear unto thee;

delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentils, unto whom I send thee, to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive remission of sins and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in me.]

[Hence, when the Lord Himself commissioned Ananias, a disciple at Damascus, in a vision, to seek out the penitent Saul and tell the latter what he *must* do to become a Christian He said to Ananias]: "Go thy way: for *he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel [Acts 9:15]. [And Paul himself tells us that Ananias said to him, among other things, Acts 22:14, 15]: The God of our fathers hath appointed thee to know his will, and to see the Righteous One, and to hear a voice from his mouth. For thou shalt be a witness for him unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard. [Therefore, the Apostle writing to the Corinthian Christians later, said, in defense of his Apostleship]: Am I not free? am I not an apostle? have I not seen Jesus our Lord? (1 Cor. 9:1). [Again, 1 Cor. 15:1-8] Now I make known unto you, brethren, the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye received, wherein also ye stand, by which also ye are saved, if ye hold fast the word which I preached unto you, except ye believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received: that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures: and that he appeared to Cephas; then to the twelve; then he appeared to above five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain until now, but some are fallen asleep: then he appeared to James; then to all the apostles; and last of all, as to the child untimely born, he appeared to me also. [Is it to be wondered at, then, that immediately after Paul's experience before the gates of Damascus, and his subsequent repentance and baptism], straightway in the synagogues [in that city] he proclaimed Jesus, that he is the Son of God [Acts 9:20]? [Paul evidently saw the Lord in His glorified body, the brilliance of which outshone the radiance of the midday sun; in the same body in which Peter, James and John had seen Him, on a former occasion, on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:1-8). Peter could never forget that experience, and harking back to it in memory, in his later years, he write]: For we did not follow cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there was borne such a voice to him by the Majestic Glory, This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased: and this voice we ourselves heard borne out of heaven, when we were with him in the holy mount [2 Pet. 1:16-18]. [Finally, John summarize the function of the Apostolic office in these vivid words]: That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hands handled, concerning the Word of life (and the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare unto you the life, the eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us); that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you also, that ye also may have fellowship with us: yea, and our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ: and these things we write, that our joy may be made full [1 John 1:1-4]. [So testify the Scriptures uniformly with respect to the Apostleship.]*

No matter what the word "apostle" has come to mean in more recent times, its New Testament meaning is what concerns us here. And an "apostle," in New Testament times, was an ambassador who had *seen* Christ after the latter's Resurrection from the dead. Hence the term "witness" is the term most frequently applied to the Apostles in the New Testament Scriptures. Now, obviously, *a witness can testify only to what he has seen with his own eyes. Hence, in the very nature of the case, a witness can have no successors; and the whole preposterous dogma of "apostolic succession" falls to the ground right at this point.* The Apostles saw Jesus after His Resurrection; they so testified, in no uncertain terms, to both Jews and Gentiles of their day; then they incorporated their testimony in permanent form in Scripture for all future ages. There it is today, for us to read and to be convinced thereby that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Having delivered their testimony to the world, orally at first, then in writing, they passed on to their eternal reward (cf. 2 Tim. 4:6-8); and with their passing, the Apostolic office,—and along with it, inspiration, revelation and demonstration—came to an end. The authority and infallibility of the Apostles is now embodied in the New Testament Scriptures. *The Apostles had no "successors."*

The Apostles were guided, at all times that such guidance was necessary, by the Spirit of God.

[1. *They were filled with the Holy Spirit, i.e., with His powers and influences. Acts 2:4*: They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. [Acts 4:8]: Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, etc. [Acts 4:31]: And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spake the word of God with boldness. [Acts 9:17—here Ananias said to the penitent Saul, at Damascus]: Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, who appeared unto thee in the way which thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mayest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Spirit. [Acts 13:9]: But Saul, who is called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, fastened his eyes on him [*i.e., Elymas the sorcerer at Paphos*]. [2. *Their authority was that of the Spirit, or, perhaps it would be more correct to say, that of Christ as actualized in them by the Spirit.*] [Acts 5:3, 4, 9]: But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thy heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and keep back part of the price of the land? . . . Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. . . . Peter said unto her [Sapphira], How is it that ye have agreed together to try the Spirit of the Lord? [Obviously, in lying to an inspired Apostle, they had lied to the Spirit, and in attempting to deceive a Spirit-filled Apostle, they had "tried" the Spirit of the Lord.] [Thus the decisions

of the first Council of Apostles and elders in Jerusalem were first of all the decisions of the Holy Spirit, as announced in the letter which was sent out to the churches, Acts 15:28]: For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things, etc. [This was the Council at which it was decided once for all not to bind circumcision upon the Christian Churches.] [3. *They were constantly guided by the Spirit in their work.*] [Acts 13:1-4]: Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was there, prophets and teachers, Barnabas, and Symeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen the foster-brother of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. And as they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. So they, being sent forth by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia, etc. [Acts 16:6-8]: And they [Paul and his companions] went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden of the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia; and when they were come over against Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia; and the Spirit of Jesus suffered them not. [Acts 20:22-23—here Paul says to the Elders of Ephesus]: And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: save that the Holy Spirit testifieth unto me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. [Paul was especially conscious that his whole ministry was inspired and directed by the Spirit of God. Rom. 15:18, 19]: For I will not dare to speak of any things save those which Christ wrought through me, for the obedience of the Gentiles, by word and deed, in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Holy Spirit: so that from Jerusalem, and round about even unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. [Paul had preached the Word of Christ and established churches in the power of the Spirit. 1 Cor. 2:4, 5]: My speech and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power; that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. [1 Thess. 1:5, 6]: how that our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance. . . . And ye became imitators of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit, etc. [Gal. 2:3, 5]: This only would I learn from you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? . . . He therefore that supplieth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? [According to the New Testament, the Spirit guided the early Church in the creation of its permanent polity and officers Cf. Acts 6:1-6, and especially Acts 20:28, where Paul says to the Elders of Ephesus]: Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers, to feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood. [4 *They performed miracles by the power of the Spirit.* Mark 16:19-20]: So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken unto them, was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word by the signs that followed. [1 Cor. 2:4, the words of Paul]: And my speech and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. [Heb. 2:3, 4]: How shall we

escape, if we neglect so great a salvation? which having at the first been spoken through the Lord, was confirmed unto us by them that heard; God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will. [5. *They revealed the Will of God for the redemption of men, by inspiration of the Spirit.*] [1 Cor. 2:10-13]: But unto us God revealed them [the things of God] through the Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For who among men knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of the man, which is in him? even so the things of God none knoweth, save the Spirit of God. But we received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is from God; that we might know the things that were freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth; combining spiritual things with spiritual words. [1 Pet. 1:12]: To whom [the ancient prophets] it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto you, did they minister these things, which now have been announced unto you through them that preached the gospel unto you by the Holy Spirit sent forth from heaven. [Gal. 1:11-12, Paul says]: For I make known unto you, as touching the gospel which was preached by me, that it was not after man. For neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came to me through revelation of Jesus Christ [cf. Eph. 1:3-14, 3:1-13]. [Rev. 2:7]: He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches [cf. Rev. 2:17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22].

The Bible is the record of God's progressive revelation of His Eternal Purpose, a record begun through holy men of old, inspired by the Spirit; continued through the Hebrew Prophets, inspired by the Spirit; and concluded by Jesus and the Apostles, inspired by the Spirit. The inspirational, revelatory and demonstrative work of the Spirit all came to an end with the Apostles of Christ.

3. The Incorporation of the Body of Christ

Again, the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles in baptismal measure, on the Day of Pentecost, for the purpose of *creating* the Body of Christ and of incorporating the Jews as such into that Body. This was the beginning of the second phase of the Creative Process, the institution of the Reign of the Messiah—the Reign of Grace—upon earth.

The events of that great Day of Pentecost—all interconnected—were four in number, namely, (1) the advent (descent) of the Spirit upon the Apostles in baptismal measure; (2) the preaching of the first Gospel sermon (*i.e.*, the first proclamation of the facts of the Gospel) and the first public announcement of the terms of admission into the New Cov-