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Religious.

For the Christian Messenger.

PRIMITIVE EPISCOPACY.

No. 1.

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The Authorized Version of the New Testament speaks of *bishops* as presiding officers in christian Churches. There are bishops in the Church of Rome—in the Greek Church—in the Eastern Churches—and in the Church of England. Is the episcopal office in those Churches the same as that spoken of in the New Testament? Are the bishops of the nineteenth century like the bishops of the first?—Did the apostles appoint, for instance, such bishops as those of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick? These are interesting and important questions.

I think that reflecting readers of the New Testament cannot fail to be struck with the difference between the religious arrangements of the old covenant and those of the new.—Under the law there was but one place of worship: Jerusalem was the place which the Lord chose out of all the tribes to put his name there." Under the gospel, as "spiritual sacrifices" only are offered, so they may be presented wherever "two or three are gathered together in the name of Jesus, and the gracious declaration is, that He is "in the midst of them."—Under the law, none could officiate at the altar but the priests: under the gospel there is no exclusive priesthood. Every believer is a priest, and may present his own offering: 1 Peter ii. 5; Heb. xiii. 15. Under the law the people had nothing to do but to obey the priests: under the gospel, the administration of affairs is in the hands of the church, and there is no higher earthly tribunal, in religious matters. "I will neglect to hear the church," said our Lord "let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican."—Matt. xviii. 17.

When the Christian Church was founded, the apostles naturally took the management of it, in the first instance, as it was some time before the organization was fully completed. All the while they remained in Jerusalem they exercised general care and control over the new community, although they did not become local officers, that is, pastors of that or any other church. There was a higher service. They were not confined to place, but were free to go wherever necessity required or the Lord might direct them.

The apostles received their appointment direct from the Saviour. Paul was the "last of all," but in many respects the most renowned. As apostles, they had no successors. The office was extraordinary, and ceased when the first holders died. The order died out when the Apostle John expired at Ephesus.

We have next to inquire, how the apostles provided for the government of the churches. The first notice of any new appointment at headquarters occurs in Acts xv. 2., where we find that on the occurrence of a difficulty in the church at Antioch it was determined to send for advice to Jerusalem, to the "apostles and elders." By that time, therefore, the care of the church in that city had been committed to "elders."

The same course was pursued by the apostle Paul, for we read, Acts 14. 23., that he "ordained them elders in every city." The elders at Jerusalem are mentioned again in Act xxi. 18.

When the Apostle Paul arrived at Miletus on his way to Palestine, "he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church." In the solemn charge which he gave them he said, "Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers." The word used there and translated "overseers," is *episcopoi*, i. e., *bishops*. We learn, therefore, that there were several bishops in the church at Ephesus.

The historian Luke gives us no further information. His work ends with Paul's first imprisonment at Rome, A. D. 61, and we gather from it that at that time christian churches were under the care of elders, or

bishops, and that there were several in each church.

There can be no doubt that this was done by divine direction. The same historian expressly says that the Lord Jesus was frequently seen by the Apostles after his resurrection, during "forty days," and that he spake to them "of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." It is a just conclusion, that in their subsequent proceedings the apostles followed the instructions then received, and which were supplemented, in the case of the apostle Paul by special revelations.

It is remarkable that the apostolic epistles furnish very scanty information respecting government, discipline, or modes of worship. As to the first particular, (government)—the most important of the epistles—those to the Romans, Corinthians, and Galatians, contain no reference to it, with the exception of a direction to the Church at Corinth to exclude a member who had fallen into immorality. There is an enumeration of the gifts bestowed by the Saviour, in the Epistle to the Ephesians, but no notice of any methods of administration. Nothing is said on the subject to the Colossians, save that they are instructed to remind Archippus of his duty, in words which seem to imply that he had become somewhat remiss: Col. iv. 17. The Thessalonians are charged to "know them which laboured among them, and were over them in the Lord, and admonished them, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake" (1 Thess. v. 12, 13); while, in the instructions given with regard to the exercise of discipline, all the "brethren" were required to get—to "warn them that were unruly"—and to "withdraw themselves" from such as "walked disorderly" (1 Thess. v. 14; 2 Thess. iii. 5). The meagreness of statement I have referred to is in striking contrast to the ecclesiastical complications of subsequent centuries, and the decrees and canons which ecclesiastical busy bodies took delight in framing.

There is one passage, however, which is singularly express and clear. It is Philippians i. 1. Paul's beautiful letter is addressed "to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons." The single church at Philippi had "bishops and deacons," exactly agreeing, with respect to the former, with the church at Ephesus.

We then come to the Pastoral Epistles, as they are now called—those to Timothy and Titus. In these epistles the apostle Paul gives directions to Timothy and Titus, whom he had appointed for a time as his representatives, the one at Ephesus, the other in Crete. Among other things, they were to provide the churches with suitable officers.—But the only officers named are bishops, or elders, and deacons: And that by "bishops" and "elders" the same officers were denoted is plain from Titus i. 5-7:—"For this cause I left thee in Crete, that thou shouldst set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee; if any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children, not accused of riot or unruly; for a bishop must be blameless," &c.

The state of the case was this:—every church had its elders, or bishops, and its deacons. To the former the work of instruction, in its various departments, was committed; they presided at the meetings, led the worship, preached, and guided in the administration of affairs, while the actual control was exercised by the churches themselves and none could be admitted, disciplined, or excluded, but by the votes of the members. The deacons, it is presumed, had the charge of the temporalities, and it was their special duty to take care of the poor.

Where then is the parallel in these things? It is to be found in those churches, and in those only, which consist of persons who have made a credible profession, according to the New Testament, of repentance and faith, and whose affairs are managed by themselves under the superintendency of their pastors and deacons. The pastors of such churches are their "elders" or "bishops."

The contrast between the primitive and the modern bishops (as the word is now used) is very noticeable. The primitive bishop was one of several elders, all of them equal in power and authority, and jointly presiding

over the same church. The modern bishop claims to belong to a higher order, and he rules over all the ministers in his diocese, which includes many congregations and a large district of country. Nothing like this occurred in the days of the apostles. I take no notice of the fable of Peter's bishopric of seven years at Antioch, and of twenty-five years at Rome, because it is rejected by all who are versed in ecclesiastical history.

Candid Episcopalians do not scruple to make large concessions on these points. The words of Dean Alford may be quoted:

"The Apostles ordained those whom the churches elected" on Acts xiv. 23.

"The E. V. has hardly dealt fairly in this case with the sacred text, in rendering *episcopous*, ver. 23, 'overseers'; whereas it ought there as in all other places to have been 'bishops,' that the fact of *elders and bishops having been originally and apostolically synonymous* might be apparent to the ordinary English reader, which now it is not." On Acts, xx. 17.

"The simple juxtaposition of the officers with the members of the church, and indeed their being placed after those members, shews the absence of hierarchical views such as those in the Epistles of the apostolic fathers." On Phil. i. 1.

It is merely laying a trap for misunderstanding, to render the word, at this time of the Church's history, 'the office of a bishop.' The *episcopoi* of the New Testament have nothing in common with our *Bishops*. In my note on Acts xx. 17, I have stated that the E. V. ought to have been consistent with itself, and to have rendered *episcopous* everywhere 'bishops,' not 'bishops' and 'overseers' as suited ecclesiastical prejudices. But it would be better to adopt the other alternative, and always to render *episcopous* 'overseers.' Thus we should avoid any chance of identifying it with a present and different office, and take refuge in the meaning of the word itself, which at the same time bears an important testimony to the duties of the post. The identity of the *episcopos* and *presbuteros* in apostolic times is evident from Tit. i. 5-7. On 1 Tim. iii. 1.

Some persons have fancied that a different order of things existed at Jerusalem, and they have ventured to say that in the latter years of the apostolic era James was bishop of that Church. They appeal to various passages in support of their hypothesis; such as, Acts xv. 13-21: xxi. 18. Gal. i. 19: ii. 12. I do not think it needful to trouble your readers with any lengthened argument on this point. It is sufficient to remark, that whatever deference was paid to "the Lord's brother," it is abundantly manifest that he was not the ruler of the church. The "elders" governed at Jerusalem, while such of the apostles as were at any time present in the city received all the honours which their character and office deserved. Thus, when Paul visited Jerusalem on one occasion he found there "James, Cephas, and John," who "seemed to be pillars."

An attempt has been also made to drag into the episcopal service our Lord's letters to the seven churches in Asia, because they are addressed to the "Angels" respectively of those churches. Our friends must first prove who those Angels were. The opinions of commentators are various and discordant.—Some supposing that at that time something like episcopacy had been developed, imagine that the "Angel" was the presiding elder. They think that, for the sake of order, one of the elders would be appointed Chairman, and that to him the title "bishop" would be specially applied, and at length, exclusively.—This is possible, but it cannot be proved, and if it could be, it would not serve the purpose of episcopacy, properly so called.

Those who hold that the title was derived from the practice of the synagogue are manifestly in error, because "the angel of the synagogue" was not the ruler, and did not occupy a position analogous to that of an elder in a christian church.

Dean Alford's theory is that *real* angels were intended, under whose charge the churches were in some sense placed—as individual christians are served by "ministering spirits."

One thing is evident,—that the Churches themselves were addressed. They were charged with sin: they were urged to duty;

they were commended for what was praiseworthy; to them the promises and threatenings were delivered, and all the responsibility referred to or implied was theirs. Our Lord spoke to the churches—not to the officers.

I shall endeavour to shew, in my next, in what manner episcopacy, as it is now understood and practised, grew up in the Church. Acadia College, Feb. 18, 1868.

An Argument tested.

There is an argument for pouring as baptism, which seems to be a sort of pet among our pedobaptist friends of late. We find it in their grave commentaries, in newspapers and in the pulpit.

Reduced to a syllogism, it is about this:—Joel, speaking figuratively, called a certain manifestation of the influences of the Holy Spirit, an out-pouring;

Christ, speaking figuratively, called the same manifestation a baptism;

Therefore pouring is baptism.

Of course, *literally*, this manifestation was neither pouring nor baptism. Now this way of finding out the literal meaning of words from the figurative, seems to open an entirely new path in the labyrinth wherein we are searching for truth; and who knows but it may help us to the meaning of some other words? For instance:

Christ speaking figuratively to Peter, called Christians lambs;

Christ speaking figuratively, through Paul calls Christians soldiers;

Therefore soldiers are lambs.

Again. One writer in a newspaper, some time ago, alluding to the Southern famine, said:—"The vials of God's wrath are poured out upon that unhappy people."

Another, (or the same at another time,) alluding to the same event, said:—"The South is plunged in the deepest distress."

Therefore pouring is plunging.

And, if so, we freely admit that it is baptism.

Why are not these syllogisms as good as the first one?

In like manner, we might prove that, as Christians are called in one place sheep, in another pillars, and in another stones, therefore sheep are pillars and stones. Yet, we cannot say that we have quite confidence enough in the regard which our literalizing friends have for consistency, to expect them to buy either wood or stone for mutton.

Why will intelligent men reiterate an argument based upon the absurdity, that two distinct figures cannot be employed in relation to the same thing?—*National Baptist*.

Original Sin.

Original sin is one thing; the way in which it is accounted for is another. The doctrine is, that such is the relation between Adam and his posterity, that all mankind, descending from him by ordinary generation, are born in a state of sin and condemnation. Any man who admits this, holds the doctrine. But there are at least three ways of accounting for this fact. The scriptural explanation is, that "the covenant being made with Adam not only for himself, but also for his posterity, all mankind, descending from him by ordinary generation sinned with him, and fell with him in his transgression." The fact that mankind fell into that state of sin and misery in which they are born, is accounted for in the principle of representation. Adam was constituted our head and representative, so that his sin is the judicial ground of our condemnation, and of the consequent loss of the Divine image, and the state of spiritual death in which all men come into the world. This, as it is the scriptural, so it is the Church view of the subject. It is the view held in the Latin and Lutheran, as well as in the Reformed Church, and therefore belongs to the Church Catholic. Still, it is not essential to the doctrine. Realists admit the doctrine, but, unsatisfied with the principle of representative responsibility, assume that humanity as a generic life, acted and sinned in Adam, and, therefore, that his sin is the act, with its demerit and consequences, of every man in whom that generic life is individualized. Others, accepting neither of these solutions, assert that the fact of original sin (i. e., the