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DIVINE
AUTHORITY.

UNAUTHORIZED ORDINANCES VOID.

THE ordinances of the Gospel cannot be effectually administered without divine authority. That authority does not and cannot originate in man. It may be assumed, it is true, and presumptuous men may claim to be called of God without communication from Him. But their performances will be without avail and will not be recognized in heaven, either in time or in eternity. When there is no revelation from God there can be no divine authority on earth. Baptism, even if solemnized according to the form and pattern followed by the Saviour and His appointed servants, will be of no avail and will not bring remission of sins, unless the officiating minister has received authority from Deity to act in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Men may lay their hands on the baptized believer in the form of confirmation, but if they have not been divinely appointed to do so, the Holy Ghost will not flow to the convert, and the performance will be void in the sight of heaven. Those who have the temerity to act in that manner will be counted guilty of taking the name of the Lord in vain. No council, convocation, conference, synod, or presbytery, composed of any number of learned, devout, and venerable persons, without divine communication can confer the smallest amount of divine authority. Their power is only human, their decisions, their commissions and their creeds are equally valueless in the plan of salvation.

THE PRIESTHOOD.

Whenever the Almighty desires to communicate with man on earth, He selects His own representatives and endows them with authority to speak and act in His name. What they uttered by the power of the Holy Ghost, and what they administered as He directed, was recognized by Him as if performed and spoken by Deity in person. When He gave them authority to call and ordain others to the same duties, their administrations were also accepted by the Lord, and were fully efficacious. This divine authority was called the Holy Priesthood. It was bestowed in the earliest ages. It existed among the Patriarchs, was exercised in the Mosaic dispensation, was held by many of the prophets, and was established in the Christian Church by the Saviour Himself. There are two orders or branches of that Priesthood.

THE MELCHIZEDEK PRIESTHOOD.

The higher, which includes the lower, came to be known as the Melchizedek Priesthood. This was because Melchizedek, the king of Salem, who lived in the time of Abraham and from whom "the father of the faithful" received his blessing, obtained great power in that Priesthood. It is referred to in the Epistle to the Hebrews, seventh chapter. Much controversy has arisen over the meaning of the third verse, which says: "Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest

continually." The difficulty has arisen through the application of these remarks to the individual instead of to the Priesthood which he held. The higher or Melchizedek Priesthood was not limited, as the Levitical order subsequently was, to a special lineage. It did not depend upon parentage or descent, and it was an eternal Priesthood, those who possessed it worthily retaining it through life, and being kings and priests unto God forever.

THE AARONIC PRIESTHOOD.

The lesser Priesthood was held notably by Aaron and his sons, in the line of the firstborn, and has therefore been called by his name. It had authority to administer in the lesser ordinances and in temporal affairs, but not in the higher and more spiritual concerns of the Kingdom of God. But no man could take this honour unto himself. He must be called of God as Aaron was, or he could not hold that Priesthood. (Heb. 5:4.) Aaron was called by revelation through Moses the Prophet, and ordained under his hands.

NO MAN CAN ASSUME THE PRIESTHOOD.

This being so, as a matter of course, no man can take unto himself the higher, or Melchizedek Priesthood. Unless called of God by revelation and properly ordained, he could not obtain that authority. Even Jesus of Nazareth, though He was the Son of God, did not assume that Priesthood. He was "called of God, a High Priest after the order of Melchizedek." It was written further: "So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee." (Heb. 5:5.)

CONFERRED UPON CHRIST'S APOSTLES.

It has been erroneously taught among the Christian sects of the present age that this Priesthood, in both of its branches or orders, was done away in Christ. That it has not been on earth for several centuries may be true, and therefore the authority to administer in the name of the Lord has not been enjoyed among men. But the authority held by Jesus Christ as "a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek" was conferred by Him upon His Apostles, to whom He gave the keys of that power and authority, so that what they sealed on earth should be sealed in heaven, and what they loosed on earth should be loosed in heaven. (Matt. 18:18.) He said to them: "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." (John 20:2.) Again, He said: "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain." (John 15:16.) The Apostles thus authorized had power to call others to this Priesthood and ministry, when directed by the Holy Ghost, as Moses called and ordained his brother Aaron.

LESSER PRIESTHOOD NOT ABOLISHED.

The law of carnal commandments, in which the lesser or Levitical Priesthood administered, was fulfilled in Jesus Christ, but the Priesthood or authority to administer in the name of the Lord was not then abolished, the higher, or Melchizedek Priesthood was restored. That was the change in the Priesthood referred to in Heb. 7:12: "For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law." From this it is evident that the Priesthood was not abolished, but the law of the Gospel being introduced by Christ in place of the Mosaic code, the higher Priesthood was also introduced, for the Gospel is a higher law than that of Moses. The sacrifice of animals in which the lesser Priesthood administered was no longer required, after the great sacrifice of the Son of God of which they were typical,

so that the function of the lesser, or Aaronic Priesthood was discontinued. But the administration of the ordinances of the Gospel was necessary, and could not be rightfully performed without divine authority. Therefore, the Priesthood of God held by Jesus Christ, and by His Apostles and by others called of God through them, was a part of and essential to the Christian dispensation.

"CALLED OF GOD."

The term, "called of God," appears to be as much misunderstood as is the subject of the Priesthood of God. Men assume to act in the name of Jesus Christ, either because they feel or imagine they have a call in their hearts to this ministry, or because they have been called by some person or conclave having no more divine communication and authority than they had themselves. In contrast to their assumption let us view the case of Saul of Tarsus, afterwards called Paul the Apostle. In the narration of his case as given in Acts 22, he says that on his way to Damascus the Lord Jesus Christ appeared to him in glory, and he was stricken blind thereby. He received his sight by miracle and was informed: "The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth. For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard. And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." Paul subsequently received another divine communication, informing him that the Lord would send him unto the Gentiles (Verses 12-21.) After all this he was not authorized to act as a minister of the Gospel, because he had not yet been properly called and ordained.

HOW MEN WERE CALLED ANCIENTLY.

It was ten years after this, according to the chronology of the New Testament, that Paul was ordained to the Priesthood or authority to act in the name of the Lord. It is stated that certain prophets and teachers were in the Church at Antioch, and "As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away." (Acts 13: 2-3; see also Acts 9: 15-18.) Paul in his epistles invariably declared that he was not called by the will of man; and he taught that no man of himself could rightfully assume the authority to administer in the name of the Lord. To the Galatians he wrote: "Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead)." (Gal. 1: 1.) Writing to Titus, Paul said: "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, as I had appointed thee." (Titus 1: 5.) Writing to Timothy, Paul says, "Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery." (I. Tim. 4: 14.) It was thus that the seven Deacons were ordained, as recorded in Acts 6: 6.

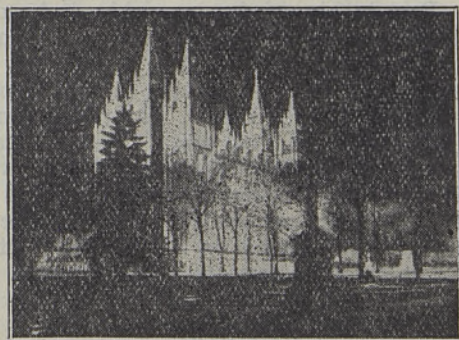
OFFICERS IN CHRIST'S CHURCH.

That there was a divinely appointed ministry in the Church established by our Saviour, must be evident, to every mind open to the truth, on reading the New Testament; also that it was essential to the Church, and that without it there can be no true Church of Christ on earth. Explaining this subject and stating the order of the Christian ministry given by Christ, Paul says: "And he gave some, apostles; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors

and teachers." (Eph. 4: 11.) These inspired men were, as we have seen, called of God, not of men, and ordained and were appointed in their respective callings by divine authority. It is claimed that these were necessary only in the first days of the Church of Christ on earth, and that they are no longer needed. But the succeeding verses of the scripture we have quoted show most positively to the contrary. They were given, Paul says: "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive." (Verses 12-14.) Without these divinely ordained and inspired men, holding this Holy Priesthood, the work of the ministry cannot be performed acceptably to God, neither can the Church be perfected. They are absolutely necessary until all shall come to a unity of the faith and a knowledge of the Son of God. The absence of that divine authority, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, has caused the division and dissension that now exist among professing Christians, who are "tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine," led hither and thither by unauthorized and uninspired men, and by the "cunning craftiness" whereby hirelings who preach for money, "lie in wait to deceive" and "make merchandise of the souls of men."

GOD'S HOUSE A HOUSE OF ORDER.

All the ministrations, ordinances, baptisms, confirmations, performances and ceremonies that have been instituted by men and conducted under merely human authority, whether devoutly, sincerely, and piously, or with wilful intent to impose upon the ignorance and credulity of mankind, are void in the sight of heaven, are not recognized of God, and have no virtue or effect as aids to salvation. God's house is a house of order, and He will accept only that which He has authorized and ordained. However startling this may appear, it is the eternal truth, which will stand the test of both reason and revelation. Truth is mighty and will prevail.



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