

EPISCOPACY.

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I PROPOSE to deal with the subject of Episcopacy very briefly under four heads: (1) Origin of Episcopacy, and its nature in the Early Church; (2) Is Episcopacy legitimate? (3) Is it necessary according to (a) the New Testament; (b) the Early Fathers; (c) the Prayer Book? (4) Bearing of all this on the question of Reunion.

I. ORIGIN OF EPISCOPACY

Although not approving of the spirit of Jerome's remark (in commenting on Titus i. 5, 7, "Idem est ergo presbyter quam episcopus, et, ante quam diaboli instinctu studia in religione fuerunt, communi presbyterorum consilio ecclesiae gubernabantur," we must yet admit that not only do the words *πρεσβύτερος* and *ἐπίσκοπος* in the N.T. always and everywhere denote the holder of one and the same office, but also that the differentiation between the two terms was of very gradual growth. As it is an accepted fact of history that the worship of the early church was modelled on that of the Synagogue, not on that of the Temple, and as the ministers of the Synagogue were styled "Presbyters" (עֲלֵמֵי: *πρεσβύτεροι*), it was quite natural that the same title should be given to the corresponding officers of the Christian congregation, just as the congregation itself was called both *συναγωγή*¹ and *ἐκκλησία* (עֲבֵדָה: *ἐκκλησία*), as was that of the unconverted Jews. Each Christian as well as each Jewish assembly was under the guidance not of a single presbyter but of a body or council of presbyters, collectively denominated "the Presbytery" (*πρεσβυτέριον*).

These men were in each case called presbyters (Elders) from the fact that they were selected from among the senior members of the community. Each Jewish Synagogue of any importance recognized one among its presbyters as the chief of that little community, and styled him the "Chief of the Synagogue" (רֹאשׁ הַבְּנַיִת: *ἀρχισυναγωγος*). It is noteworthy, however, that, just as this

¹ Jas. ii. 2.

word (Mark v. 22, etc.) was sometimes used in the plural and then (apparently) denoted all the presbyters of that particular synagogue, so in the Christian congregation, when the secular Greek official title *ἐπίσκοπος* came into use as equivalent to presbyter; all the presbyters alike were so spoken of. It is easy to understand, however, that the fact that in the synagogue one presbyter was generally regarded as "primus inter pares," and on special occasions acted as representative and president of the community, rendered it natural for the same thing to come about in each Christian community. When the term "synagogue" ceased to be used in Greek in reference to the Christian congregation, and consequently its President could not be styled *ἀρχισυνάγωγος*, the presiding elder (whom Justin Martyr and others call *προεστώς*) would naturally be distinguished by the title "Superintendent," in Greek *ἐπίσκοπος*, and the word gradually assumed this meaning and referred no longer to each of the Elders (*πρεσβύτεροι*), but was confined to one among them.

The origin of the Episcopate is therefore easily understood. In any society certain men necessarily come to the front through their personal character and abilities. Hence, even had there been no precedent tending in that direction, there must necessarily have appeared some Presiding Elder in each Christian community soon after its incorporation. When, however, we remember that the existence of a similar leader in each Jewish synagogue set the example, we perceive that the Christian congregations would almost unavoidably be led in the same direction. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that in nearly every city in which Christians were found, a body of Presbyters was early formed (1 Tim. iv. 14; Acts xiv. 23), and that it was presided over by a Superintendent by the end of the first century—in most cases much before that time. The residence of Paul himself for considerable periods in Corinth and Rome accounts for the fact that such a president, or (as he afterwards came to be distinctively styled) *Episcopos*, is not mentioned as existing in those two Churches when Clement wrote his Epistle to the Corinthians. He does not himself claim the title at Rome, though writing in the name of the Roman Church, nor is the letter addressed to any such official at Corinth. In Jerusalem, however, where no Apostle seems to have long resided, and where several of them might occasionally be found sojourning for a short

time, James, "the Lord's brother," early became the Presiding Elder, and hence, by an anachronism readily understood, is later spoken of by the Greek Ecclesiastical Historians and others as the first "Bishop" of Jerusalem. Paul sent Timothy and Titus as his commissaries to Ephesus and Crete respectively, not as Bishops but to represent himself in his Apostolic character, and hence with authority over the local Presbyters for a time. This was, however, another step in the development of Episcopacy, if we may now use the word. The convenience of having a chief Pastor was all the more readily felt when the Apostles passed away one by one. It is not surprising therefore to find Ignatius writing of each city having not only a "presbyterion" or Council of Elders, with deacons to help them, but also a President or Superintendent, to whom the term Episcopos had then come to be applied exclusively. His language about the authority of these Bishops has been misunderstood and has caused doubt as to the genuineness of his Epistles, while the same mistake has led others to found high hierarchical claims for the Episcopate on his words. When, however, we remember that there was an Episcopos in every city, and often in villages, at that time, we perceive that the Episcopos was then practically merely the Rector or Vicar of what was then, as now, called "a Parish" (*παροικία*),¹ the other presbyters being his "Assistant Curates" as we should now express it. There is nothing at all strange, then, in Ignatius' urgent warnings to "do nothing without the Bishop"; "As the Lord . . . did nothing without the Father, so do ye nothing without the Bishop and Presbyters." Accordingly he speaks of the Presbyterion at Ephesus as "fitted to the Bishop as strings to a harp." To the Church at Smyrna he says: "Deem that a valid Eucharist which is under the Bishop or him to whom he has delegated it"; "It is not permitted, apart from the Bishop, either to baptize or to hold an Agape." A modern Rector might use the very same language in giving advice to a brother Incumbent's curates. The principle was that of St. Paul; "Let all things be done decently and in order." To found upon such expressions of Ignatius the theory that the Early Church held Episcopacy absolutely essential to the existence of the Church is therefore to show that one has failed to understand the state of affairs in Ignatius' time. The mistake arises from reading modern

¹ Vide Circular Letter of Church of Smyrna, *initio*.

conditions into ancient documents. To think that the *Episcopos* in Ignatius' letters connotes the modern head of a Diocese among ourselves is equivalent to that of the man who would blame Paul and his fellow-travellers for luxury in travelling, because Luke says, " We took up our *carriages* " (Acts xxi. 15, A.V.). The word *Bishop* doubtless comes from *Episcopos*, yet to found an argument for Episcopacy on Ignatius' words is really to confound St. Luke's company of Missionaries tramping along each with his pack upon his back with a modern party of tourists in a motor-car !

It is worth noticing that in the *Didaché* the term *Episcopos* includes the *Presbyteros*, for presbyters are not mentioned separately, only " bishops " and deacons (*Did.* xv. sqq.). When a Rector (or *Episcopos*) came to the fore, he was long only the chief Presbyter of the Parish, elected (and ordained, if there was anything equivalent to an Ordination to the office) by the other Presbyters in early times, in some places at least. Timothy was ordained " by the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery " (1 Tim. iv. 14) ; and the practice seems to have remained in force in Alexandria until the third century (*Duchesne, Early History of Christian Church*¹). Whether the Order of Bishops is even now distinct from that of Presbyters is still a moot question.

II. IS EPISCOPACY A LEGITIMATE MODE OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT ?

" This question need not detain us long. Our own study has proved to us all the general correctness of the statement made in the Prayer Book (Preface to Ord. Services) that " It is evident unto all men diligently reading the holy Scriptures and ancient Authors, that from the Apostles' time there have been these Orders of Ministers in Christ's Church ; Bishops, Priests and Deacons."

But such a fact as this does not by any means do away with the necessity for considering the question whether Episcopacy is so essential to the Universal Church that no Christian community which does not possess Episcopacy can justly claim to be part of the Church of Christ, or, in other words, that Ordination is not

¹ Vol. I., p. 69, and Vol. II, p. 99, Eng. Trans. Hase, *Kirchengeschichte*, p. 68. De Pressensé, *Histoire des Trois Premiers Siècles*, vol. II. pp. 466, 467. He quotes Jerome as saying : " Alexandrini usque ad Heraclium Dionysium presbyteri semper unum ex se electum in excelsiori gradu collocatum episcopum nominabant, quomodo si exercitus imperatorem faciant " (*Hieronom. Opera*, ii. 220).

valid unless conferred by a Bishop. Hence we now proceed to enquire: Is Episcopacy necessary?

III. IS EPISCOPACY NECESSARY? IF SO, IN WHAT SENSE AND FOR WHAT REASON?

We have seen that Episcopacy was found very useful in the Early Church and that it arose almost of necessity and was gradually adopted everywhere. The same may be said of Royalty in most parts of the world. But it has been found by experience that the existence of a king is not necessary to constitute a State, that a Republic is quite as legitimate as a form of government as is a Monarchy. Can it then be affirmed that a Presbyterian form of government is legitimate in any part of the Christian Church as an alternative to the Episcopal? Or are we obliged to hold that a Christian Community is no part of the Church Universal unless it is governed by Bishops? In answer we address ourselves (*a*) to the New Testament; (*b*) to the Early Fathers; and (*c*) to the authoritative formularies of the Church of England. Of course these three authorities are of very different value: yet they all seem to me to disprove the assertion that Episcopacy is necessary for the existence of the Church, meaning by the latter word the Church Universal, defined in our Communion Service as "The blessed company of all faithful (*i.e.* believing) people" (τῶν πιστῶν).

(*a*) In the N.T. it cannot be said that Episcopacy is once mentioned. In fact it had not been evolved then. The process which ultimately produced Episcopacy was already in operation, as we have seen above. But that is not quite the same thing. In Moses' time causes were already working which finally led to the establishment of the Israelite monarchy, yet it would hardly be correct to say that the kingship existed then. As the Apostolic Office did exist in the New Testament Church, and was established by our Lord Himself, it is somewhat strange that its continuance was not insisted on as necessary for the very existence of the Church. But the early Christians understood the essentially spiritual nature of the Church's life too well to fancy that it *depended* upon names or even the regular transmission of the ministerial functions, though they did not overlook the value of such things. St. Paul secured the appointment of Presbyters (a body of them, a *Presbyterion*) in each Christian community; but the strict letter of Holy Writ

leads us to perceive that Ordination was not performed by a Bishop but "by the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery" (1 Tim. iv. 14).

(b) As the Episcopal Order arose from the Presbyterial, and as the latter was the older of the two, it is illogical to affirm that, though Presbyterial Ordination was sufficient to "transmit the grace of Orders" in Apostolic times, Orders now conferred by the Presbyterial Church of Scotland are not valid. There was Presbyterial Ordination (even of Bishops) in the Church of Alexandria for some centuries, yet the rest of the Church of Christ did not even suggest that Alexandria was schismatic. As we have already seen, Rome and Corinth were at first without Bishops, and Clement of Rome recognizes only two Orders, Episkopoi and Diaconoi (Ep. to Cor. xlii.), since the distinction between Bishops and Presbyters had not arisen in Rome and Corinth when he wrote. He speaks of the Apostles as appointing Ministers, and of others afterwards being appointed by the latter to succeed them, with the approval of the Church, and declares that such Ministers should not rashly be deprived of their office. He never suggests the necessity of "Episcopal" ordination, though there were probably Bishops, as distinct from Presbyters, in some Asiatic Churches then. It is well known how much importance Hegesippus and Irenæus ascribe to the due succession of Bishops, but they do so, not from a belief in the need for the transmission of spiritual authority through Bishops, but because they were concerned to prove, in opposition to Gnostic claims to the possession of esoteric Christian doctrine, that though the Rule of Faith, the N.T. books, and an orderly succession of Ministers, had been handed down, generation after generation from the Apostles, yet these Gnostic heresies had never been recognized by the Church. Not till Augustine's time do we find that the Episcopate was valued especially as transmitting spiritual or ecclesiastical authority. In earlier times the historic importance of being able to trace a regular succession of men chosen by each Christian community, recognized as heads and representatives of such communities, and, lastly, appointed and consecrated by other similar heads of Christian communities, was what was held to constitute the special value of the Historic Episcopate.¹ If

¹ See Dr. Robinson's Essay on Apostolic Succession in the *Early History of the Church and Ministry*, ed. by Dr. Swete.

the same end can be attained by Presbyterian instead of by Episcopal headship, why should Episcopacy be regarded as necessary? In fact Irenæus speaks of transmission from the App. through the succession of *Presbyters*.¹ A republic may be as legitimate a State as a Monarchy. At any rate, as the earlier Church did not regard Episcopacy as *necessary* for the transmission of Orders, why should we? It has never been an article of the Christian Faith embodied in the Creeds, as must have been the case had Episcopacy been deemed so essential as to render its absence a bar to the transmission of Orders and the due administration of the Sacraments. Even now, illogically enough, those who deny that the Lord's Supper when administered by a Minister who has not been Episcopally ordained is valid, yet recognize that such a Minister—nay, even a layman or a woman—may (and in cases of necessity should) administer the other Sacrament of the Christian Church, Baptism. Why this difference?

(c) The Teaching of the Church of England on this point. The principle upon which our Church acts and judges in such matters is clearly expressed in Art. XX. "It is not lawful for the Church to ordain anything that is contrary to God's Word written . . . it ought not . . . beside the same . . . to enforce anything to be believed for necessity of salvation." Hence, were our Church to insist on Episcopacy as necessary for the Universal Church, and for the transmission of Orders and the administration of the Sacraments, she would be acting *ultra vires* and stultifying herself. On the other hand, in accordance with the first part of this Article: "The Church hath power to decree Rites and Ceremonies," the Church of England has the right of deciding *for herself*, as she has decided, to retain Episcopacy and insist on Episcopal Ordination. But nowhere has she insisted that every other Church must adopt the same system, and otherwise cannot be recognized as a true branch of Christ's Church Universal. On the contrary, when we consider the circumstances under which the Articles of 1562 were drawn up and the friendly relations which then existed between our own Church and the Reformed Churches on the Continent, and then read Art. XIX and Art. XXIII, it becomes clear that care is taken to avoid insisting on the necessity of Episcopacy in the constitution of other branches of the Universal Church. Art. XIX says: "The

¹ Irenæus, *Haer.* iii. 2.

visible Church of Christ is a Congregation of faithful men, in the which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments be duly ministered according to Christ's ordinance in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same." And Art. XXIII runs thus: "It is not lawful for any man to take upon him the office of public preaching, or ministering the Sacraments in the Congregation, before he be lawfully called, and sent to execute the same. And those we ought to judge lawfully called and sent, which be chosen and called to this work by men who have public authority given unto them in the Congregation, to call and send Ministers into the Lord's vineyard." As Archbishop Whately says of our Reformers: "Though themselves deliberately adhering to Episcopal Ordination, they refrain, both in the Article on 'the Church' and in that on 'Ministering in the Church,' from specifying Episcopacy, and Episcopal Ordination, as among the essentials" (*Apostolical Succession Considered*, Longmans, 1912, pp. 72, 73).

IV. BEARING OF ALL THIS UPON THE POSSIBILITY OF REUNION

The result of our inquiries seems to me to be twofold. In the first place we see that Episcopacy is of great antiquity in the Universal Church, and that in the first few centuries it was very useful. The fact that it was afterwards abused is no reason why it should not be still capable of being of great service to the Church in modern times. In this respect it may be compared with Royalty. But as the latter institution is no longer suited to every nationality without distinction, so certain branches of the Christian Church have been justified in preferring to return to the older Presbyterian form of government, just as some nations have rightly abolished royalty and become republics. As, however, the late War has proved, there is no reason why Empires and Republics should not form alliances with one another. It is no longer possible for men to hold that Monarchy is the only form of political rule of which God approves, for He has blessed republican states too, both in war and in peace. So too in ecclesiastical matters it cannot be denied that God's Holy Spirit has abundantly blessed many Churches which have adopted other than Episcopal direction. Hence, recognizing that where the Holy Spirit is, there is the Church (cf. Acts x. 47), we dare not "unchurch" those parts of the One Univer-

sal Church which God has accepted. The Church belongs to Christ and not to us. If the Commander-in-Chief has seen fit to acknowledge other regiments as well as our own to be integral parts of His Army, the one "Army of the Living God," who are we that we should venture to oppose His supreme decree? We must beware of imposing unlawful terms of agreement. If we follow no higher example in this matter, let us at least learn even from Balaam to say: "He hath blessed, and I cannot reverse it" (Num. xxiii. 20).

Secondly, we have seen that our own Church recognizes in her Articles certain principles, in accordance with which we must admit the validity of the Orders and Sacraments of at least certain Churches which are not Episcopal. Therefore, remembering the urgency of our Divine Lord's prayer for Unity in His Church, and recognizing what a scandal to the world and source of weakness to the cause of Christianity our disunion is and long has been, and that Episcopacy was not established to rend the Church asunder but rather to preserve its unity, we conclude that we are justified in endeavouring to devise some means whereby, while retaining Episcopacy for ourselves, we may yet form a living union between our own and those other Churches which, holding the "Faith once for all delivered unto the Saints," prefer a system of ecclesiastical polity different from our own. It may be questioned whether the System of the Church of Scotland, for instance, with its presbyter and council of Elders in every parish does not approach nearer to that of the sub-Apostolic Church than our own, since the functions of the modern Bishop differ so immensely from what they were in Ignatius' day. That, however, is a matter of no practical importance. What is of importance is to refuse to degrade Episcopacy into a shibboleth, or, still worse, to use it as a Nehushtan, a hindrance to the unity of the Church of Christ, a curse rather than a blessing.

NOTE.—The foregoing Paper was read recently before a small gathering of Church of England Clergy, and discussion was invited. Among the weightiest arguments brought forward against the writer's conclusions were the following: (1) According to one opponent's view, the writer was wrong in his exegesis of the New Testament, in his history, and in his statement of the doctrine of the Church of England. The opponent said he had almost fancied himself, in listening to the Paper, to be hearing a "Little Bethel" preacher. The New Testament recognized three Orders of the Ministry, and these still existed and must exist. (2) Another approved of the sketch given of the Origin of the Episcopate, but could not imagine any reader of Ignatius' Letters accepting the explanation given by the writer of this Paper.

[Yet, if we take a modern example—for instance Deal—the matter seems fairly obvious. In Deal there are about 11,000 people and three parishes. The old Parish Church is St. Leonard's, and its Rector still bears the title "Rector of Deal." If we imagine ourselves back in the second century, in Ignatius' time, Deal would have had an "Episcopus" and a number of Presbyters associated with him, and would have constituted one Parish. What would the "Episcopus" then have been but the modern "Rector" ?] The Church of England in Ordination conferred on her Clergy, through the imposition of the Bishop's hands, certain authority and powers which the "Non-Episcopal bodies" did not claim to bestow. To the writer these arguments did not seem to affect his contention at all seriously. But he lays them and his paper before the readers of this Magazine, hoping that the important subject dealt with so briefly and inadequately in this Article may receive the attentive consideration which is so very especially needed at the present time.

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A REMARKABLE BOYHOOD.

HERBERT TINGLE, AND ESPECIALLY HIS BOYHOOD. By John R. Clark Hall, with an introduction by H. M. Burge, D.D., Bishop of Oxford. London: S.P.C.K. 3s. 6d.

This somewhat slight sketch of the playtime amusements of a very remarkable boy and his companions, with some references to his maturer life, is of quite unusual interest. We echo the hope expressed by Dr. Burge, now Bishop of Oxford, that it will be widely read. It is a capital book to give to a boy and the parents and friends of children will find in it much to reflect upon. Herbert Tingle at an early age showed signs of possessing a mind of much originality and power, coupled with a very remarkable memory and no little practical ability. How out of very scanty materials he and his boy friends, one of whom is now the writer of this book, evolved a state system with railways, armies, political parties, elections, newspapers, universities and national institutions, Mr. Clark Hall tells us so interestingly that we could wish the book had been a good deal longer. The newspapers and books of this imaginary state were at first produced by hand with a fine pen to resemble print. Afterwards they were produced on a toy printing press. Some of them must have been uncommonly well done, for Mr. Clarke Hall found one at the British Museum, with the imprint of "Tingle and Hall" and wondered much how it reached there. A reproduction of a map drawn by Herbert Tingle at the age of 13 which is given as a frontispiece to this memoir, gives proof of his skill as a draughtsman. Some passages from a stage-play "Harlequin and Bluebeard," one of many ventures of the same kind, shows a good deal of latent talent which went undeveloped in later life. The book gives us a picture of happy intelligent boyhood, full of fun and high spirits, growing into serious and thoughtful manhood with noble ideal and purpose, not desirous of shining widely, only ambitious to do the work of life well in every detail and so to leave the world a little better than he found it.

W. G. J.

