

**OXFORD CHURCH TEXT
BOOKS. THE
CHURCH: ITS MINISTRY
AND AUTHORITY**

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DARWELL STONE

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The Church:
its Ministry and Authority

BY

THE REV. DARWELL STONE, M.A.

LIBRARIAN OF FUSEY HOUSE, OXFORD

FORMERLY PRINCIPAL OF DORCHESTER MISSIONARY COLLEGE

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PREFACE

This book is an attempt to state in a short and clear form the facts and doctrine with regard to the Church contained in Holy Scripture and later history. The scope of it forbids any extensive citing of authorities; a few references are given in the hope that they may supply a help to further study on the part of those who have opportunity.

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THE CHURCH: ITS MINISTRY AND AUTHORITY

CHAPTER I

ANTICIPATIONS OF THE CHURCH BEFORE THE TEACHING OF CHRIST

Introductory.—The description of the Church contained in the New Testament is one of surpassing grandeur. It is there represented as the kingdom and family and household of God the Father, as the body of God the Son made Man, and as the temple and home of God the Holy Ghost. It would have been altogether contrary to the general method of the divine working in nature and in grace if so splendid and so overwhelming an idea had been given to the world without any work of preparation or without fitting surroundings in which it might live and from which it might extend. And, as a matter of fact, the preparation had lasted for many centuries; and it was amid surroundings in which this had been most fully carried out that the Church was proclaimed and began to be.

The Preaching of S. John the Baptist.—As S. John the Baptist was the herald and forerunner of the teaching and work of our Lord generally, so also was he of the Church in particular. It was part of his office to foretell and proclaim the coming of the Saviour who as the Lamb of God should redeem mankind (Luke iii. 6; John i. 36). It was another part of it to preach and to administer that baptism of repentance which supplied the final stage in the preparation for the institution of the Christian Sacrament of Baptism (Matt. iii. 6, 11;

Mark i. 4, 5, 8 ; Luke iii. 3, 7, 16 ; John i. 33). Besides this proclamation of the atoning work which was to give meaning to the existence of the Church and this preparation for the Sacrament which was to form the means of admission to it and the power which should unite its members to one another and to God, S. John the Baptist declared the coming of the kingdom of heaven. 'In those days,' says S. Matthew, 'cometh John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judæa, saying, Repent ye ; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand' (Matt. iii. 1, 2). He described Him of whom he was the forerunner as a King for whom, as for an Eastern monarch, the way must be prepared. 'For this is that which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make ye ready the way of the Lord, make His paths straight' (Matt. iii. 3). He depicted this King as carrying out a work of justice, as One 'whose fan is in His hand, and He will throughly cleanse His threshing-floor ; and He will gather His wheat into the garner, but the chaff He will burn up with unquenchable fire' (Matt. iii. 12). And it is to be noticed that, when our Lord joined the beginning of His own ministry to the close of that of S. John the Baptist, it was in the preaching about the kingdom that He made the link. 'From that time,' says S. Matthew, 'began Jesus to preach, and to say, Repent ye ; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand' (Matt. iv. 17). 'After that John was delivered up,' says S. Mark, 'Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand : repent ye, and believe in the gospel' (Mark i. 14, 15).

Jewish Anticipations in the Old Testament.—The idea of a divine kingdom was not new when S. John the Baptist began to preach. The conception of the world which the Old Testament suggests is that of a kingdom under the rule of God. The purpose of creation was that God might receive the service of created beings, and that in this service they might themselves attain their highest good. When the fulfilment of the purpose was for the time interrupted by the introduction of sin in the Fall, and by the subsequent growth of wickedness, the idea

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of a moral kingdom was preserved by the promise of redemption. The call of Abraham and the choice of the nation of Israel eventually led to the establishment of an earthly kingdom. This kingdom throughout had a typical significance. The ideal of the ruler was of one who was the instrument and representative of God, whose rule was based on divine ordinances and guided by the divine will, of whom it could be said that God was his Father (2 Sam. vii. 14). As the revelation contained in the Old Testament was gradually developed, the character of the future kingdom, of which the earthly Jewish kingdom was the type, was more clearly shown. It had been foretold to Abraham that the blessing granted to him and to his seed should extend to all mankind (Gen. xii. 3, xviii. 18, xxii. 18), and that kings should be among his descendants (Gen. xvii. 6). As the picture of the future kingdom grows in fulness, it is seen that a deliverer and ruler, the descendant of Abraham and David, who, in addition to being the servant of the Lord, will also Himself be of superhuman character and authority, is to rule over Gentiles as well as Jews. The 'kingdom of priests,' which the 'holy nation' of Israel formed (Ex. xix. 6), was a prophetic type of a spiritual kingdom which should be world-wide and include all nations; and the ideal king, the characteristics of whom were found only imperfectly in the best Jewish kings, was an anticipation of the spiritual monarch who should be both the deliverer from sin and the ruler of those whom He had redeemed. Thus, the failure of the Jewish kings and people to attain to the high ideal set before them gave emphasis to the anticipations of psalmists and prophets that there should be a kingdom of righteousness in which the divine purpose should be fulfilled and which should last for ever (*e.g.* Ps. lxxii.; Dan. vii. 13; Zech. vi. 13).¹

Later Jewish Anticipations: The 'Psalms of Solomon.'—There are many indications that this idea of a divine kingdom had not been lost among the Jews at the time

¹ Cf. Liddon, *The Divinity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*, pp. 80-91; Church, *Advent Sermons*, pp. 29-57.