

# The visible church : in the light of history [end]

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# THE VISIBLE CHURCH

## IN THE LIGHT OF HISTORY.

(End.)

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We now turn to consider more particularly the position of Timothy and Titus, converts of S<sup>t</sup> Paul himself and, as we shall see, bearing the same relation to the Pauline stream of the Church that Matthias and James, the Lord's brother, do to the older apostolic stream in Jerusalem. Not indeed that these two streams were really distinct, but where by treating them as such we arrive at the same result for each, our confidence in its truth will be greatly increased.

As also in the one case so in the other, if we confine ourselves to a few names it is not because they are to be regarded as alone occupying the position in which we find them, but rather as representing a numerous class concerning the other members of which it is only lack of information that forbids us to speak more definitely; not but that the indications given would enable us to name others with at least some probability of correctness, but after all the question is not so doubtful as to require a minute investigation of the region of half light.

In treating of the two men mentioned we shall make unhesitating use of the epistles in the canon addressed to them by S<sup>t</sup> Paul. If the canon itself were the subject of our discussion it might be desirable to consider the objections that have been raised against them, but something must always be taken for granted to form a base of departure, and where the aim is to construct something positive out of the remains of the primitive age, it would be mere pedantic trifling to affect to have any doubt whatever as to the authenticity of the pastoral epistles,

until at least very much weightier objections have been brought against them than, have seen the light hitherto. Or if any have such doubt, the arguments here used will for him be modified only, not destroyed.

Timothy then was the close companion, fellow worker, and frequent delegate of S<sup>t</sup> Paul; this lies on the very surface of the canonical writings, but let us by the closer examination of a few passages learn the full significance of the fact.

In his first letter to the Corinthians S<sup>t</sup> Paul tells them that he is sending Timothy to bring back to their remembrance the pure way of Christ according to his own universal teaching, and bids them listen to him with respect. (I Cor. IV, 17; XVI, 10.)

In the second letter he joins Timothy with himself in the opening salutation, and no one who is familiar with S<sup>t</sup> Paul's style can fail to be aware that this means very much more than a mere brotherly salutation such as are to be found at the close of his letters.

It is true that while he styles himself an apostle, he calls Timothy simply the brother, and so we must not say that the salutation standing alone, even in the equalsing form found in the Epistle to the Philippians, would be proof that Timothy also had received the apostle-ship. But we are dealing with realities that had not yet had time to become crystallized and codified into universally recognised forms with a settled terminology, the name apostle connoted much more in the case of S<sup>t</sup> Paul than it could in the case of Timothy, and the latter would certainly have refused to share in the title on terms of equality so formally and conspicuously as in the opening salutation. The letter remains written in the name and with the authority of them both as the body of it bears out, and it is in this light that we see the force of the salutation.

There is one letter, that to the Galatians, in which the brethren in general are joined with himself in the opening greeting, but this only shows that S<sup>t</sup> Paul had no rigid rule, and throughout the body of that letter he is careful to use the first personal pronoun in the singular and not in the plural, so that on the whole strength is given to our contention that there is important significance in the presence of another name beside S<sup>t</sup> Paul's in the salutation, when in apostolic pronouncements

in the body of the letter the pronoun is used in the plural, and when as sometimes happens general greetings are found at the end.

In the body of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, which is more immediately before us, we find S<sup>t</sup> Paul and Timothy sharing the same ministry of the gospel; God has established them both as ministers of the New Testament and of His reconciliation, to proclaim that God was reconciling the world to Himself; they are both ambassadors of Christ. (2 Cor. III, 6; V, 18.)

In the letters to the Thessalonians both Silas and Timothy are joined with S<sup>t</sup> Paul in the salutation in terms of absolute equality. Then immediately after a reference to the fact that they had been entrusted by God with the gospel, they claim the right to be burdensome to the Church if they chose because as they say outright they are “apostles of Jesus Christ” (I Thess. II, 6.)

It is impossible to maintain, especially at this early stage of the letter, that S<sup>t</sup> Paul means himself only when he uses the plural pronoun, the anarthrous “apostles” would alone forbid the supposition; and indeed the use of the singular is a point on which he is very careful as we see later on where speaking of the interest they all took in Thessalonica and of an intended visit, he explains parenthetically that this intention was his alone. (I. Thess. II, 18.)

It is true that S<sup>t</sup> Paul is thinking rather of Silas than of Timothy, but let this be pressed to the utmost and it will not lessen by one iota the fulness with which he commissioned Timothy to represent him, it would only mean that we do not know whether he would have called a representative of his own by the title of apostle which doubtless had already begun to be restricted if not absolutely to the immediate messengers of Christ, at least to them and to a very few of their fellows such as Matthias, James, Barnabas and Silas himself. In any case being unable to go himself to Thessalonica, he “sent Timothy our brother to establish you and comfort you concerning your faith”, and such being the object of the mission it is to be noted that Silas appears equally with himself as authority for it.



Now when we remember the fluid state in which all Church order necessarily was, except perhaps in Jerusalem and a few other places, we could not easily imagine in what terms S<sup>t</sup> Paul could show that he desired Timothy to be recognised as the full inheritor of his own responsibility and effective authority in the ministry of the gospel more distinctly than he does in such passages as we have just now passed in review.

Already then we see that Timothy was not only entrusted with the gospel, but was also put forward by S<sup>t</sup> Paul as his own representative in the face of the churches in a way that may be true of certain other individuals, but is certainly not true of the “elders” or “guardians” as a class. From this alone it would be a legitimate inference that the younger man had received in particular the prerogative of bestowing the apostolic sanction, that is of ordination, but the Pastoral Epistles turn this inference into certainty.

Let us examine their testimony not only on this point but also on the nature of the work for which men were to be ordained. Our quotations may be compressed but they not be distorted. “O Timothy, guard the trust that has been delivered to thee, avoiding the idle speculation that has wrecked the faith of other men.” (I Tim. VI, 21.)

“I have been appointed a herald and apostle, hold thou the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me, guard the trust which has been delivered to thee.” (II Tim. I, 11.)

“Be strong in the grace in Jesus Christ, and what thou hast heard from me through many witnesses, the same deliver thou to faithful men who shall be able to teach others.” (II Tim. II, 1, cf. note on “grace”, p. 477.)

It is of course certain that the elders would have duties of various sorts in addition to that of preaching the gospel, and that in the actual working of the church some would devote themselves to one department and some to another. (I Tim. III; V, 17.)

But the purity of the faith is distinctly the leading idea of the purpose of their office, and there is no room either for supposing that those on whom the care of the gospel fell were a temporary class distinct from the true elders, and that these were a purely local body with a soul above doctrine, ruling in discipline and finance, and so supplying the really important

element of Church life and the permanent element of Church order!

As to Timothy himself S<sup>t</sup> Paul speaks to him as he never spoke to the elders, not even to these same Ephesian elders when he thought that he would never see their face again. To them he gave no charge to transmit their trust to faithful men, but he now sends Timothy among them to perform this very function. There is moreover no indication that the Ephesians might be acting in this direction on their own initiative, no hint of any departure from settled principles of order in Timothy's mission, no sign of there being in it any abnormal supersession of the elders' authority.

There is no mention even of any cooperation on the part of the elders, but we need not suppose that they were in fact to be entirely ignored, rather it was so obvious that Timothy was to act in harmony with them and the whole body of the faithful that no special warning on this head was required; Timothy's danger lay on the other side. (I Tim. IV, 12.)

With regard to the ceremony of ordination there is no reason for doubting that the laying on of hands was used, for though the instruction to Timothy to lay hands suddenly on no man may perhaps refer to the restoration of persons under discipline yet we know that he himself was ordained by the laying on of the hands of S<sup>t</sup> Paul with the presbytery, and this illustrates not only the form of the ceremony but also the cooperation of the elders. (I Tim. IV, 14; II Tim. I, 6.)

But the form of the ceremony in itself is not important for our investigation, and we may now state the result which we have obtained. Timothy's case shows us as clearly as any single example can that S<sup>t</sup> Paul followed the system of the original apostles in that while he ordained many to labour in the gospel, he authorised only a few to ordain fresh labourers.

The same thing follows with equal clearness and even greater conciseness from the instructions given to Titus, to whom S<sup>t</sup> Paul writes: "For this cause left I thee in Crete that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting and ordain elders in every city... An elder must hold fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to give exhortation and to convince the gainsayer." (Tit. I, 9.)

There is very little more evidence left as to St Paul's procedure, and nothing to make us doubt the justice of the conclusion arrived at from the two decisive cases just now considered.

But before we leave the Pastoral Epistles we may note that it is in them that deacons are first found in conjunction with presbyters. With regard to their proper work it is possible that they had less direct responsibility for the gospel message than the presbyters had, but as no one is likely to dispute that their ordination rested on the same sanctions, and as it would be a small matter if it did not, our interest in them lies chiefly in this that they are undoubtedly the official predecessors of the later diaconate, and show that the existing threefold form of the ministry took its rise in apostolic times, and may even have been the form universally contemplated from the first.

One qualification demanded of the deacon is that he should hold the "mystery of the faith" in purity.

We may also look a little more closely at the two references to Timothy's own ordination. "Neglect not the charisma in thee which was given thee through prophecy along with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Be diligent... Take heed to thyself and to thy teaching." And "Stir up the charisma of God which is in thee through the laying on of my hands... Be not ashamed then of the testimony of our Lord."

These two passages must be held as applying to the same ordination ceremony, for the charisma, by which we must understand the office rather than the spiritual strength by which its duties were performed<sup>1)</sup>, is the same in each, by it in each Timothy must bear witness to Christ.

But the two descriptions of the ceremony are totally different, they have not one feature in common, and of this there is only one explanation possible. The actual ceremony must have included the features of both descriptions; further it must on the one hand have been so identified by custom with ordination that St Paul could naturally speak of the office being conveyed simply *by* the ceremony, and yet at the same

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<sup>1)</sup> V. note at end of chapter.

time the really important thing must have been what lay at the back of the ceremony and not the ceremony's own elements, for if the crucial point had been the laying on of S<sup>t</sup> Paul's hands he could not have said that it had been conveyed "by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery", so also neither could the latter element be essentially of vital importance; and it is equally inconsistent with the language used to suppose that the two elements were both necessary and formed in conjunction the essential factor in the conveyance of office. But if the details of the ceremony were secondary there would be no difficulty in referring to the whole by any one of the more prominent parts and this then we understand S<sup>t</sup> Paul to do in the case before us.

In any case no weight can very well be laid on the difference of the propositions that govern "the laying on of the hands" in the two references, for the "with" that governs it in the one case links it so closely to "prophecy" that it comes effectively in sense under the government of the preposition that governs this latter word, and that preposition is "by". But if it be held otherwise it is a small matter it does not touch the considerations above advanced as to the secondary character of the whole ceremony, and only emphasises the absence of any reference to S<sup>t</sup> Paul's part in the place where that of the presbytery is mentioned.

What then was the meaning of the ceremony? It was firstly the natural, the inevitable, method of invoking the Divine assistance for the right performance of the office on which Timothy was entering, and S<sup>t</sup> Paul himself, the apostle neither by man nor through man, had not disdained to seek strength in this way, when he was entering not indeed into his office but simply upon a fresh evangelistic effort. And secondly, as no better form could be devised for the visible conveyance of the spiritual office of the ministry of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the bestowal of the blessing was in fact adopted as the form by which this was done, but not of necessity, and indeed D<sup>r</sup> Hatch (Outlines, p. 133) exhibits some remarkable evidence tending to show that ordination was given in certain regions without it. In this its formal aspect the presbyters would act perhaps rather as the representatives of the Christian people than as themselves sharers in the apostolic work, and

so would represent all that part of the sanction of the in fact complex office of presbyter which was dependent inalienably on the general body of the faithful.

To have understood by "charisma" the indwelling divine help rather than the office would render any consistent explanation of the two passages impossible, and we may point out in addition to what has gone before that Timothy is urged not to yield himself to its promptings and cooperate with it, but to fan it into flame, a curious point of view if the charisma itself be the divine energy.

Nor is there any difficulty in the fact that the charisma is said to be *in* Timothy, for just as the charisma of a wealthy man would be not so much the gold itself which he possessed as the resulting faculty of doing good, so here Timothy's charisma is not so much his office considered objectively as the faculty now resident in himself as holder of that office.

We have already seen various instances of the term apostle being applied to other than the immediate recipients of Christ's commission, and while it never actually became the proper title of a permanent officer in the church, those instances are an indication of how easily it might have done so had not reverence for the first apostles together with the real linguistic convenience of having a special designation for them, restricted its general use. It will be interesting to glance at other examples. There are two passages (I Cor. XII, 25; Eph. IV, 7) in which St Paul in emphasising the unity of the body amid the diversity of charismata, the diverse manifestations of the charis given unto each man, begins a list of workers with *apostles*. It is clear indeed on the one hand that he is contemplating the visible activities of church life and not a canonically defined framework of officials, and that the same man might quite well combine in his own person more than one of these activities, yet on the other hand when we find a class of workers, and this the leading class in each list, described as apostles, we must admit that the name was bidding fair to become an official title, and this all the more in that it does not directly contemplate an activity as prophet for example does, but a status; it is not the labour of the missionary but the fact of the mission that it points at.



Again when Andronicus und Junias are said to be “of note among the apostles”, we must not forget that it means that these two men were themselves notable apostles. Again, who were the false apostles in Corinth? (II Cor. XII, 13.)

They themselves claimed either the title or a status which S<sup>t</sup> Paul calls apostleship, and they would not have done so had they not hoped to gain both credence and prestige.

Finally, we may notice how much more forcible and full of living connection with the context S<sup>t</sup> Paul’s exclamation as to the miserable lot of the apostles is, if we understand (I Cor. IV, 9) him to have in view Apollos and Sosthenes and men of like standing as well as Cephas and the original band.

There is nothing it may be remarked in the word apostle itself to limit its application to those only who had received authority to send out labourers as well as the commission to labour, but any definite indications that we have seen point without exception to the fact that this limitation was never overpassed, that is when the word was used in an ecclesiastical sense. Indeed it would have been very strange if the title of the original apostles had been applied to any whose essential relationship to the gospel differed vitally from their own.

To close our New Testament investigation we may now turn to the angels of the churches in the Apocalypse.

In the case of figurative language there is of necessity ample room both for mistaken interpretations on the one hand and on the other, owing to the inevitable halting leg, for the multiplications of objections even to the right one; and so the most that any one can do is to trust his own judgment, to state his own view as clearly as he can, and to leave the matter to the judgment of his readers.

It is in its essentials the ordinary interpretation that is adopted here, and its justice stands out with renewed strength in the light of the facts already emphasised in the course of our enquiry, upon which in its turn the apocalyptic passage throws interesting light.

The angels are in the first place represented as stars in the hand of Christ. A star is a centre of light and when placed in Christ’s hand forms a most appropriate symbol for a radiating focus of the *evangel*; but this is exactly what an

apostle is according to the purpose of his high office, and hence when we find that the stars represent angels or messengers of God, we are quite ready to identify them with apostles or messengers of Christ, that is with those by whatever name they were called who had inherited the fulness of the permanent apostolic responsibility and prerogative.

Hence also, stars in Christ's hand though they be, these angels are but erring men.

Is this consistent with the terms of the vision? Resident in a Christian community one of these angels would not only in the sense indicated represent Christ to the people, but he would also naturally be accepted by the people as their leader and representative, and in this character as well as in that of messenger of Christ he would be responsible.

It is just this position that the angels of the vision hold; for they are not only stars, distinct from but connected each with a lamp, which in its turn figures a church, but they are also sharply rebuked and that not only for their own shortcomings but also for the failure of their respective churches in faith and morals.

Even from the standpoint of those who forget that to him who wrote the Apocalypse Greek was a living language, who forget that in its very vocabulary imagery and suggestion are wholly in place, and who therefore demand that all shall be measured by the rules of prose as laid down in a twentieth century grammar,—even from this standpoint the objections to the interpretation above adopted do not seem to be insuperable.

For if apostle of the Gentiles may mean a messenger *to* the Gentiles (Rom. XI, 13); if angel of the waters, angel of the abyss (Rev. IX, 11; XVI, 5) may mean God's angel presiding over the waters, over the abyss, it is not impossible to understand by the angel of a church God's ambassador presiding over the church, a brother with a message to brethren.

As an example of other systems of interpretation let us take that which comes to us with the greatest authority (Lightfoot's *Christian Ministry*, p. 199). In it "the star shining steadily by its own inherent light is the supra-sensual counterpart, the heavenly representative; the lamp, flickering and uncertain, the earthly realisation, the outward embodiment... Whether the angel is here conceived as an actual person, the



celestial guardian, or only as a personification, the idea or spirit of the church" is left undecided.

But both lamp and star are equally in heaven in the immediate presence of Christ, they are the supra-sensual counterparts of church and angel respectively; and further there is no word of the uncertain flame of the lamps to contrast with that of the stars, rather are the stars themselves the only lights spoken of, and in their earthly counterparts we see even that the stars in one aspect are the flames of the lamps, for this is the same thing as to say that the angels represent the spiritual life of the churches.

Then as between the alternative interpretations offered, if the angel be the celestial guardian, where is the propriety of St John addressing a letter to him full of definite particulars? What fresh aspect of his character is exhibited in his presentment as a star, with which he is identified in the same manner as the church is with the lamp? Is the sharp rebuke administered to him meant to teach us that when we go wrong it is really the fault of our guardian angels?

But if the angel be the personification of the church, then we have the latter presented to us under the three figures of the lamp, the angel, and the star as well as directly under its own character and the whole artistic balance of the vision is overthrown; and if this were not enough the rebukes are addressed not to the church itself, not to its presentment as burning with flickering and uncertain flame, but to that aspect of it in which it is most closely identified with the star in Christ's right hand.

Possibly not one of these difficulties would be in itself insuperable, but for the mere pleasure of overriding them all we are not justified in forsaking the old straightforward interpretation. Moreover as this old interpretation itself receives in the light of our present investigation a point and a consistency that is to be found in no other way there is a corresponding increase of probability that we have in fact arrived at the true explanation. We learn in particular with regard to the historical development of the apostolic ministry that men of like standing with the apostles were, in Asia Minor at least, established as resident leaders of local churches.

Our survey of the writings of the New Testament is now complete, and while the evidence in itself may be somewhat scanty yet it is every whit as abundant as the nature of the surviving material justifies us in expecting, where it is distinct it is without exception in favour of the one conclusion and where it is indistinct that same conclusion is usually the best and never an impossible explanation of the facts. Hence we adopt that conclusion with the fullest confidence, and need not be afraid to speak of it as applicable to the whole primitive church provided that we do so with recollection of the conditions then existing when the gospel was poured out like new wine, and the permanent elements of corporate life were present indeed in the church but not necessarily in every geographical spot where Christ had been named, and even where present not necessarily fully recognised or come to their full effect. In other words, although we have found that a certain element of the visible church's being, that is the apostolic sanction, was indisputably in vigorous existence we must not argue from the analogy of a later age that it was always found in the same combination with other elements and that in the concrete one settled *form* of church order prevailed universally at the very first.

Conversely if we find indications that a settled order one in all the details of its form did not in fact prevail universally we need not imagine that there is any reason for doubting the common presence of the apostolic sanction for it would be adapted everywhere to the local conditions and would take time to work out an obvious unity of form throughout the world. It is the neglect of this latter consideration that seems slightly to vitiate the otherwise admirable passage just now to be quoted. For whence, we may ask the writer, did that order of clergy spring common to them all by which the different churches all over the world were actually made one? But let us hear him:—

“The moment we think of the Church not as an ecclesiastical or political institution, but as it was in the first age, a spiritual body, that is to say a body partly moved by the Spirit of God, dependent also on the tempers and the sympathies of men swayed to and fro by religious emotion, the perplexity solves itself, and the narrative of Scripture becomes truthful

and natural . . . The first fervour of religious feeling does not admit a uniform level of church government . . . No attempt is made to bring the different churches under a common system. We cannot imagine any bond by which they could have been linked together without an order of clergy or a form of church government common to them all; this is not to be found in the New Testament. It was hard to keep the church at Corinth at unity with itself; it would have been still harder to have brought it into unity with other churches." (Jowett Epp. to Thess., Gal. and Rom., Vol. I, p. 374.)

Nothing in fact can explain the catholic Church of history but the apostolic unity of the ministry.

Without further remark or specific reference to particular passages we may now summarise our results.

Christ's charge to the original apostles was a definite thing imparting a responsibility over and above the general duties of discipleship, and so far was its possession from being the automatic result of the possession of the qualifications that were effective in its fulfilment, that not only was its authoritative bestowal necessary, but even it was bestowed, and that by our Lord Himself, upon an utterly unfit man. The Apostles in their turn took the natural course, which also had been more or less distinctly pointed out to them by Christ and as time passed and their work developed they transmitted their charge to others, delegating in general at the outset only the executive substance thereof, and only after the lapse of a certain time empowering certain chosen individuals to act with full missionary authority and in their turn to commit the charge to faithful successors.

The apostolic character was from the first treated with great respect by the general body of believers, and in the more settled centres was the distinguishing mark of a regular ministry; and so harmonious was the concerted action of all that it is impossible to analyse the actual ministerial status and declare clearly what was due to apostolic sanction and what to the assent of the Christian people, only the proclamation of the truth in Christ was beyond all doubt the kernel of the apostolic work.

In certain places, Corinth for example, we already see manifestations of a spirit that would inevitably bring on a crisis

when the immediate authority of the original apostles was finally withdrawn by death, and the direct question whether or no the apostolic ministry as such had any claim to acceptance had to be faced, but there is no recorded instance of a church organising itself without such a ministry, and all opposition to apostolic authority that we hear of is no more than the result of ordinary factiousness or of false teaching, and in no way offers a model for deliberate modern imitation. On the other hand, such opposition as we find is useful in showing us that access to Christ could never have been exhibited by His messengers as in any way the monopoly of a privileged class, and that isolated expressions of S<sup>t</sup> Paul must not make us imagine that any systematic claim to absolute lordship over the faithful was made by the apostles.

As the ministry did not start fully and rigidly elaborated, but sprang from the central principles as need arose, so its form was at first fluid and indeterminate and became fixed and uniform only after the lapse of a certain time.

In itself of no importance for our investigation the form, in proportion as it becomes determinate, does nevertheless acquire importance as being the embodiment and unambiguous expression of those principles which are for us the very thing in question. Thus an age which had actually forgotten the origin of the ministry might be shown to have preserved it intact by the witness of the continuity of its form.

We must note then that by the close of the New Testament period there is a distinct emergence of a threefold order, those who held no more than an executive relation to Christ's gospel commission being divided into two grades. Wherein these differed there is little to show at this early date, but whether both orders alike held the full executive substance of the apostolic commission, or whether one of them held none of it and in its functions was representative merely of the people, they both alike in the harmonious mingling of apostolic and popular sanction required the former as portions of the settled ministry.

The members of these two executive orders were from the first resident normally in the churches of their ordination, but the remaining order, those namely that could bestow the apostolic sanction, were not yet universally apportioned to definite and permanent spheres of work, and this state of things

must have held the door open for many abuses and much confusion. In Jerusalem however and in Asia Minor we find in the New Testament that there were in the modern sense of the word resident bishops.

Agreeably with the fact that no technical terminology would naturally arise until some time after the offices themselves had become distinctly established, the terms used at first are either directly descriptive such as apostle, or else are taken from those in use for officers of outwardly similar functions in contemporary organisations such as presbyter. Hence we must be careful not to assume that the same term necessarily implies absolute identity of function, that for example the deacon of the pastoral epistles was exactly the same or even evolved out of the deacon of the earlier days in Jerusalem. Nor need we be surprised at finding the same officer called now presbyter or elder, and now bishop or guardian.

As regards the highest of the three orders, that namely which carried all that could be permanent of the original apostolic character, we recognise that as there was necessarily a great gap in fact and above all in popular estimation between the position of the first and that of succeeding holders of the charge, it would be very unlikely that the name apostle which was closely associated with the former would be continued as the proper title of the latter, even though it might be occasionally applied to them descriptively, and our surprise must be accorded not to the fact that this title was dropped but to the nearness to being retained to which it actually came.

Moreover as even at the close of the period just reviewed many of the original apostles were probably still alive, men like Timothy would be regarded popularly as their personal delegates rather than as members of a permanent order of the ministry, and indeed their final establishment as such was not yet wholly assured.

So then both from the partial retention of the name apostle and from the comparative lateness of the time at which the episcopal office in the modern sense of the word assumed a settled form it is altogether natural that its final title should be long in gaining its distinctive place.



**Note on χάρις and χάρισμα.**

For any complete examination of the nature of the ministry as exhibited in the N. T. a right knowledge of the uses of the words *χάρις* and *χάρισμα* would be required, and some considerations bearing on the point are here set forth.

That the former word is often used to denote the mental disposition of goodwill, of unearned favour, will not probably be disputed by many. This subjective sense best satisfies a great number of passages such as “Ye are not under law but under grace” (Rom. VI, 14), “If by grace, then is it no more of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace” (Rom. XI, 6).

But often also, like *χάρισμα*, though perhaps with a livelier sense of the nearness of the giver it denotes the concrete expression of that disposition, the favour bestowed, the nature of which must be inferred from the context and from the known point of view of the writer. At once we see that in any given case there is a wide entrance for difference of opinion as to the exact shade of meaning of either of the words in question, or rather of the exact thing that the writer has in mind, for the word itself gives no definition of this; and where so much is left to the sympathetic power of throwing oneself into the position of men who lived nearly 2000 years ago, and of shaking off the trammels imposed by our own preconceived opinions and by connotations unknown to the writers, it is impossible to prove with mathematical precision that a given meaning is the right one in any particular instance, but I am confident that the passages submitted below will bear out the assertion that the N. T. writers apply both words to a man's opportunity, faculty, or condition in life regarded as given by God. Either would make a very good rendering for the phrase in our Catechism “that state of life unto which it shall please God to call me”, though it is to be remarked that while the Catechism directly contemplates a man's environment the Greek words rather suggest the resulting faculty or responsibility resident in the man. This is true in particular of *χάρισμα* which applies very well to any separate one of man's powers and talents, while *χάρις* naturally is quite applicable to a gift that enfolds a man on all sides. It will be found further that there are no passages in which the gift directly spoken of under *χάρις* and

*χάρισμα* is the inward and spiritual *δύναμις* by which responsibility is fulfilled and opportunity fructified. This negative proposition is of course even less capable of positive proof than the former, and it must of course not be understood to deny that a miraculously bestowed faculty would naturally be termed a charisma. But indeed the case of the well known charismata rather strengthens and illustrates the proposition here contended for: they were called spiritual gifts not because there was anything spiritual about their own nature but because they were obviously gifts of God; we know that their possessors could exercise them in a most carnal fashion, they were for the more part certainly such as many men possessed by nature and cultivation, and when acquired in this way they would have been none the less, in S<sup>t</sup> Paul's sense, charismata to be used for edification.

But now let us turn to the passages that illustrate and establish the use contended for.

*We have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand.*  
(Rom. V, 2.)

Here, as the context shows, the grace (*χάρις*) is the state of justification entered by, but yet distinct in conception from, the energy of faith.

*I say through the grace given unto me to every man that is among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think.* (Rom. XII, 3.)

Here S<sup>t</sup> Paul grounds his right to make such a direct personal appeal for humility not on his own merits but on his recognised apostolic character bestowed on him by God.

The grace referred to is in fact a definite position and responsibility in the church, and he goes on at once to compare the Church to a human body and to point out that every member has his own grace, post, or office in the same.

*Having then gifts (*χαρίσματα*) differing according to the grace (*χάρις*) that is given us, whether prophecy let us prophesy, &c.*  
(Rom. XII, 6.)

In later times the difference between our two words seems to disappear, but it is still visible in the N. T., and we may notice here that S<sup>t</sup> Paul's concern being now to direct attention to the different visible "gifts" in themselves he chooses the word *χαρίσματα*, adding "according to the *χάρις* that is given



us” as a reminder that the gifts were but different embodiments of the same favour, that the selfsame God was the giver of all. *χάρις* may be regarded as embodied in many forms, but as yet the sense of the oneness of the essence remains, distinct in the word.

But let us note what in fact the *χαρίσματα* of our passage are. Prophecy, ministry, exhortation, almsgiving, authority. Each one of these things, and S<sup>t</sup> Paul’s argument turns on this, denotes a certain relationship to the church whether by definite appointment to formal office therein or by the possession in any way of a faculty for doing it good.

But this is the only element common to all the particulars grouped under the common title, and so we say confidently that in this passage a man’s status or faculty in the church, regarded of course as given him by God, is called either his *χάρισμα* or *χάρις δοθεῖσα* according to the point of view.

*I have written the more boldly unto you. . . . because of the grace given unto me by God that I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to te Gentiles ministering the Gospel of God.* (Rom. XV, 15.)

Here as before he appeals to his office, as to a thing recognised by all, in justification of the boldness of his language. In this passage the original subjective sense of *χάρις* is so far present in S<sup>t</sup> Paul’s mind as to make him picture the actual ministering of Jesus Christ as the *purpose* of the ‘grace given’, i. e. of the apostolic status; but in the following example even this distinction is lost, and the ‘grace’ and the preaching are identified with each other.

Unto me who am less than the least of all saints *ἐδόθη ἡ χάρις αὐτή, ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν εὐαγγελίσασθαι κ. τ. λ.* (Eph. III, 8.)

Other similar passages are I Pet. IV, 10; Rom. I, 5; XI, 29; I Cor. XII, 4; Gal. II, 9; Eph. IV, 7; I Tim. IV, 14; II Tim. I, 6. Reference to the last two is made in the text when the case of Timothy is under consideration.

In the course of our investigation we meet with more evidence to the same effect and we may remark here that we have found a simple explanation of the references found in the Church Orders of a later date to those “holding *χαρίσματα*”, for this term would apply to those who held any office in the Church whatsoever.

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