

The Papal System – XIV. The Sacrament of Orders



Continued from [XIII. Extreme Unction.](#)

The officers of a New Testament Church are bishops and deacons. No other class is ever named as discharging permanent duties in the apostolic communities. The names presbyter and bishop designated the same position, the one describing the venerable gravity of the man, the other the oversight which his episcopal duties imposed.

The deacon was charged with the care of the poor, and the distribution of the elements at the Lord's Table. It was no part of his diaconal (pertaining to a deacon) duties to preach, though Stephen and Philip proclaimed the word of life. When the first glow of gospel love warmed the hearts of men, though persons were specially set apart for the duties of the ministry, preaching in some way appears to have been a general work, for we find Acts viii. 1, 4, that by persecution the members of the church at Jerusalem "were all scattered abroad;" and "they that were scattered abroad, went everywhere preaching the word." At a very early day, after inspired men left the churches, deacons become inferior ecclesiastics; and bishops were made superior to elders.

Metropolitans.

At first all bishops were on an equality no matter where their field of labor was located. Perhaps in the beginning of the third century, in some places, one bishop began to claim some measure of superiority over another. At the commencement of the fourth century the order of metropolitans was generally recognized.

Duties of these Officers.

They ordained the bishops over whom they exercised jurisdiction; they decided controversies among their episcopal subjects; they summoned provincial synods; they published ecclesiastical laws made by councils or by the emperors in their own provinces, and enforced their observance; and they took charge of sees made vacant by death in their jurisdiction until they received new bishops. The name is derived from the seats of these lords of bishops.

The capital of a province was the residence of an ecclesiastical prince. Hence he was called a metropolitan. The Council of Chalcedon has two canons appointing those cities to be honored as the residences of metropolitans, which enjoyed the same distinction in the civil government of the empire. There are a few exceptions to this rule, The principal one was in Africa, where the senior bishop was primate no matter where he lived.

Patriarchs.

It is supposed that this order first showed itself in the churches about A.D. 381. Socrates, speaking of the Synod of Constantinople, held in A. D. 381, says: "Then too patriarchs were constituted, and the provinces distributed, so that no bishop might exercise any jurisdiction over churches out of his own diocese: for this had been often indiscriminately done before, on account of the persecutions." He then recounts the divisions of the empire into patriarchates, and gives the names of the princely bishops.

The patriarch ordained all his metropolitans; he summoned them and all provincial bishops under them to councils over which he presided; he received appeals from metropolitans and provincial synods; and originally had no ecclesiastical superior. Under God in his church empire, he was sovereign. At first there were thirteen or fourteen patriarchs. By many changes and efforts, in the course of time the number was reduced to five: the patriarchs of Rome, Constantinople, Antioch, Alexandria and Jerusalem.

Inferior Clergy.

In the time of Paul, the presbyter was the bishop. In two hundred and fifty years from his day he was the assistant of the bishop. Presbyters might preach, baptize, consecrate the Lord's Supper, and in the bishop's absence give absolution to penitents, after the episcopal office was elevated by men above the presbyterial.

Deacons.

In the early churches the deacon was "a minister of widows and tables," a levite, that is one in the lowest grade of the ministry. According to the Council of Carthage, "a deacon was ordained, not to the priesthood, but to an inferior service,"

The Archdeacon.

St. Jerome says: "The deacons choose one from themselves whom they know to be industrious, and him they call archdeacon." It was the duty of this minister to attend the bishop at the communion table, to assist him in connection with the revenues of the church, to render help in preaching, and to exercise some supervision over the inferior ministers.

Deaconesses.

As a general rule the deaconess must be from forty to sixty years of age before receiving the appointment, a widow, having had but one husband; or an unmarried sister. 'They are employed, says Bingham, "To assist the minister

at the baptizing of women." They were also obliged to visit the poor, the sick and the martyrs.

Sub-Deacons.

This office existed in the third century; its duties were to fit the sacred vessels for the altar and hand them to the deacon in time of divine service; to attend the doors of the church during the communion; and to journey to foreign churches as the bishop's messengers.

Acolyte.

This office existed in the third century. The acolyte at his ordination received a candlestick, with a taper in it, to instruct him that it was his duty to light the candles of the church; and an empty vessel to furnish wine for the Lord's Supper. It is supposed that it was their duty to attend the bishop wherever he went, and that from this service their name was obtained.

Exorcists.

In the first half of the third century this office was in full exercise in the churches. The exorcist cast out devils.

The Lector or Reader.

This was a distinct office in the third century. It was the duty of the lector to read the Scriptures, not at the altar, but in the reading-desk in the body of the church. The lector has entered upon his duties at eight years of age, but by a decree of Justinian, no one under eighteen was to be ordained in future.

The Ostiarii, or Doorkeepers.

The doorkeeper belonged to an order of the clergy in the third century. He was appointed by the bishop; and solemnly installed by receiving the keys from him with this charge: "Behave thyself as one that must give an account to God of the things locked under these keys."

The Psalmistae, or Singers.

This inferior order of the clergy arose about the fourth century. Their office was to regulate and encourage church music.

Copiatae.

These were an order of inferior clergy, who in ancient times took charge of funerals and provided for the proper burial of the dead. It is understood that in many places the Jews still have such an order.

The Parabolani.

These persons were devoted to the care of the sick, and were reckoned by some as a part of the clergy in the early Church.

There were several other minor offices in the primitive Church. Showing with considerable distinctness that it might lack piety, and be shorn of usefulness, but that it was rich in the abundance of its sacred situations.

Centuries rolled on revealing few changes among the clergy. The principal one was the rise of

The Order of Cardinals.

The title of Cardinal was given at an early day to the seven suffragan bishops of the pope in the immediate vicinity of Rome; to the twenty-eight presbyters or chief ministers of the Roman parishes; and to a certain number of deacons who had charge of some churches and chapels of devotion. These three classes were called *cardinati* or *cardinals*, to indicate that they were the first in rank; and that they had the chief direction of all ecclesiastics, and of all church affairs in Rome. This title conferred no great honor in the beginning, though it looked to that object from the start; but in A. D. 1059, Nicolas II. restricted the right of electing a pontiff to the seven bishops and twenty-eight priests just named; and Alexander III., to quiet dissatisfaction at Rome, enlarged the college of cardinal electors by admitting into it the seven palatine judges, the arch-presbyters of the Lateran Church, and those of the churches of St. Peter and St. Maria Maggoire; and the abbots of St. Paul and St. Lawrence without the walls; and the cardinal deacons or *regionarii*.

The pope, says Mosheim, is chosen at this day "by six bishops in the vicinage (vicinity) of Rome, fifty presbyters of Roman churches, and fourteen overseers or deacons of Roman hospitals or deaconries." These electors are all called cardinals. When a pontiff is to be chosen they are locked up in a single apartment, having only one door, which they are not allowed to leave until a successor to Peter is elected. Food is handed in to the members of the conclave, through a window. One of the galleries of the Vatican, with the requisite number of little cells to furnish one for each cardinal, is generally the room in which the conclave is confined. The cardinals are the princes of the papal kingdom, the counselors of the pope, the presidents and managers of all ecclesiastical boards in Rome; under the pope they are the masters of the Catholic Church. From the cardinals the pope is elected. Though not so in name, they are a new order of the clergy born in the eleventh century, and overshadowing all the dignitaries of the Catholic Church, except the Supreme Pontiff.

The modern Clergy of the Catholic Church.

The Council of Trent says: "As the ministry of so holy a priesthood is a divine arrangement, it was meet in order that it may be exercised with greater dignity and veneration, that in the admirable economy of the church there should be several distinct orders of ministers, intended by their office to serve the priesthood, and so disposed as that, beginning with the clerical tonsure, they may ascend gradually from the lower to the higher orders. For the Holy Scriptures make distinct mention not only of priests but of deacons, and they teach us in impressive language the things which have special reference to their ordination; and from the beginning of the Church

the names and peculiar duties of the following orders are known to have been in use: namely, subdeacons, acolytes, exorcists, readers, and doorkeepers. Although they are not all of equal rank; for sub-deacons are placed among the greater orders by the fathers and holy councils, in which we read very frequently of other inferior orders." The council heads this chapter "Of the seven orders" that are of the ministry.

The next chapter of the decree is entitled, "*Orders are a Sacrament.*" It reads, "Since it is evident from the testimony of Scripture, from apostolic tradition, and from the unanimous consent of the fathers, that by holy ordination, conferred by words and external signs, grace is given, no one ought to doubt that orders constitute *one of the seven Sacraments of holy Church*. For the apostle says, 'I admonish you that you stir up the grace of God, which is in thee by the imposition of my hands. For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of strength, and of love, and of sobriety.'" "

The Council says:

"If any one shall affirm that by sacred ordination the Holy Spirit is not given, and, therefore, that in vain the bishops say: Receive the Holy Spirit; or that by it a character is not impressed, or that he who was once a priest may become a layman again; let him be accursed."

It cannot be denied that in thousands of instances the Holy Spirit has not been given in ordination. Nothing can be more preposterous than the supposition that any character or quality of mind or heart is given by ordination to the candidate. The act only gives him the external authority of the Church to undertake certain duties. The imposition of apostolical hands conferred the Holy Spirit. No human hands bestow that Spirit now except those pierced on the tree of Calvary.

The Priests and Ministers of Rome must have the Tonsure (haircut).

The Catechism of Trent says that,

"In the tonsure the hair of the head is cut in the form of a crown, which ought constantly to be preserved, and as anyone advances in orders, his crown ought to be drawn more widely. The Church teaches that this practice is received from apostolic tradition this custom, they say, was introduced at first by the prince of all the apostles in honor of the crown of thorns, which was pressed upon the head of our Saviour."

The tonsure is indispensable to any ecclesiastical position. Every minister and priest must wear it.

The tonsure was first practiced by the monks in the fourth century; from them it passed over to the ministers of the Church. In the fifth century it was a badge of the clerical office. In A.D. 633, the fourth Council of Toledo enjoined all the clergy to shave the whole crown of their heads, leaving but a small tuft of their hair, in the form of a round circle, or a crown.

In England and Scotland, the tonsure led to bitter controversies between the ancient British and Pictish Christians, and the Anglo-Saxon converts of Augustine, the Roman, and his fellow monk

The Scottish priests permitted the hair to grow on the back of the head, and shaved the front from ear to ear, in the form of a crescent, which the Romanists derisively called, "The tonsure of Simon Magus." This difficulty, and the trouble about Easter, broke up religious intercourse between the ancient churches of Britain and the papal Church of Augustine, and drove a number of noble ministers out of England, in the seventh century, who would not yield to the pope even in trivial matters. Among whom was the saintly Coleman.

Insignia of the Episcopal and Papal Offices.

The bishop's ring denoted the nuptial union which bound him to his flock; and was a prominent mark of the dignity of a prelate.

The crozier or staff, usually bent at the top, like the crook of an ancient shepherd, was an indispensable token of episcopal authority. At the death of a bishop, in the eleventh century, his staff and crozier were forthwith transmitted to the sovereign, the bestowment of which by the monarch upon any clergyman, gave him the bishopric of the deceased. This custom stirred up the fiercest warfare ever waged by the popes between Henry IV., Emperor of Germany, and Gregory VII., Pope of Rome.

A famous pastoral staff was preserved in Ireland for many centuries. It was called, "The Staff of Jesus." St. Patrick was said to have received it indirectly from Christ; and with it, to have driven all venomous reptiles from his adopted country. Giraldus Cambrensis, a clergyman with the English when they conquered a large part of Ireland in the twelfth century, describes it, and states that his countrymen removed it from Armagh to Dublin; where it remained till the Reformation, during which it was burned.

The miter in the West is a hat divided in two at the crown, each part tapering at the top to a narrow point or tongue; it is supposed that it was intended to represent the cloven tongues in the likeness of which the Spirit of God rested on the apostles on the day of Pentecost. Miters were often made of very costly materials; gold and precious stones lending their worth and beauty. The miter is known to have been in use from the ninth century; how much earlier it is difficult to determine.

The *tiara*, or papal miter, was, originally, a tall, round hat; but it was encircled by one crown by Boniface VIII, in A.D. 1295: a second was placed around it by Benedict XII. A.D. 1335, and still another by John XXIII, in A.D. 1411. It is a triple crown, literally, This is the symbol of royalty and priestly dignity worn by the popes.

The keys are another token of the pope's dominion over heaven and the souls of men here. "The keys" refer to the power which Christ gave to Peter, and, as Catholics imagine, to the pope, Peter's successor, when he is said to have given Peter the keys of the kingdom of heaven.

Some of the official Garments of the Clergy.

In the celebration of mass, the priest is clothed to represent Christ in his suffering. The *Amice* represents the cloth or rag with which the Jews muffled our Saviour's face when, at every blow, they bid him prophesy who it was that struck him; the *Alb* represents the white garment with which Herod clothed him; the *Girdle*, *Maniple* and *Stole*, represent the cords and bands with which he was bound in the different stages of his Passion; the *Chasuble*, or outer vestment, represents the purple garment with which he was draped in mockery as a king, the cross on the back of which represents the one which the Saviour bore on his shoulders. Gavin says:

"The *Ambito* (evidently the Spanish for *Amice*) is like a Holland handkerchief, and is put around the priest's neck; the *Alba* is a long surplice, with narrow sleeves, ornamented with fine lace; the *Stole* is a long list of silk, with a cross in the middle, and one at each end; the *Maniple* is a short list of the same silk, with as many crosses, and is tied on the priest's left arm; the *Casulla* (*Chasuble*?) is a sort of dress made of three yards of silk, thirty-six inches wide at the back, but narrower in front."

The Pope and Cardinals in their Robes of Office.

Some years ago, a spectator in St. Peter's at Rome, on a great feast day, saw "The pope in a golden chair, carried on the shoulders of twelve cardinals, advancing slowly up the grand nave. He was arrayed in a large, folding robe of white satin, embroidered with gold; he had on his head the triple crown. Bishops and cardinals, clothed in crimson, with attendant train-bearers, preceded and followed him. There were miters and crucifixes, resplendent with gems, borne along. This scene, in such a church, seemed to mock even the splendid sunlight... . . . The cardinals removed their red caps... . . . Cardinals, in long, red robes, with prodigious tails, or trails, which were carried by their servants, came up and kissed his hand, or the hem of his robe, or the cross on his slipper, bowed three times, as is said, to him, as to the Father, on his right, as to the Son, in front, and on his left, as to the Holy Ghost." How loudly this description recalls the saying of St. Paul, 2 Thess. ii. 4 (Catholic version): Who opposeth and is lifted up above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself as if he were God." Or, does it not remind us of John's vision? "And the woman was clothed round about with purple and scarlet, and gilt with gold, and precious stones, and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand, full of the abomination and filthiness of her fornication." Catholic version, Apocalypse xvii. 4.

(To be continued.)

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