



THE ORTHODOX ANGLICAN CHURCH®

The Lord's Own Teaching

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CHRIST IS RISEN! The Lord is Risen indeed! Alleluia! We celebrate the Resurrection of our Lord, and even now remember the forty days of post-resurrection appearances of the Lord Christ to His followers. These forty days—the time between the first Easter and the Ascension of the Lord—marks an important but often overlooked period of the Church's history.

Those of you who have sat under my teaching know that I consider biblical numerology to be an important study. The numbers of days, especially, can be revealing of the will of the Holy Spirit in guiding us in our understanding of scripture. The forty days between the Resurrection and the Ascension are no exception. The forty days symbolize God's preparation of people for his service. In the Holy Scripture, forty days (such as the forty days Jesus spent in the wilderness before His ministry began), or forty years (such as the forty years old Israel spent in the wilderness after the Exodus) nearly always points to God's bringing to perfection the people He will use to affect his purposes on earth.

The purpose of the forty days between the Resurrection and the Ascension are told to us clearly in the first verses of the book of the Acts of the Apostles: "The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which he was taken up,

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after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen: to whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.” Here we are told that the Lord Christ, aside from giving “many infallible proofs” that he was indeed alive, also instructed His Apostles in the principles of the kingdom of God. Notice that Jesus gave instructions—

commandments—by the power of the Holy Spirit to the Apostles. Our Lord before the crucifixion had promised this gift of the Spirit to the Apostles, and here we see it in action. St. John in his gospel gives us a glimpse of these instructions to the Apostles. In John chapter 20, verses 19-23 we witness Christ’s commissioning of the Apostles (the word “disciple” here refers to the Twelve, see verse 24), and His granting them the sacramental power of Absolution: “Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. And when he had so said, he shewed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord. Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained. But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. . . .”

There are many today who teach that the ordained ministry of the Church developed slowly over the first centuries of the Church’s history. They also teach that the sacramental practices of the Church grew as the years rolled by. But this flatly contradicts the claims of Holy Scripture. The forty days between the Resurrection and the Ascension were used by the Son of God, by the power of the Holy Ghost, to prepare the Apostles for the tremendous task that lay before them—the survival and expansion of the Kingdom of God on earth.

The witness of scripture is that immediately after these forty days, and after being baptized by the Holy Spirit at the day of Pentecost, the whole teaching of the Church—the Apostolic Doctrine and Fellowship—was set, taught by the Lord Christ Himself. In other words, our actions today—our Communion service this evening—is based not upon slow gradual development, but by

the pronouncements, instructions and commandments of the Lord Jesus Christ after His Resurrection and before His Ascension.

The Book of Acts was written as a witness to this fact: our practice of Christianity is not the growth of man-made ideas, but rather is in submission to the direct teaching heard from the lips of the Son of God Himself.

We have already seen that the power of Absolution was given to the Apostles. After the day of Pentecost, we find a complete pattern of ordination of the three orders of ministry—Bishops, Priests, and Deacons. We find the Apostles teaching that Baptism is necessary to enter the Kingdom of God, and Confirmation a necessity for the reception of the gifts of the Holy Ghost in the life of the believer. We find the Church instituting an exact formula for the celebration of the Holy Communion, a formula that was memorized by the Apostles and passed on in exact form to their successors. We find a theology of Divine Healing never seen before; and the Book of Acts records the First Council of the Church—evidence that the dogmas of Faith were to be decreed in Conciliar pronouncements.

This year we have three remaining Sundays until we commemorate the Sunday after the Ascension. For these Sundays I will be preaching on each of these events in the life of the Church. Next Sunday we will examine the biblical record on Holy Baptism and Confirmation, and witness from the lips of the Apostles themselves what our Lord taught them about these sacraments. The following Sunday we will examine the Holy Communion, and discover how our celebration of the Lord's Supper now follows exactly the instructions given by our Lord. Next, we will consider Holy Orders in the Church and see how the Prayer book is correct in claiming that "It is evident unto all men, diligently reading Holy Scripture and ancient Authors [the writings of the Church Fathers], that from the Apostle's time there have been these Orders of Ministers in Christ's Church,—Bishops, Priests, and Deacons." (BCP, page 529)

It is my prayer that by this study our faith will grow stronger as we more deeply apprehend our role in the Kingdom of God, and the rich inheritance given by the Lord Christ to us: taught to His Apostles in forty days—days spent to prepare and perfect His people for His service.

Unfortunately, the Bible gives us the evidence for this only indirectly. Although we can read of Christ's empowerment of the Apostles to Absolve sins, in St. John chapter twenty, most of our conclusions will be from the circumstantial evidence found

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in the Scriptures. Think of how many disputes over theology would be solved if our Lord's words had been recorded! But there is a purpose in this omission, as well. Even if the Bible doesn't record all of our Lord's exact words to the Apostles in during these forty days, we can know what he taught the Apostles by observing their actions, which are recorded in scripture. Thus, we will be examining the most important aspects of Holy Tradition—the question of how the Lord's teaching was put into practice.

The Reverend Frank Westcott, in one of our seminary texts, puts it this way: “. . . if an Admiral of the Navy were to summon the captains of his squadron on board the flagship for a conference, and immediately afterwards they were to return to their ships and begin at once a concerted plan of action, in an orderly and systematic way, issuing the same commands on their individual vessels, we would naturally infer that that which they did, they had been told to do by their commanding officer, when he conferred with them privately. So when the Apostles, immediately after Pentecost, start out and everywhere work according to the same plan, teach the same truth, and administer the same sacraments, we infer that they were simply carrying out our Lord's orders and instructions, given during the forty days of retreat and conference.”

Today we only have time remaining to see this in one sacrament, that of Divine Healing. This was probably one of the easiest lessons our Lord taught the Apostles, since they had witnessed

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his many miraculous cures during His earthly ministry and had been sent by Jesus two-by-two to preach and heal many in Judea before the crucifixion. But the Apostles, after Pentecost, display a fully developed theology of healing; giving us evidence that the Lord Christ had granted to the church, by the Apostles, spiritual power to heal body and soul.

First, healing is done in Christ's Name. We see this in Acts 3: 1-8. ”Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have, give I thee: In the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.” Think of it—this was spoken by a man who denied the Lord three times shortly before, who was so afraid of the authorities that he ran away from Jesus' Passion. Yet here we see him at the very gate of the Temple proclaiming spiritual authority and divine healing in the Name of Christ.

Further, in the Book of James, we are taught (James 5:14,15), “Is any sick among you? Let him call for the *elders* [in the Greek this is the word we use for *priests*] of the church; and let them

pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the lord: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up”

Now, this is something new! Who taught this to James? Who taught him the sacramental principle, (in this case use of the oil with prayer) that physical things can be used by God to impart spiritual grace? Notice, this sacramental act is done in the Lord’s Name, and the Lord still does the healing. Biblically, to do something or to declare something in the Lord’s Name, is tantamount to the Lord’s personal presence and intervention given at that time. This is a stupendous witness from Scripture, and should bring us to our knees in recognition of the great promises we have in the Church: the Lord’s own presence with us at our deepest point of need.

Part 2

Now we turn our attention to Holy Baptism and Confirmation. After the meaning of the Holy Communion, there is perhaps no other more contentious subject than the meaning of Baptism. A great many of the divisions in the Church today can be traced to arguments over Baptism. There is contention as to its essential meaning, its necessity, the age at which it should be administered, the mode by which it should be performed. A whole denomination—the largest Protestant body in the United States—was formed by dogmatism on the question of whether one must be totally immersed in a pool of water to qualify as a real Christian Baptism. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, fully twelve translations of the New Testament were produced by theological partisans where the word “baptize” was altered to “immerse” or “dip.” So our subject today is an important one. We must fully understand our Lord’s teaching on the matter, and examine if our own tradition matches this instruction.

What is Baptism? The word “baptize” is transliterated from the Greek language of the New Testament, and it means to dip into water. Baptism was a religious practice of the Jews in the New Testament era. Gentiles who converted to Judaism were baptized in a religious ritual that prepared them for inclusion in the nation of Israel. Male converts were circumcised after being baptized. Thus, baptism in the Jewish world of the first century symbolized a washing away of the filth of paganism. Some of the religious sects in Judaism of the time also practiced ritual bathing—the Essenes, for example practiced religious lustrations on a regular basis. The immediate context for our understanding of Baptism, however, comes from John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus. John taught the Jews of his day that the sin of Israel was so great, they had need of baptism

themselves: it was necessary for them to wash away the effects of sin just as much as it was necessary for a gentile convert. He baptized Jews in the Jordan River, and his converts therefore became the remnant of faithful Israel, the few whose hearts were prepared for the appearance of the Messiah. John said that because the Christ “should be made manifest to Israel, therefore I am come baptizing with water” (John 1: 31). Thus Jesus, too, was baptized of John: it was necessary the He was identified with this faithful remnant—the basis for the New Covenant people of God. We are told that John’s Baptism was one of repentance from sin (Luke 3: 3), that through faith in the Messiah, those that John baptized might have their sins forgiven (Luke 3: 16,17).

Holy Baptism is a sacrament of the Gospel—instituted by the Lord Himself, and such institution is recorded in scripture. In St. Matthew’s gospel, we read, just before His Ascension, that “Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them

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in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matthew 28: 18-20).

Likewise, St. Mark records in his gospel, that before the Ascension, Jesus instructed the Apostles, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16: 15,16). Baptism, in its intimate connection with trust in God, is necessary for our salvation, for by its sacramental power given by the Lord, we have remission of our sins.

So, we see that Baptism is connected with the remission of sin. And remission of sin is a necessary first step to communion with God. Baptism is thus a rite of initiation into the covenant People of God, whereby one’s sins are remitted, and one is brought into right relationship with his Creator. Baptism is a sacramental act: an outward and visible sign (water) is a means of imparting an inward and spiritual grace (remission of sins). It thus has both an individual character (the forgiveness of sin) and a corporate character (bringing us into the Kingdom).

This understanding of Holy Baptism was granted by the Lord to His Apostles during the forty days He instructed them in the things of the Kingdom of God. The first Apostolic sermon recorded in the scriptures was preached by St. Peter. It was a powerful presentation of the Gospel to

the very ones who crucified the Lord: “Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it” (Acts 2: 22-24). “This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear” (Acts 2: 32, 33). “Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls” (Acts 2: 37-41).

Notice, when asked by the crowd, “What shall we do?” in response to the Gospel, St. Peter and the rest of the Apostles give the crowd exact instructions. *First*, they are told to “repent” (a word in the original language that means change your whole orientation to life—in other words, to become obedient to the revelation of the will of God in Jesus Christ). *Second*, “be baptized every one of you” each individual who comes to God must be baptized. *Third*, they must be baptized “in the name of Jesus Christ”. This denotes a Christian—as opposed to the old Jewish—baptism; an act that is sacramental in character, for by it is granted “the remission of sins.” Fourth, after baptism, St. Peter teaches that “ye shall receive the Holy Ghost.” This is the sacrament of Confirmation.

In his first Epistle, St. Peter declares plainly that Christian baptism brings one into the state of salvation—justifying us before God by the forgiveness of our sins. St. Peter compared Christian baptism to the flood of Noah. He wrote, “in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. [is] The like figure whereunto even *baptism doth also now save us* (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, *but the answer of a good conscience toward God*), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ: Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him” (1 Peter 3: 20-22). The Apostles baptized whole families (Acts 16:15, 31-33) men, women, children, and infants, in obedience to our Lord’s command to “Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the

kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 19:14). Very early in the Church’s history, the mode of Baptism became less important than that water was used as the outward sign of the sacrament. George Carleton, in his book, *The King’s Highway*, wrote, “It has always been the custom of the Catholic Church to baptize infants. The reasons for this are such as these. Under the old covenant infants were admitted to the family of God at eight days old, and we cannot think that the blessings of the new covenant are more restricted than those of the old. Our Lord said: Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God. And, by bestowing his blessing upon them, he showed that even unconscious babes are capable of receiving spiritual benefit. They can receive grace because, though they have not yet any active faith or repentance, yet there is not in them any self-willed impenitence or unbelief to hinder the goodwill of God towards them. The practice of infant baptism is one clear illustration of the Church’s belief that in all God’s dealings with us the beginning is with him, and our part is to respond to the grace given; that the sacraments are means of grace, and not mere tokens of a state of grace attained apart from them.”

This is not to say that baptism alone guarantees eternal life. It indeed makes us right with God, but it is not some magic amulet. Baptism makes us one of God’s people in His kingdom. Baptism is our citizenship in His Kingdom. It gives us the opportunity to obey God and have communion with Him, it grants us, by His grace, the ability to know and experience the love of God here and now, and for eternity, if we do not, as the author of the book of Hebrews states, “fall away” from the wonders of this “heavenly gift” (Hebrews 6: 4-6).

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It was not possible that the Apostles developed this complete understanding about Baptism on their own so shortly after the Resurrection. The doctrine of Baptism was taught by Jesus Christ and commanded to His Apostles and their successors. Thus, we should not be surprised to find St. Paul presenting a fully

developed theology of the sacrament of holy Baptism, when he wrote, “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve

sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 6:3-11).

There is no need for the doctrine of Baptism to be contentious. There is no need for confusion on its necessity. There is no compulsion taught about its mode of administration. But there is no doubt as to its importance, indeed, its supreme importance in the life of everyone who would follow Christ.

The same may be said of Confirmation. The Apostles began the administration of this sacrament with the very first converts to the Faith. Its appearance as a consistent practice is unexplainable: it was administered “out of the blue” as it were, *unless the Lord Himself taught the Apostles to perform this ministerial act*. Both Baptism and Confirmation—“the Laying On of hands”—are elementary doctrines of the kingdom of God (Heb. 6: 1, 2). We have seen how St. Peter, in his very first sermon, promised those who repented and were baptized that they would “receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.” What is this promise? It was made to the Jews (“you and your children”) and to the gentile nations (“and to all that are afar off”): that God would dwell in the hearts of his people in a New Covenant. The prophet Jeremiah foretold this. He wrote, “Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more” (Jer. 31: 31-34).

In Confirmation we receive the strengthening gifts of the Holy Spirit that we might continue in the new life we have received at our Baptism. Their practice shows that the Apostles taught this as a necessity for a complete Christian life, *and that it must be had at the imposition of Episcopal hands*. In the earliest days of the Church, Philip the evangelist first preached the Gospel outside of the Jewish

domain. He baptized those converted. But he was not an Apostle. He did not have the gift of the Episcopacy, and thus he could not administer the sacrament of Confirmation. The book of Acts, chapter 8 tells the story. “Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. And there was great joy in that city” (Acts 8: 5-8) . . . “when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women . . . Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost” (Acts 8: 12, 14-17).

This is the Apostolic Doctrine concerning Holy Baptism and Confirmation. It remains to find if our jurisdiction is obedient to the Lord’s teaching. In the Second Office of Instruction (page 290, BCP), we find the following: “Question: When were you made a member of the Church? Answer: I was made a member of the Church when I was Baptized. Question: What is the Church? Answer: The Church is the Body of which Jesus Christ is the Head, and all baptized people are the members.” A check of the rubrics for Holy Baptism in the Prayer book shows that both immersion and sprinkling are allowed—the mode of administration being secondary to the use of water itself as the outward form. In the Order for Holy Baptism itself, after the sacrament is performed, the Minister declares to the congregation (page 280 BCP): “Seeing now, dearly beloved brethren, that this Child (or Person) is regenerate, and grafted into the Body of Christ’s Church, let us give thanks unto Almighty God for these benefits; and with one accord make our prayers unto him, that this Child (or this Person) may lead the rest of his life according to this beginning.” Note that one is Baptized and is thereby a member of the Church—not a denomination or sect or parish—but of the whole Church, the Catholic Church.

Prayer Book teaching also agrees with our Lord’s doctrine about Confirmation. Again, in the Second Office of Instruction (Page 291, BCP), is the following: Question: What is your bounden duty as a member of the Church? Answer: My bounden duty is to follow Christ, to worship God every Sunday in his Church; and to work and pray and give for the spread of his kingdom. Question: What special means does the Church provide to help you to do all these things? Answer: The

Church provides the Laying on of Hands, or Confirmation, wherein, after renewing the promises and vows of my Baptism, and declaring my loyalty and devotion to Christ as my Master, I receive the strengthening gifts of the Holy Spirit.” In the Order of Confirmation, these strengthening gifts are listed as the “manifold gifts of grace: the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and ghostly strength, the spirit of knowledge and true godliness . . .” The Bishop, after administering the sacrament, prays, “We make our humble supplications unto Thee for these thy servants, upon whom, after the example of Thy holy Apostles, we have now laid our hands, to certify them, by this sign, of Thy favor and gracious goodness towards them.”

The book of Acts records that in the earliest days of the Church, the faithful remained in the Apostles doctrine and fellowship. Let us praise god that He has provided for us a way whereby we also may justly lay claim to remain in that same state.

Part 3

Now we examine the Lord’s own teaching about Holy Communion. There have been seemingly countless disagreements about the Lord’s Supper. Consider just the differing names for this sacrament: the Lord’s Supper, the Last Supper, the Breaking of Bread, the Holy Communion, the Mass, the Divine Liturgy, the Divine Service, the Holy Eucharist. Consider, too, the theories developed through the centuries to explain what happens at Holy Communion: transubstantiation, consubstantiation, memorialism, and mystery. There are contentions regarding its administration: unleavened Bread or Wafer? Should the laity receive the Cup? And should the Cup be administered from Wine in a chalice, or from grape juice in a small glass? Is Communion an individual act or a corporate one? Is it proper to bow or genuflect when the Blessed Sacrament is present on the Altar, or is this idolatrous and superstitious? No single act of the Church has been more thoroughly debated than this one, and no other dogma of the Church—other than the question of the Person of Jesus Christ Himself—has been more divisive to the Body of Christ than this one.

In order to unravel the mystery and debate about the Communion service, it is first necessary to examine how religious truth was taught in the first century Judea. Remember, St. Paul and many of the people associated with the early Church had been trained in the classical methods of religious instruction by the Rabbinical schools of Judea, and traces of this instruction can be found in St. Paul’s and other Epistles in the New Testament.

First, religious teaching was memorized. Sometimes formed into short, memorable phrases, truth was committed to memory in order that its dissemination was exact and accurate. Second,

religious truth was taught orally, and repeated over and over. An example of this is found in St. Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians, 2:15: "Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle."

This tells us several things. First, Apostolic doctrine is not wholly found in the written Scriptures. St. Paul often refers to his oral instruction, either already given, or that will be given, to Christians (1 Cor. 11: 34; 2 Cor. 10: 10, 11; Phil. 4: 9; etc.). Paul even makes the claim that his oral teaching and his written teaching have the same authority (2 Cor. 10: 11), and so the practice, seen in fundamentalist sects, to limit the legitimate teaching of the Church to that found written in the Bible is contrary to the Apostles own claim, and in fact, cuts them off of the Holy Traditions of the Church (much less the truths contained in the Creeds!).

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Paul says we are to "stand fast," "stand firm," "hold on to" the truths he taught by word and by letter. In the original Greek of the New Testament, the verb "hold," is the word from which we get our word "catechism." A catechism is a memorized series of questions and answers. In the older and better days of the Church, children were required to memorize the entire Catechism of the Church before they received Confirmation. St. Paul is here telling the Church to remember the catechism—the oral teaching committed to memory.

Further, we are to hold the "traditions". This word, in the Greek, is that from which we get our word paradigm—an exact copy, example, or pattern. This Greek term is in turn from the word used by first century Rabbis to denote the Traditions of their religion, committed to memory by their students. Thus, St. Paul here is using a technical word to refer to the body of oral instruction committed to memory by the earliest Christians.

Where did this oral teaching come from? The answer is conveniently found in the Scripture itself—in a section that provides instruction about the Lord's Supper. Read 1 Corinthians 11: 23-32:

For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this

cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.

This Epistle was written before the gospels were composed, and so it is the earliest written witness to the Lord's own teaching on the Holy Communion. This is the heart of New Testament teaching on the Lord's Supper.

But St. Paul did not originate the ideas presented in these verses. Notice, he “received from the Lord” this teaching about the Lord's Supper, which he “delivered” or “passed on to” the church at Corinth. This “delivery” of the teaching was done orally by the Apostle during a prior visit of St. Paul to the city. St. Paul here is not making then claim that he received this teaching directly from Jesus by way of special revelation, but rather that he was catechized by the other Apostles during his time with them in Jerusalem. This Apostolic doctrine came not from them, but from the Lord Himself. Jesus Christ is the author and originator of our Faith. It was the Lord's own teaching, in the form of a memorized religious instruction, which the Apostle Paul “delivered” to Corinth. This again is the Greek term for our word *paradigm*—the Holy Tradition of the Church. What follows therefore is a word-for-word description of the institution of the Holy Communion: the Lord Jesus took bread; He gave thanks; He broke the bread; He distributed it to His Apostles, calling it His Body, broken for the world. Then He took a cup of wine; He gave thanks; He distributed it to His Apostles, calling it His Blood of the New Covenant, for the forgiveness of sin.

The synoptic gospels, of course, also record this sacred Act: and the words used are virtually the same in each case (Matt. 26: 26-30; Mark 14:22-26; Luke 22: 14-20). This is the Lord's Own Teaching—the Holy Tradition taught to the Apostles when they were catechized into the principles of the of the Kingdom of God (Acts 1: 2, 3). Thus the practice of Holy Communion in the early church is clear. What of its meaning? First, we can understand at the outset that this is much more than a memorial meal. The command “Do this in remembrance of me” in the Greek literally means, “Do this in order to set forth the benefits of My Death again.” In Matthew's gospel (26: 28) we see

that the partaking of the elements—especially of the Cup—is for the remission of sin: “For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.” It is also the way by which we receive the life of our Lord in a “heavenly and spiritual manner” (Article 28, page 608 *BCP*). In St. John 6: 48-58 we are taught the essential connection between Holy Communion, the remission of sin, and the resurrection of the dead:

I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat? Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.

That this eating of Christ’s flesh and the drinking of His blood is commemorated in the Holy Communion is confirmed for us by the Apostle Paul, in 1 Corinthians 10: 16: “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?”

Plainly, there is far more to the Lord’s Supper than mere remembrance of His death. What great harm has come to Christendom from dishonoring the Lord’s Body in his Supper! “For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.” (1 Cor. 11: 27- 29)

“The nature of the Body and Blood of the Holy Communion were clearly understood by the early Church.”

Yet the Church has also erred on the other side: making of the elements of Communion a virtual idol in itself. The elements of the Communion *are* the Body and the Body of the Lord, but they are such in a way that cannot be defined: it is a Holy Mystery. The Western compulsion to put every sacred Act under scrutiny to our logical minds has produced great confusion and error. The teaching of transubstantiation was bad theology based upon bad science: an attempt to define an ineffable Mystery by the erroneous scientific notions current in the Middle Ages.

The nature of the Body and Blood of the Holy Communion were clearly understood by the early Church, however: Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyon, who lived AD 120-202, wrote, Christ “took that created thing, bread, and gave thanks, and said, ‘This is My Body.’ And the cup likewise, which is part of that creation to which we belong, He confessed to be His Blood, and taught the new oblation of the new covenant; which the Church receiving from the Apostles, offers to God throughout all the world . . . our opinion is in accordance with the Eucharist, and the Eucharist in turn establishes our opinion. For we offer to Him His own, announcing consistently the fellowship and union of the flesh and the Spirit. For as the bread, which is produced from the earth, when it receives the invocation of God, is no longer common bread, but the Eucharist, consisting of two realities, earthly and heavenly; so also our bodies, when they receive the Eucharist, are no longer corruptible, having the hope of resurrection to eternity.”

The Church thus truly teaches the bread is the body, the cup is the blood: materially one thing, mystically another. By its faithful reception, the Lord’s own life is imparted to us, as He taught; we receive remission of our sins and all other benefits of His Passion; and we are given thereby the seal of our own resurrection from the dead.

Now it remains to be seen if Prayer Book worship agrees with the Lord’s own teaching. We see from the language of the Communion service itself that at each celebration, we repeat the very words of institution of the sacrament. Further, Prayer Book doctrine is exactly taught in The Exhortations (pages 85-89, *BCP*), wherein is the truth that our Lord died “that he might make us the children of God, and exalt us to everlasting life . . . [and that] he hath instituted and ordained holy mysteries, as pledges of his love and for a continual remembrance of his death.” It is further written that the Communion is the sacrament “whereby alone we obtain remission of our sins, and are made partakers of the kingdom of heaven.” The Prayer Book doctrine is taught catechistically in the Offices of Instruction (page 293 *BCP*).

We can also be confident of the fact that our Liturgy—alone of those in popular use today—includes the confession of sin and an absolution, that we are given the opportunity to judge

ourselves, “For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged”, as St. Paul says (1 Cor. 11 31).

Finally, we have found many names for this sacrament, not only in the Scriptures themselves, but also in the writings of the early Church. The Anglican tradition however is easily seen in the Prayer book itself, on the title page of the service (page 67): in our church, it is properly called The Lord’s Supper, or Holy Communion. In the very first Book of Common Prayer, these terms were ended with the phrase, “commonly called the Mass.”

The Apostolic doctrine, which is the Lord’s own teaching, committed to memory, handed down orally to Christians in the first days of the Church, and witnessed in the Scriptures, was dogmatically set forth by both the Anglican and Orthodox Communions in 1931: “(1) At the Last Supper, our Lord Jesus Christ anticipated the sacrifice of His death by giving Himself to the Apostles in the form of bread blessed by Him as meat and in the form of wine blessed by Him as drink. (2) The sacrifice offered by our Lord on Calvary was offered once for all, expiates the sins as well of the living as of the dead, and reconciles us with God. Our Lord Jesus Christ does not need to sacrifice Himself again. (3) The sacrifice on Calvary is perpetually presented in the Holy Eucharist in a bloodless fashion under the form of bread and wine through the consecrating priest and through the work of the Holy Spirit in order that the fruits of the sacrifice of the Cross may be partaken of by those who offer the Eucharistic Sacrifice, by those for whom it is offered, and by those who receive worthily the Body and Blood of the Lord. (4) In the Eucharist the bread and the wine become by consecration the Body and Blood of our Lord. How? This is a mystery. (5) The Eucharistic bread and wine remain the Body and Blood of our Lord as long as these Eucharistic elements exist. (6) Those who receive the Eucharistic bread and wine truly partake of the Body and Blood of Our Lord.”

What a tremendous thing it is to be a Christian! What an honor it is to come before the Lord, offering ourselves, our souls and bodies as a living sacrifice to Him, as we partake of His life, in the Bread of Heaven and the Cup of Salvation.

Part 4

Now we move into the commands given by our Lord regarding how the Church was to be governed between His Ascension and his Second Advent. When we speak of “government” of the Church, we are necessarily talking about Church polity—the politics of ruling in the Church. We

must ask ourselves if the Lord personally instituted a specific polity—a specific system of government—that we must therefore follow.

“It is our solemn duty, therefore, as followers of Christ, to also follow the duly constituted government He instituted for His own Church—and a rejection of that sacred government is thus also necessarily a rejection of Christ’s own authority over us.”

We must first understand that God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, possesses all power and authority over the creation. God is the absolute monarch of the Cosmos. Therefore, all power, including governmental power of any kind, is derived from Him. Further, we know that this power and authority is executed by Jesus Christ: “All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him” (Matt. 11:27). All things were delivered to the Son, including the power to rule, and to institute government. And the Lord has given this authority to no other. St. Paul affirms this when he describes the Lord Jesus Christ as the Head of the Church: “Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us

meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins...And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence” (Col. 1: 12-14, 18).

The question arises, how does Christ rule the Church as its Head, while we await His return? He rules, of course, by the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1: 4-8). The Spirit of God inhabits the Church, imparting grace to the world. And yet, it is a principle of the kingdom of heaven, made clear from both the Old and New Testaments, that God uses broken and weak humanity to affect His purposes on earth. Christ rules the Church by and through the Holy Spirit, coming upon men who thereby act as the governors of the Church on earth (see, for example John 20: 22,23). It is our solemn duty, therefore, as followers of Christ, to also follow the duly constituted government He instituted for His own Church—and a rejection of that sacred government is thus also necessarily a rejection of Christ’s own authority over us.

Jesus Christ chose twelve men out of His disciples, who became known as the Apostles, “Sent Ones,” who were given a special commission of governing in the Church: “Then the eleven

disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted. And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matt 28: 16-20).

Christ, as Head of the Church, would be with the Apostles, by the agency of the Holy Spirit, “until the end of the world”—better translated as “age.” He would be with them until the “end of the age,” the age between His Ascension and His Return in glory. Thus, the commission given to the Apostles must necessarily still be found in the Church today. We know this further from the fact that the Apostles replaced the position of the traitor, Judas Iscariot: “And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty,) Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus. For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry. Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out. And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, Aceldama, that is to say, The field of blood. For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishoprick let another take. Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection. And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen, That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place” (Acts 1: 15-26).

If there were no divinely instituted and commanded government of the Church, as many Protestants insist, then the Apostles would have not chosen a successor to Judas Iscariot. But they chose a successor, in obedience to our Lord's own teaching. Further, notice that the qualification to be an Apostle is eye-witnessing the earthly life of our Lord and including His Resurrection (Acts 1: 21, 22). However, the authority of this office is the called the Episcopate (Acts 1: 20, "Bishopric"). While the eyewitnesses to Jesus' resurrection would die out, the authority of their sacred Office would not. Indeed, the pages of the New Testament plainly show us that other Bishops were consecrated during the lives of the original Apostles (2 Tim. 1:6; 1 Pet. 5:2), and their qualification for this Office was carefully documented (1 Tim. 3: 1-7). Furthermore, St. Paul commanded St. Timothy, who had been consecrated to the episcopacy, to ordain and commit the Apostolic doctrine and fellowship to others who would live after them (2 Tim 2:2). These were brought into the Episcopal order by the laying-on of the hands of the Apostles.

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It is abundantly clear, therefore, that our Lord, who has all authority in the Church, commissioned the Apostles as the human hands of His government, acting by the power of the Holy Spirit, as His representatives on earth. The Apostles, in turn, consecrated successors to their Episcopal Office, and this will be done until the Lord returns.

The original twelve did not rule the Church alone. Very shortly after Pentecost, the number of believers grew so rapidly that the Apostles needed assistance, and the Bible shows us the institution of the Diaconate, in Acts 6: 1-7: "And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them. And the word of God increased; and the number of the

disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.”

The word “Deacon” in the original Greek, means “server.” The role of the Diaconate in the Church is to assist the Bishops in the physical needs of the ministry. It is an honorable and needed Order in the Church, so much so that their moral qualifications are documented in First Timothy (1 Tim. 3: 8-13). Likewise, we have evidence that the Apostles ordained “elders” (presbyters, or priests) in the earliest days of the Church (Acts 15: 4). For example, Titus, consecrated to the episcopacy by St. Paul for service in Crete, was to ordain priests to assist him (Titus 1: 5). The role of the Priesthood in the Church is to assist the Bishops in the sacramental needs of the ministry.

And so we have a scriptural witness to the three Orders of the Church: Bishops, Priests, and Deacons. There can be no doubt that this polity—or Church government—was instituted from the beginning of the Church’s history and is the system of government taught by our Lord. The Protestants, rejecting the Lord’s own teaching, insist that the hierarchy of Bishops was developed over the first few centuries, and that the original government of the Church was presbyterial in nature. Roman Catholics also separate themselves from the Lord’s own teaching by their insistence that St. Peter was given primacy of jurisdiction over all the Apostles. But the simple witness of scripture is that of a full hierarchy of three Orders—each with a specific calling, qualifications, and dignity.

Further, the earliest of the Church Fathers confirm this understanding of the Lord’s teaching about Holy Orders. Ignatius, the disciple of St. John, writes: “In like manner let all reverence the Deacons, as an appointment of Jesus Christ; and the Bishop as Jesus Christ, who is the Son of the Father; and the Presbyters as the sanhedrin of God, and the assembly of the Apostles. *Apart from these there is no church*” (Trallians iii).

Anglican church polity agrees with this primitive witness. The Preface to the Ordinal of the Book of Common Prayer (on page 529) says, “It is evident unto all men, diligently reading Holy Scripture and ancient Authors, that from the Apostles’ time there have been these Orders of Ministers in Christ’s Church,—Bishops, Priests, and Deacons.” An examination of the Ordinal itself shows that the Apostolic Office is conveyed in the Consecration of Bishops (page 553), as is the sacramental ministry of the Priesthood (page 546), while Deacons are charged to perform the physical needs of the ministry of the Church, after the example of the first Deacons to be ordained (page 532). The Bishops of the Orthodox Anglican Communion are furthermore in Succession from the Apostles, upholding not only the lineal succession of consecration but also Apostolic

“The Bishops of the Orthodox Anglican Communion are furthermore in Succession from the Apostles, upholding not only the lineal succession of consecration but Apostolic doctrine in its scriptural purity.”

doctrine in its scriptural purity.

The Apostolic succession is found in both the Apostles’ doctrine and fellowship (Acts 2:42). To have the correct Church government, according to the institution of our Lord, without the faithful teaching of correct doctrine, is the situation found in many churches and communions ruled by Bishops but ruined by heresy. The antidote to this woeful situation—rampant in the Church today—is for the faithful to flee from an heretical episcopacy and adhere themselves to orthodox Bishops, for the protection and furtherance of the faith.

Our Lord Jesus Christ instituted a form of government for His Church. A rejection of that

government is a rejection of Him. So closely is He tied to His servants, that He said to them, “He that heareth you heareth Me, and he that despiseth you despiseth Me, and he that despiseth Me despiseth Him that sent Me” (St. Luke 10:16). Thus we see that contentiousness about the government of the Church, strife over the rulership of God’s People, is, at its root, a rejection of the sovereignty of God Himself.

Let us thank the Lord, Jesus Christ, for His mercy in providing servants for His Church. And let us beseech Him to grant us a larger portion of ministry in His Kingdom.

Amen.