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I.—LITERARY.

THE OFFICERS OF THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH.

In the preceding paper we saw that the membership of the Apostolic church was of two sorts, that on the one hand all adult believers in the Lord Jesus were of right members of the visible church, and that, on the other, the infants of believers were also of right members of the same body. This was shown to be the manifest teaching of the New Testament. But if New Testament teaching indicates with clearness what classes are of right members of the church, it is no less clear in setting the church forth *not* as an aggregation of units merely but as an organic thing, all its parts being, ideally at least, in vital and living union with one another.

The *organic* feature of the church is distinctly taught and emphasized in manifold ways in Scripture. Christians are represented as a growing temple: Paul wrote to the Ephesians, "Ye are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit." Peter says likewise, "To whom coming as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious, ye also as living stones are built up a spiritual house." The Apostles felt that the ordinary house, a thing without vital connection between its parts, was an insufficient object to illustrate the body of believers, and so they spoke of a house of living stones growing together

unto a holy temple in the Lord. Again, the Scriptures speak of Christians as the body of Christ: Paul exhorts the Ephesians to "grow up into him in all things which is the head even Christ; from whom the whole body, fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." Again, Christians are often represented as the subjects of a kingdom; and, in such cases also, organization is clearly implied. A kingdom worthy of the name can never be *chaos*. The very name implies an organized union and interdependence of parts. Finally, Christians are represented as formed into a church—*ekklesia*; as enjoying common privileges in virtue of their being citizens of Christ's kingdom; and "entitled to united action as a lawfully constituted community."*

These Scripture passages, while true in the fullest sense only of the ideal church, or of the church invisible, are in a lower sense applicable to, and were originally—the most of them—said of the visible church. The visible church was designed of God, as we thus see, to be an organic body.

From this point of view the necessity of officers in the visible church is an easy and certain inference. Says Bishop J. B. Lightfoot, "No society of men could hold together without officers, without rules, without institutions of any kind; and the Church of Christ is not exempt from this universal law."† Christians could not express themselves as one living whole, as a kingdom, or as a church, without teachers, rulers, administrators—without officers. As a formless mass Christians could do no effective work for Christ; and, as individuals, they must deteriorate. In order to noble living and achieving they must be reduced to orderly organization, must be made to work together, must have officers.

The Scriptures do not, however, leave the existence of officers to be inferred, but speak of them at length. And the purpose of the present paper is to name, characterize and account for the several offices extraordinary and ordinary of the Apostolic church. It is not proposed to dwell at any considerable length on the extraordinary officers, but on the contrary to describe them with all the brevity compatible with their clear characterization. The ordinary officers we shall more particu-

*Jacob: The Ecclesiastical Polity of the New Testament. p. 8.

†Lightfoot: Philippians, p. 181.

larly describe, going into their respective functions as fully as is consistent with the limits of such an article.

The sources of information to be resorted to in the settlement of the questions as to the various kind of functionaries which flourished in the New Testament church, are the New Testament writings themselves—especially the Acts, the Epistles of Paul, and the Epistles of John to the seven churches of Asia Minor. If we are permitted in a subsequent article to trace the development of the church organization through the period following the Apostolic age, we will then consider the validity and contents of the ecclesiastical writings of that period for the light which they have been supposed to cast upon the New Testament church organization. But for the present our purpose is merely to discover the *New Testament teaching* about these officers.

We have what appear to be imperfect catalogues of the officers of the Apostolic church in Ephesians 4: 11, 12, and 1 Cor. 12: 28. Eph. 4: 11, 12, "And he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." 1 Cor. 12: 28, "And God hath set some in the church—first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers; after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues." These passages mention extraordinary as well as ordinary functionaries in the church, or, in preferable terms, include at least partially the "ministry of gifts" as well as the "ministry of orders."

The extraordinary functionaries. The Apostles were plainly extraordinary functionaries. They were witnesses of the majesty of the Lord Jesus, especially of his resurrection from the dead (1). They were commissioned immediately from Christ himself (2), and they were so endowed with the power of the Holy Spirit as to be able to work miracles (3), to confer the power to work miracles on others (4), and to write and speak with the inspiration of infallibility (5). A glance at this set of characteristics shows that the Apostolic office was necessarily tempo-

(1) Acts 1: 21, 22; 1 Cor. 9: 1; 15: 8; 2 Peter 1: 16.

(2) Luke 6: 13; Gal. 1: 1; 1 Tim. 1: 1; 2 Tim. 1: 1; (Matthias really no exception. Acts 1: 24-26,

(3) Acts 2: 43; Heb. 2: 4; 2 Cor. 12: 11-12.

(4) Acts 8: 15-19; 19: 6.

(5) John 20: 20-22; Acts I and II; John 16: 13-16; Gal. 1: 1; 1! 12.

rary. When the last witnesses of the risen Jesus had died there was no longer a possibility of more apostles (6).

The *Prophets* were evidently also extraordinary ministers: they made revelations by the inspiration of God (7), and they expounded of God's deeper truths and they enforced duties (8). It is plain, too, that the ministrations of those "who wrought miracles, who possessed gifts of healing, and who had diversities of tongues," must also be designated extraordinary. All these forms of ministry seem to have been temporary, and not to have outlasted the Apostolic age.

The ordinary officers. The *Evangelist* seems to have been a minister with the several power of teaching and administering the sacraments, and of exercising rule in organizing churches and ordaining officers—deacons, elders, pastors, or other evangelists—in regions where the church did not exist. In other words he was a teaching elder in the regions beyond, with enlarged powers in those regions—enlarged because of his relations to the unorganized or semi-organized condition of the people of God in the regions beyond. This view seems to satisfy the only passages in which the term Evangelist occurs, viz: Acts 21:8; Eph. 4: 11; 2 Tim. 4: 5. It satisfies all those passages which set forth the authority and the functions of the evangelist—to preach and teach (1), to reprove, to supervise and correct both elders and churches (2), to reject heretics (3), to ordain teachers (4). It satisfies those passages which describe the way in which the evangelist worked—without a local charge (5).

That this office was intended to be perpetual—at least to continue as long as there should be need for further propagandism on the part of the church, there can be no doubt. Very true, Paul, in setting forth the qualifications for the ordinary offices, in the Pastoral Epistles, says nothing of the *Evangelist*. But this gives us no difficulty if we suppose that Paul regarded the Evangelist as but a teaching presbyter—a teaching bishop—in the regions beyond—entrusted with large powers indeed, but

(6) The work apostle is used in a wider sense. 2 Cor. 8: 23; Phil. 2: 25.

(7) Acts 11: 23; 21: 10.

(8) Acts 15: 32.

(1) Acts 18: 24-27; 2 Tim. 4: 2-5.

(2) 1 Tim. 5: 20-21; Tit. 1: 13-14; 2: 15; 1 Tim. 1: 3; 4: 11-13; 5: 19; 2 Tim. 4: 2-5.

(3) Tit. 3: 10.

(4) 2 Tim. 2: 2; 1 Tim. 5: 22; Tit. 1: 5.

(5) 1 Cor. 16: 10-12, 2 Tim. 4: 11-12; Tit. 3: 12-13; Phil. 2: 25.

so entrusted because he is in the regions beyond. The qualifications for his functions being the same needed in elders generally, there was no call for a special enumeration of them. On the other hand in the enumeration of the functionaries in the passage in Ephesians, Paul's placing the name of the Evangelist before that of him who is *pastor and teacher*, may be explained as an intimation of the importance merely of the Evangelistic functions and relations. There may be no intention to distinguish out and out the Evangelist as an officer from the ordinary Presbyter bishop. And this we believe to be true, for Paul seems to be giving lists of functionaries rather than of officers, in the passage in Ephesians.

Returning again to the partial catalogues of the functionaries of the Apostolic church, "it is probable that by the helps, of whom Paul here speaks, he understands *the deacons*, who were originally appointed to relieve the Apostles of a portion of their labor which they felt to be inconvenient and burdensome." (1)

The office of deacon is a most important one. In its prime aspect this office is "a representative of the communion of saints." (2) This communion is "impressively exhibited in two ordinances, both of which are emphatically denominated by the word *communion*, to-wit: the Lord's Supper and contributions in money or its equivalent. (Acts 2: 42-46; 1 Cor. 10: 16; 2 Cor. 8: 4; Heb. 13: 16; Rom. 15: 26-27). No definition can be framed which can be justly applied to the Lord's Supper, that will not apply also to these contributions. There is no more glorious act of worship described in the Bible than that in the last chapter of the First Book of Chronicles.

This view of contributions accounts for the importance ascribed to them in both Testaments. They are the tokens, and in some respects the most unexceptionable tokens of the reality of the communion of saints. * * * * * No wonder that the great apostle was willing to travel all the way to Jerusalem to seal the gift to the recipients—that is to expound its comprehensive spiritual meaning, and to impress upon their hearts the reality and the glory of the communion of saints. (Acts 11:29-30; Rom. 15:25-28; 1 Cor. 16: 1-4; 2 Cor. chaps. 8 and 9.)

"It was in this form in relieving each other in outward things

(1) Killen : Ancient Church, p. 231.

(2) Peck : Ecclesiology, p. 198.

according to their several abilities and necessities, that the communion of saints was first and most conspicuously exhibited in the primitive church; and it was in connection with this form that the deacons first appeared." (2)

To the deacon was also committed, no doubt, the management of the other temporal affairs of the church, under the oversight of local presbytery. (1) We safely argue their administrative care over all the property of the church from the manifest fact that they handled the funds to be applied to the support of the poor, and freed the hands of the higher officers for their more important duties, pastoral and teaching. Hence it is evident that the functions of a New Testament deacon were very much like those of the deacon in the Presbyterian churches of to-day.

In one respect the New Testament diaconate had an extension which practically it does not have in our church. It was an office that could be, and that was at times, exercised by women. (2) It may be well said that the peculiar social conditions of those times created a stronger demand for female deaconesses than our times do. Nevertheless, had the church always accorded to woman this official outlet for her activity, it is not improbable that it had suffered less from the invasion of women into the places of pastors and preachers.

The office of deacon was the first of the ordinary offices to be established. The Book of Acts represents the Twelve Apostles as having been the sole directors and administrators of the church in its earliest days. For the financial business of the infant community, as well as for its spiritual guidance, they alone were responsible, but this state of things could not last long.

Bishop J. B. Lightfoot, one of the most distinguished and trustworthy scholars of the church of England, has described with such ability and impartiality the occasion of the institution of the diaconate as well as the nature of the office, that, even at the cost of some incidental repetition of ideas already advanced in this paper, we beg leave to present to the reader, from his work on "The Christian Ministry," the following lengthy extract:

(2) Ecclesiology, pp. 197, ff.

(1) The idea that the work of the deacons was to be under the oversight of the session will be more fully developed in a subsequent paper.

(2) Rom. 16: 1; and ch. 16: 3, 6, 12.

'By the rapid accession of numbers and still more by the admission of heterogeneous classes into the church, the work became too vast and too various for them (the Apostles) to discharge unaided. To relieve them from the increasing pressure, the inferior and less important functions passed successively into other hands; and thus each grade of the ministry, beginning from the lowest, was created in order.

'1. The establishment of the diaconate came first. Complaint had reached the ears of the Apostles from an outlying portion of the community. The Hellenist widows had been overlooked in the daily distribution of food and alms. To remedy this neglect a new office was created. Seven men were appointed whose duty it was to superintend the public messes, (2) and, as we may suppose, to provide in other ways for the bodily wants of the helpless poor. Thus relieved, the twelve were enabled to devote themselves without interruption 'to prayer and to the ministry of the word.' The Apostles suggested the creation of this new office, but the persons were chosen by popular election and afterwards ordained by the Twelve with imposition of hands. Though the complaint came from the Hellenists, it must not be supposed that the ministrations of the Seven were confined to this class. The object in creating this new office is stated to be not the partial but the entire relief of the Apostles from serving tables. This being the case, the appointment of Hellenists (for such they would appear to have been from their names) is a token of the liberal and loving spirit which prompted the Hebrew members of the church in the selection of persons to fill the office.

'I have assumed that the office thus established represents the later diaconate; for though this point has been much disputed, I do not see how the identity of the two can reasonably be called in question. If the word deacon does not occur in the passage, yet the corresponding verb and substantive, *diakonein* and *diakonia*, are repeated more than once. The functions moreover are substantially those which devolved on the deacons of the earliest ages, and which still in theory, though not altogether in practice, form the primary duties of the office. Again, it seems clear from the emphasis with which St. Luke dwells on the new institution, that he looks at the establishment of this office, not as an isolated incident, but as the initiation of a new order of things in the church. It is in short one of those representative facts, of which the earlier part of his narrative is almost wholly made up.

'Thus the work primarily assigned the deacon was the relief of the poor. Their office was essentially a 'serving of tables,' as distinguished from the higher function of preaching and instruction. But partly from the circumstances of their position, partly from the personal character of those first appointed, the deacons at once assumed a prominence which is not indicated in the original creation of the office. Moving about freely among the poorer brethren and charged with the relief of their material wants, they would find opportunities of influence which were denied to the higher officers of the church who necessarily kept themselves more aloof. The devout zeal of a Stephen or a Philip would turn these opportunities to the best account; and thus,

(2) Acts vi. 2, "serve tables."

without ceasing to be dispensers of alms, they became also ministers of the Word. The Apostles themselves had directed that the persons chosen should be not only 'men of honest report', but also 'full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom'; and this careful foresight, to which the extended influence of the diaconate may be ascribed, proved also the security against its abuse. But still the work of teaching must be traced rather to the capacity of the individual officer than to the direct functions of the office. St. Paul, writing thirty years later, and stating the requirements of the diaconate, lays stress mainly on those qualifications which would be most important in persons moving about from house to house and entrusted with the distribution of alms. While he requires that they shall hold the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience, in other words, that they shall be sincere believers, he is not anxious, as in the case of presbyters to secure aptness to teach', but demands especially that they shall be free from certain vicious habits, such as a love of gossiping, and a greed of paltry gain, into which they might easily fall from the nature of their duties (1).

"The strict seclusion of the female sex in Greece and in some Oriental countries necessarily debarred them from the ministrations of men; and to meet the want thus felt, it was found necessary at an early date to admit women to the diaconate. A woman deacon belonging to the Church of Cenchreae is mentioned in the Epistle to the Romans (2). As time advances, the diaconate becomes still more prominent. In the Philippian church a few years later (about A. D. 62) the deacons take their rank after the presbyters, the two orders together constituting the recognized ministry of the Christian society there (1). Again, passing over another interval of some years, we find St. Paul in the first Epistle of Timothy (about A. D. 66) giving express directions as to the qualifications of men-deacons and women-deacons alike (2). From the tenor of his language it seems clear that in the Christian communities of Proconsular Asia at all events the institution was so common that ministerial organization would be considered incomplete without it. On the other hand we may perhaps infer from the instructions which he sends about the same time to Titus in Crete, that he did not consider it indispensable; for while he mentions having given direct orders to his delegate to appoint presbyters in every city, he is silent about a diaconate (3)."

Presbyter-bishops seems to have been the only remaining class of officers in the Apostolic Church. The functions of these officers were those of instruction and rule. This is perfectly certain: Paul charges the elders of Ephesus, "Take heed unto yourselves and to all the flock in which the Holy Ghost hath made you bishops to feed," that is, to *shepherd* literally, to guide and tend and feed, "the flock of God, which

(1) I Tim. 3:8, ff.

(2) Rom. 16:1.

(1) Phil. 1:1.

(2) I Tim. 3:8 ff.

(3) Lightfoot: Commentary on Phillipians. pp. 187, ff.

he purchased with his own blood (4).” Every New Testament reference to these functionaries, whether by the term elder or bishop, points them out as the pastors and teachers of the churches; while the Pastoral Epistles remove every possible cause of doubt. In I Tim. 3:1-7, and again in Titus 1:5-9, the qualifications for the office are laid down at length. These qualifications are such as point precisely to the functions of teaching and ruling. And, while it is highly probable that government was the first conception of the Presbytero-Episcopal office—the meaning of the terms presbyter and bishop, and their application in the Synagogue in the one case, and in civil relations in the other, make this clear—yet, the work of teaching must have fallen to the presbyters from the very outset, and must have grown more and more, as the visits and labors of the Apostles and Evangelists in a given church became more infrequent?

Reverting once more to our catalogues of functionaries in the Apostolic church, we have, in the passage addressed to the Ephesians, nothing remaining but *‘pastors and teachers’*; and in that to the Corinthians, nothing but *‘teachers’* and *‘governments.’* The passage in Ephesians describes a single order of officers—describes one officer with a twofold function. The form of the original seems to show this. Paul does not say, “He gave some, Apostles; and some, Prophets; and some, Evangelists; and *some, pastors and some, teachers*; but “Christ gave some, Apostles; and some, Prophets; and some, Evangelists; and *some, pastors and teachers.*” The passage in I Corinthians may be regarded as describing the same order of officers in two different aspects, each being partial and incomplete without the other. That is, in I Corinthians, Paul may be supposed to call the same officers, *‘teachers’* while he looks upon them as occupied in the functions of instruction; and *‘governments,’* when viewing them as doing the work of pastors. But it seems to us more probable that, in writing to the Corinthians, Paul wished to distinguish between the Presbyter-bishop who devotes himself to teaching as well as ruling and the Presbyter-bishop who rules only.

In I Timothy, 5:17, Paul says, “let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in word and doctrine.” Here he clearly points out two classes of elders, or presbyter-bishops, one of which devoted itself to

(4) Acts 20:17-28.

teaching as well as ruling, while the other gave itself only to ruling. And it is therefore quite probable that in our passage in Corinthians, Paul, in speaking of the "teacher" referred to the teaching elder; and that, in speaking of "governments," he referred to the ruling elder. But which ever interpretation we take it is certain that he refers to presbyter-bishops. The functions of presbyter-bishops were as we have seen primarily those of rule and secondarily those of teaching.

The origin of the office of presbyter-bishop—or elder, or bishop—is a matter on which the New Testament has very little to say. The sacred historian of the Acts dwells at length on the institution of the diaconate; but he is silent about the beginnings of the Presbyterate. The explanation seems to be in the fact that the Presbyterate had not the claim of novelty; that it was but an office of the Jewish synagogue, appropriated by the first Christian synagogues. The appropriation was made under Apostolic guidance, of course; and it was abundantly sanctioned by Apostolic example and teaching, as Acts and the Epistles show; but it was so natural as to call for no specific recording.

The same great scholar of the English Church, whom we have quoted on the institution of the diaconate, has, by a fine use of the historical constructive imagination, given us a picture also of the way in which the Presbyterate was established in the Christian Church. And as he can not be looked upon as biased in favor of Presbyterianism we again take the liberty of presenting the reader with the following extract from his work in the "Christian Ministry":

"The institution of the Jewish Synagogues was flexible enough to allow free scope for wide divergences of creed and practice. Different races as the Cyrenians and Alexandrians, different classes of society as freedmen, perhaps also different sects as the Sadducees or the Essenes, each had or could have their own special Synagogue, where they might indulge their peculiarities without hindrance. As soon as the expansion of the church rendered some organization of the church necessary, it would form a synagogue of its own. The Christian congregation in Palestine long continued to be designated by this name, though the term *ecclesia* took its place from the very first in heathen countries. With the synagogue itself they would naturally, if not necessarily adopt the normal government of a synagogue, and a body of elders or presbyters would be chosen to direct the religious worship and partly also to watch over the temporal wellbeing of the society.

"Hence the silence of St. Luke. When he first mentions the Presbyters, he introduces them without preface as though the institution were a

matter of course. But the moment of their introduction is significant. I have pointed out elsewhere that the two persecutions, of which St. Stephen and St. James were respectively the chief victims, mark two important stages in the diffusion of the Gospel. Their connection with the internal organization of the church is not less remarkable. The first results directly from the establishment of the lowest order in the ministry, the diaconate. To the second may probably be ascribed the adoption of the next higher grade, the presbytry. This latter persecution was the signal for the dispersion of the twelve on a wider mission. Since Jerusalem would no longer be their home as hitherto, it became necessary to provide for the permanent direction of the church there; and for this purpose the usual government of the synagogue would be adopted. Now at all events for the first time we read of 'presbyters' in connection with the Christian brotherhood at Jerusalem (1).

"From this time forward all official communications with the mother church are carried on through their intervention. To the presbyters Barnabas and Saul bear the alms contributed by the Gentile churches (2). The presbyters are persistently associated with the Apostles in convening the congress, in the superscription of the decree, and in the general settlement of the dispute between the Jewish and Gentile Christians. By the presbyters St. Paul is received many years later on his last visit to Jerusalem, and to them he gives an account of his missionary labors and triumphs.

"But the office was not confined to the mother church alone. Jewish presbyters existed already in all the principal cities of the dispersion, and Christian presbyteries would early occupy a not less wide area. On their very first missionary journey the Apostles Paul and Barnabas are described as appointing presbyters in every church (1). The same rule was doubtless carried out in all the brotherhoods founded later, but it is mentioned here and here only, because the mode of procedure on this occasion would suffice as a type of the Apostles' dealings elsewhere under similar circumstances.

"The name of the presbyter then presents no difficulty. But what must be said of the term 'bishop?' It has been shown that in the Apostolic writings the two are only different designations of one and the same office (2). How and where was this second name originated?

"To the officers of Gentile churches alone is this term applied as a synonyme for presbyter. At Phillippi (3), in Asia Minor (4), in Crete (5), the presbyter is so called. In the next generation the title is employed in a letter written by the Greek church of Rome to the Greek church of Corinth. Thusthe word would seem to be especially Hellenic(6)."

(1) Acts 11:30.

(2) Acts 11:30.

(1) Acts 14:23.

(2) Com. on Phil. p. 96 ff.

(3) Phil. 1:1.

(4) Acts 20:28; I Tim. 3:12.

(5) Tit. 1:7.

(6) Lightfoot: Phillippians, pp. 102, ff.

The statement quoted a little above, to-wit: That the words "*bishop*" and "*presbyter*" are only different designations of one and the same office are words very comforting to the believer in the Presbyterian polity. For, of course, Bishop Lightfoot can not be accused of prejudice in favor of that polity. He makes his assertion in view of the facts; for it is perfectly indisputable that the bishop and the presbyter were identical in the New Testament church.

The identity of bishop and presbyter is proven by the following considerations:

1. In Acts 20:17-28, the same officers are alternately called elders and bishops. In the seventeenth verse it is said that Paul "sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church." In the twenty-eighth verse he charges them: "Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in the which the Holy Ghost hath made you bishops to feed the church of God, which he purchased with his own blood." Here Paul calls all these elders *bishops*. This passage of itself, in the absence of any distinction between the offices any where in the New Testament, should be regarded as decisive.

2. In Phil. 1:1, Paul sends greeting "to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Phillippi, with the bishops and deacons." He makes no mention of presbyters by that name. We can easily understand why he does not use the word presbyter if presbyters and bishops were identical. But on the supposition that presbyters and bishops were different kinds of officers the omission would be an inexplicable omission; and would reflect on the presbyterial body in Phillippi or on the writer of the Epistle himself. Besides, the plurality of bishops in the little Church of Phillippi could not have been diocesan bishops. They could have been no more than congregational bishops or presbyters.

3. In I Tim. 3:1-13, Paul sets forth the qualifications of all ordinary church officers; and mentions only two, bishops and deacons; but later, in the same Epistle, 5:17-19, he uses the term presbyter when speaking of the officer he had called bishop in 3:1-8.

4. In Tit. 1:5-9, we have an identification of the presbyter and bishop: Paul writes, "For this cause left I thee in Crete that thou shouldest set in order the things that were wanting, and appoint elders in every city, as I gave thee charge; if any man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having children

that believe, who are not accused of riot or unruly. For the *bishops* must be blameless as God's steward." The "elders," to be appointed "in every city," were bishops.

5. Another practical identification of the *presbyter* and the *bishop* is found in I Pet. 5:1-2, where Peter says, "The elders therefore among you I exhort, who am a fellow-elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, who am also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Tend the flock of God which is among you, exercising the oversight (acting the part of bishop), not of constraint but willingly," &c.

Trustworthy and unprejudiced scholars generally agree in the view that the offices of elder and bishop were identical in the Apostolic times. The view of Dr. J. B. Lightfoot, than whom no man in England was abler to speak on this subject, has already been placed before the reader. Dr. Philip Schaff says, "Even Pope Urban ii. (A. D. 1091) says that the primitive church knew only two orders, the diaconate and the presbyterate. The original identity of presbyter and bishop is not only insisted on by Presbyterians, Lutherans, and congregationalists, but freely conceded also by Episcopal commentators, as Whitby, Bloomfield, Conybeare and Howson, Alford, Elicott, Lightfoot, Stanley, and others" (1). Jerome the most scholarly of the Roman Catholic fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries taught the same view. His testimony is so clear and sound that we take pleasure in allowing him to speak for himself.

In his commentary on Titus he says :

"Should any one think that the identification of bishop and presbyter, the one being a name of age and the other of office, is not a doctrine of Scripture, but our own opinion, let him refer to the words of the Apostle saying the Phillippians—Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Phillippi, with the *bishops* and *deacons*, grace to you and peace, and so forth. Phillippi is one city of Macedonia, and truly in one city, there cannot be, as is thought more than one bishop; but because, at that time, they called the same parties bishops and presbyters, therefore he speaks of bishops as of presbyters without making distinction. Still this may seem doubtful to some unless confirmed by another testimony. In the Acts of the Apostles it is written that when the Apostle came to Miletus he 'sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the same church,' to whom then among other things, he said—'Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost has made you bishops, to feed the Church of the Lord which he has purchased with his own blood! And attend especially to this,

(1) Schaff: History of the Christian Church, Vol I, p. 494.

how, calling the elders of the one city Ephesus, he afterwards addressed the same as bishops. Whoever is prepared to receive that Epistle which is written to the Hebrews under the name of Paul there also the care of the Church is divided equally among more than one, since he writes to the people—Obey *them* that have the rule over you and submit yourselves, for they are they who watch for your souls as those who must give an account that they may not do it with grief, since this is profitable for you. And Peter, who received his name from the firmness of his faith, in his Epistle speaks saying—‘The *elders*, therefore, who are among you, I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and who am a partaker of his glory which shall be revealed, feed that flock of the Lord which is among you, not by constraint but willingly.’ We may thus show that anciently bishops and presbyters were the same; but, *by degrees*, THAT THE PLANTS OF DISSENSION MIGHT BE ROOTED UP, all care was transferred to one. As, therefore, the presbyters know that, in accordance with the *custom of the church*, they are subject to him who has been set over them, so the bishops should know that they are greater than the presbyters, rather *by custom*, than by the truth of an arrangement of the Lord (1).”

Some of the defenders of “*jure divino* Episcopacy” claim support for their theory in the “angels of the seven churches of Asia.” They imagine that they see in these angels Bishops proper—diocesan bishops. Against this view it should be observed, 1. That much of the mystery which characterizes the whole book of Revelations clings to the term *angel* in these letters. It may be doubted whether any man living has a perfect right to say that he knows exactly what it does mean.

Bishop Lightfoot denies that it can mean diocesan bishop, and says, “Whether the angel is here conceived as an actual person, the celestial guardian, or only as a personification, the idea or spirit of the church, it is unnecessary for my present purpose to consider. But whatever may be the exact conception, he is identified with it and made responsible for it to a degree wholly unsuited to any human officer. Nothing is predicated of him which may not be predicated of it. To him are imputed all its hopes, its fears, its graces, its shortcomings. He is furnished with it and he is rewarded with it. . . .

“Indeed, if with most recent writers we adopt the early date of the Apocalypse of John, it is scarcely possible that the Episcopal organization should have been so mature when it was written. In this case probably not more than two or three years have elapsed from the date of the Pastoral Epistles, and this interval seems quite insufficient to account for so

(1) See quotation in Killen’s Ancient Church, pp. 525, ff.

great a change in the administration of the Asiatic churches (1)."

The Historian Killen says that the *angels* were trusty deputies sent by the churches to visit John while he was in exile on Patmos, "To assure him of their sympathy and to tender to him their friendly offices (2)," and that in return for their kind offices John under the inspiration of God delivered to each of them such a message as the circumstances of his congregation called for.

Dr. Philip Schaff says, "The Angels of the Seven Churches in Asia Minor must be regarded as identical with the presbyter-bishops or local pastors. They represent the presiding presbyters or the corps of regular officers, as the responsible messengers of God to the congregation (3)."

This last interpretation is, in our judgement, the most respectable offered. Many, however will be dissatisfied with it. But from such figurative passages we certainly cannot safely draw a polity in direct opposition to the plainer teaching of Acts and the Epistles of Paul. The argument of the advocates of Episcopacy from these angels is an argument *from an unknown quantity*.

2. Furthermore, the argument is certainly wrong, as we can see, though we may not know exactly what the term angel denoted. For if the angel be regarded as a single human person and a bishop, he was yet confined to a single church. He was, therefore, not a diocesan bishop. The most that can be claimed is that he was the chief pastor of the church named, or that he was the president of the local presbytery.

Again, some would see in the moral oversight which John undoubtedly kept of the churches in Asia Minor a proof that he acted as bishop—as diocesan bishop. But there is no sign of John's official exercise of any diocesan functions. His moral and spiritual preeminence, and his possession of the truth, warranted him in proclaiming that truth to the churches everywhere. Any presbyter in the church to-day who has important truth and knows it, has the right to preach wherever the people will hear him. When Dr. B. M. Palmer writes to the brethren throughout our whole denomination, warning against evil courses, or inciting them to higher endeavor, he does not

(1) Lightfoot: Ephippians, p. 200.

(2) Killen: Ancient Church p. 268.

(3) Schaff: Hist. of the Christian Church, Vol. 1, p. 479.

necessarily play the diocesan bishop. Moreover, it is to be remarked that there is in John's extant writings no sign of his having developed church polity. He did develop doctrine. But he did not develop the form of government of the church. From his writings we must conclude that John was thoroughly satisfied with the Pauline type of church polity.

Finally, it is sometimes supposed that Titus in Crete and Timothy in Ephesus were diocesan bishops. But it is a conception of a later age which so represents these men. Paul's letters to them make it plain that the positions they held were temporary. In both cases their terms of office were drawing to a close. See 1 Tim. 1: 3; 3: 14; 2 Tim. 4: 9; Tit. 1: 5; 3: 12.

The prerogatives assigned them cannot be shown to have been larger than those which may properly be assigned to an Evangelist who may never lord it over a presbytery or session once such a body is created in his territory.

We have no sign of a diocesan bishop in the New Testament.

We have now completed this imperfect sketch of the officers of the Apostolic church. We have given some indications of their rise in the church, their functions, and the time of their continuance. In our next paper we propose to consider the nature of ordination, and perhaps the organization of the officers for the government and work of the church.

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