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## ARTICLE IV.

## RECENT INVESTIGATIONS INTO THE ORGANIZATION OF THE APOSTOLIC AND POST-APOSTOLIC CHURCHES.

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*[Continued from page 250.]*

WE come now to another turning-point in our investigations. Hitherto, following our guides, the most prominent being Heinrici, we have been led to notice especially the general relations of the early Christian churches to the religious associations of Greek and Roman society. We must next enter more into the inner organization of these churches, and trace, as far as possible, the rise of rudimentary officials, the origin of the diaconate, the nature of the primitive presbytery, the dark beginning of episcopacy, the general relation of clergy and laity, and the important subject of the charismatic ministry of the word and its historic connection with the administrative offices of the church. At this stage of our inquiry, we meet the striking and suggestive work of Hatch,<sup>1</sup> who takes up the particular question of church organization where the general studies and results of Heinrici terminated. The fundamental positions from which he prosecutes his investigation are (1) that the growth of the constitution of the early churches was much slower than is usually supposed, and (2) that the elements of this constitution in general and particular were already in existence in the civil and social relations of the Roman empire. What, then, was this constitution, and what was its origin, accord-

<sup>1</sup> *The Organization of the Early Christian Churches*, Oxford, 1881.

ing to Hatch? He calls our attention first to a body of men in the early church, who formed a guiding and governing committee, like the senate in a municipality, or the executive officials in a Greek club. These men were called an *Ordo* in both civil and ecclesiastical usage. They were known as *πρεσβύτεροι*, a name common also to members of Jewish *συνέδρια* and of the Hellenist *γερονσία* of Asia Minor. They were also called bishops, for this identity, he supposes, has ceased to be a disputed question among scholars. These officers were very likely coördinate in rank, with the bishop acting as president. But who was the bishop? The reply has to do first with the reason why "the single head of the Christian communities was called, at first commonly and at last exclusively, by the name *bishop*." Hatch finds the ground of this in the office of almoner in the early church. The term *ἐπίσκοπος* was used in religious societies for the treasurer; the treasurer of the alms in the first century, when poverty was the greatest calamity and charity the sweetest virtue, became more and more the central figure in the Christian community; hence, although he was the president of the congregational committee, also a "depository of doctrine," and judge in cases of discipline, the official name which clung to him came from his office of treasurer. The deacons arose in a similar natural way. The church early felt the need of men for works of practical benevolence. First "the seven," and then the men known as deacons. Bishops and deacons appear in close relation throughout the New Testament; their qualifications are almost identical, and they divided the work between them, so that in the sphere of public worship the bishops received the free-will offerings, the deacons distributed them among the people. In the department of general benevolence the bishop was chairman and treasurer, while the deacons were outdoor relieving officers, and in the place of discipline, the bishop and his council were superintendents and judges, with the deacons as officers of inquiry into the daily walk of the church. The deacons were always more or less subordinate, but when the

clergy became priests they were regarded as Levites, and when the churches grew till the outdoor care of the sick and the needy passed beyond their power and into other hands, the deacons' duties became limited to assisting in public worship. They were, however, always regarded as in closer relations to the bishops than to the presbyters.

This brings us to the origin of the presbyters ; and here we touch what Harnack considers the fundamental contribution of Hatch to this whole question. He teaches that the later fixed constitution of the churches was a combination of two different organizations, which had been formed after the analogy of civil institutions. So far as the congregation grew into a system of leaders and followers, the distinction arose, from the nature of the case, of *πρεσβύτερος*, on the one hand, and *λαός* on the other. So far as the congregation presented an active band of brothers, there appeared, as officials, bishops and deacons. That office was purely external, legally fixed, and rested upon no special *charismata* ; this, on the contrary, was the proper spiritual office, and those who occupied it were qualified by very special graces of rule and beneficence. They worked in the fulness of the Spirit on and in the congregation and gave it its characteristic stamp. These two classes of officials, the presbyter leaders and the episcopal-diaconate pastors and teachers, differed somewhat as a board of trustees and clergy differ in modern churches. Such a division of jurisdiction Hatch traces as far back as the synagogue. Here there were presbyters, whose work was administrative and disciplinary, and who had no direct connection with teaching and worship. These were the members of the local sanhedrim, which met often in the same building with the local synagogue, and judged the same community. But there were also religious guides, the *ἀρχισυνάγογοι* and others, who formed a committee for the spiritual work of the congregation. In these relations are to be found, according to Hatch, the beginning of the Christian eldership. The presbyter came into the church from the synagogue and his duties remained largely

the same, the work of administration and discipline. That, at all events, was the origin of the elders in Jewish Christian churches. But there were presbyters also in the Gentile churches. Where did they come from? Hatch thinks the presbyterate here "had a spontaneous and independent origin." He supports this view by the consideration, that similar designations were used among the Greeks, and by the fact that the members of the governing council in the Gentile churches were known by various names, and that the Jewish names did not at once uniformly prevail. In the second century the Jewish idea of a ruling council became the dominant one. Next the presbyter ceased to be a councilor, and, as an individual, began to preach the word and administer the sacraments. The elders in the Apostolic Church *might* teach, but that was not their work. If they both taught and ruled, they filled two offices. The rise of many churches under one bishop turned the presbyters into clergymen. With the change of ideas also about church discipline and personal watch over church members, came naturally the change of the presbyter from an officer of inspection and correction to a priest with liturgy and sacraments. Thus we have bishops and presbyters springing from two different organizations, which did not merge into one until the end of the first century, when presbyters and bishops had become the same. Out of that presbyter-episcopal college the monarchical bishop naturally arose, as president of the committee, as almoner of church bounty, as God's representative in the brotherhood, as the bearer of apostolic teaching in opposition to Gnostic errors, and as the meeting-place of unity in discipline and unity in doctrine, in contrast with Montanistic and all other irregularities, heresies, and schisms.

In reference to the broad question underlying all official distinctions, the question as to the relation of clergy and laity in the early church, Hatch proceeds from the general position of Heinrici and gives some very interesting particulars of limitation and application. He notices first that all words,

during the first two centuries, which describe the officers of Christian communities, agree in the primary idea of leadership or presidency. There are *οἱ ἡγούμενοι* (Heb. xiii. 7), *οἱ προηγούμενοι* (Clem. Rom., xxi. 6), and *οἱ προϊστάμενοι* (1 Thess. v. 12; 1 Tim. v. 17, etc.). These leaders had a priority of order, and the common members were related to them as followers, as subject to regular authority (Heb. xiii. 17; 1 Pet. v. 5). But there was nothing sacerdotal in this relation, for Hatch holds, not only that all these terms used for church officers were found also in contemporary organizations not Christian, in imperial administration, municipal corporations, and voluntary associations, but that the relation implied by these designations was in all respects essentially the same as that sustained in the pagan societies. Teaching and preaching were free to all church members in apostolic times. The sacraments might be administered in exceptional cases by any believer. The whole congregation exercised discipline, and could both elect and remove its officers (Ep. of Polycarp, xi.). Thus the Christian officials had no powers beyond those usual in the secular societies. They exercised general oversight and control, that everything might be done decently and in order. When all distinctions in service were ascribed to a *χάρισμα*, there could not be the rigid official distinction between the leaders and the ordinary brethren, such as arose later. Montanism was just the reassertion of the primitive methods, though it was found impracticable in the new circumstances. Hatch shows further, that ordination meant simply "appointment or accession to rank," and that, with the single exception of the laying on of hands, all the elements in it—nomination, election, approval and declaration of the election by a proper officer—were identical with those in the civil appointment. In reference to the laying on of hands he argues that it meant simply a prayer, and had no meaning of consecration, such as came in later. Beyschlag had already taken the same ground.<sup>2</sup> Ordinary church members

<sup>2</sup> *Die christliche Gemeindeverfassung im Zeitalter des Neuen Testaments*, 1874.

were received by the laying on of hands; the rite of ordination was not universal; Stanley points out that in Alexandria and Abyssinia it took place by breathing, in the Eastern Church by lifting up the hands, in the Armenian Church by the dead hand of the predecessor; and, finally, an ordained bishop could very easily be unordained, showing that his ordination was not regarded as bestowing an inalienable gift.

Some further peculiarities in the theory of Hatch will appear in a brief criticism of his positions, to which we now proceed, following chiefly here the strictures of Kühn. That writer thinks, first of all, that the historic construction of Hatch is very venturesome, built as it is upon a single passage (or at most two), to show that the office and name of bishop, as a finance and governing official, come from an analogous official position in the Greek religious societies. The passage speaks of the *ἐπίσκοποι*, Dion and Meleippos, paying money, but there is no reason to hold that these bishops of a Greek club were permanent officers of finance. So general a name does not suit so narrow an office. It had very likely a wider place also in the religious societies. This view is supported by the studies of Foucart, who finds the bishops to be those officers who had to examine candidates for admission to the Greek associations. That is certainly the more natural theory of these heathen *ἐπίσκοποι*, if they formed a regular official class; but the fact that when the officers of such societies are enumerated the title bishop never occurs, is against the existence of any such permanent office. The other references of Hatch to city *Collegia* show that the bishop there also is a special official doing some single, particular duty. They were "special commissioners," sent, *e. g.*, from Athens to conquered cities, to reduce things to order. Lightfoot refers also<sup>3</sup> to the same use of the word *ἐπίσκοπος* in the LXX. for inspectors, at the purification of the temple (2 Kings xi. 19), and at the destruction of the temple service (1 Macc. i. 51), etc. Such an extraordinary, temporary, special office can hardly present an analogy to the permanent Christian bishopric. A

<sup>3</sup> Commentary on Philippians, London, 1868, p. 93.

third analogy of Hatch is found in the use of the term *ἐπίσκοποι* for a committee of the *βουλευταί* of a city, when entrusted with some particular duty. He thinks the bishops and presbyters were an exact parallel of this executive committee and the whole board of councilors. The *βουλή* is the presbytery; the committee is the bishops. But the proof is not sufficient. Kühl says, "Not once are the members of this committee called *ἐπίσκοποι*; in every case there stands the verb *ἐπισκοπεῖν*." We hear of a special duty, but of no special office. The *ἐπίσκοποι* were and remained *βουλευταί*. And even this committee does not seem to have been a standing one; it was rather a special commission appointed for each case. Again, it is urged, such an accidental, temporary office could not give rise to the permanent Christian bishop. The early meanings of *ἐπίσκοπος* in profane Greek, especially for the judicial deity and judicial officers, cannot be set aside by three *ex parte* analogies picked out by Hatch. It is urged, on the other hand, that the prominent names in the early church, looking towards the future bishopric, are not connected with any treasurer's office. The terms *ἡγούμενοι* (Heb. xiii. 7), *προϊστάμενοι*, *προεστώτες* (1 Thess. v. 12 and 1 Tim. iii. 4), as used down to the time of Clement of Rome (Ep. i. 1, 3), Hermas (Vis. ii. 2, 6), and Irenæus, make prominent always the idea of presidency. Weizsäcker also shows,<sup>4</sup> from Clement of Rome (xliv.) and Hermas (Vis. iii. 5, 1), that the bishops were priests offering sacrifices, rather than almoners, and that they were not prominent in receiving gifts. It was not the state of poverty looking towards the treasurer-bishop which gave rise to the monarchical bishop, nor was the felt need for such a primate, but, as all early indications show, the need of opposing heresy by a unity of representation of the orthodox doctrine in the churches. This is ignored in Hatch's view.

Turning next to the new hypothesis of the origin of the presbyters, Kühl holds that it makes this office nothing else than a sort of police authority for preserving good order and morals

<sup>4</sup> *Theologische Literaturzeitung*, 1883, No. 19.



in the churches. The bishops shared in this work of discipline. The presbyters, however, formed a legal board and had no charismatic gifts or spiritual character; that is the decisive point in the new view. The *charismata* belonged to those who proved the doctrines and cared for the treasury. But the presbyter described in the Epistle of Polycarp (chap. vi. and xi.) has to do with the church treasury, and cared for widows and orphans, just as Hatch's bishop is said to have done; the elders in the Acts (xi. 30) did the same thing. Hence, it is held, the effort to find a theoretical difference between the first presbyters and bishops, though they did the same work, is not supported by historic evidence. Neither is there a hint anywhere that the episcopal work done by presbyters belonged to a committee of the college of elders, a presbyter-episcopacy; but everywhere simply presbyters as such are referred to. Until the time of Ignatius, no difference of nature is heard of in reference to the official standing of bishops and presbyters. Hatch's theory runs against these plain facts.

In reference to the general position of *Heinrici*, which is here presupposed, *Kühl* maintains that the resemblance of the early churches to the religious societies in the Roman empire was only outward. The monthly dues were voluntary offerings for the poor and not for festivities. The common meal was not in imitation of the heathen. The *προσδάτης* of the club was not the *προϊστάμενος* of the church. This latter *Kühl* identifies with the presbyter. The Heathen might apply club terms to the Christians, but that proves nothing. One or two names like *θιασόρχης* are used to describe church officials, but that is very natural. The word *ἐκκλησία* was borrowed in both cases from the assembly of the people. All other terms in the churches, for persons and events, came from the popular language, and are not technical expressions. The first characteristic Christian official, the deacon, did not arise through club influence, why should the others? All these things have some weight, and show that the Christian polity was not a slavish imitation of the Roman and Greek

association methods ; but they are not sufficient to exclude the view of Heinrici, that the tree of life planted by the gospel, and the tree of good morals planted by the Greek clubs, rooted in the same soil, fed by the same general influences, modified by similar relations to Roman laws, did in their external organization appear as subdivisions of the same class of social and ethical growth. The weight of evidence seems decidedly in favor, at least, of a similarity of parallel development in bodily structure, while, of course, the spirit and aims of the two societies were very essentially different.

A new stage in this whole inquiry was reached with the publication, in 1883, of the "Teaching of the Twelve Apostles" by Bryennios. Harnack had already translated Hatch's book into German, and published it with *Analecta* of his own in defence of the new theory. He now turned to the new source with eager interest, and has found<sup>b</sup> not only that it supports Hatch in many respects, but also that it sheds new light upon the whole question of early church organization. Hitherto the investigations had treated chiefly bishops, presbyters, and deacons ; other officials were almost neglected, as being temporary and charismatic. But this recent discovery puts in the foreground apostles, prophets, and teachers as the clergy and leaders in the early church. Lucian called Peregrinus a prophet, and the *Διδαχή* now shows he was right. This early document knows "only one class of honored men, solely those who proclaim the word of God, in their capacity of *ministri evangelii*." Heb. xiii. 7, distinguishes only preachers and hearers. The *ἡγούμενοι*, Judas and Silas, are also called prophets (Acts xv. 22, 32). And there is no place, Harnack holds, in early literature where *ἡγούμενοι* necessarily means presbyters, it points rather always to the teachers. It was not till the prophets and teachers disappeared as the regular preachers, and the bishops took their place, that the title of *ἡγούμενοι* passed over also to the episcopal leaders. "These teachers were not regular

<sup>b</sup> *Die Lehre der zwölff Apostel nebst Untersuchungen zur aeltesten Geschichte der Kirchenverfassung und des Kirchenrechts.* Leipzig, 1884.

officials of a single church, neither chosen by the churches, but free teachers, who received their commission from a divine call or *charisma*, and went from church to church with their preaching." There were thus two classes, (1) the apostles and (2) the prophets and teachers, both of whom labored in the word and doctrine. The apostles were the regular missionaries of the gospel; the prophets and teachers were edifiers, the supporters and promoters of the life of the churches. These leaders were called by the Spirit, and were not also elected by the church, as were the bishops and deacons (the "Teaching," xv. 1). Until about A.D. 140, these three classes of charismatic men were at work, and the order of church officials in those days was apostles, prophets, teachers, then bishops and deacons. There were two sides to church official activity: first, the call of God, the divine gift, the enthusiastic conception of leadership in religious things; and, second, the recognition of the church, the choice of the brotherhood. Harnack holds that none of the prevalent views about the origin of church offices fits this early idea; for in none of them is there this element of enthusiasm which came from a claim of immediate divine calling. This idea of a divine call, and that call being to preach the word as the great thing in the office of preacher, shows that the instincts of the Reformers turned naturally here also to the original methods. With administrative and judicial functions these early apostles, prophets, and teachers had nothing whatever to do. The executive and routine work of the congregation was performed by the bishops and deacons, who had charge of such duties; and it was only as the local church put these administrative and disciplinary officials in the place of those God-given teachers of Christendom, that the charismatic officials and the whole enthusiastic organization of the church sank down to an ecclesiastical-political level. The apostles disappeared soon after the middle of the second century. The prophets lingered till the end of the century, as a necessary part of the spiritual church. The excesses of Montanism, however, gave the death-blow to this early prophecy. Still

longer did the teachers continue, and even after the new church organization, with bishops, presbyters, and deacons, came in, such a case as Origen shows the respect in which such men were still held. There were, accordingly, in the Post-Apostolic Church two classes of officials: (1) The charismatic, consisting of apostles to evangelize the heathen, and prophets and teachers to build up the churches; these men are the only permanent officers recognized in the *Αἰδαχή*. (2) Officers of administration, appointed by the congregation itself—the bishops and deacons. Our new source of information shows the transition from the charismatic to the catholic system of polity. The passage xv. 1. 2: “Choose for yourselves, therefore, bishops and deacons worthy of the Lord, men meek and not lovers of money, true and tried; for they perform for you the service of prophets and teachers. Do not, therefore, despise them, for they are the honored among you, with the prophets and teachers”—this passage Harnack thinks has no equal, in the whole range of early Christian literature, in importance for the history of the rise of the Catholic episcopate. By basing the episcopate and the diaconate upon the work of the prophet and teacher, it sets the rise of the bishopric in an entirely new light. It is significant that there is no mention of presbyters. This adds support to the view of Harnack and Weizsäcker, that the presbyters originally were not administrative officers of the congregation, but simply the older men in opposition to the *νεώτεροι*. They were a group of natural advisers, but not official leaders, and hence, belonging neither to the apostles, prophets, and teachers, called of God, nor to the bishops and deacons, chosen by the congregation, might well be passed over. And yet, in the period between the *Αἰδαχή* and the close of the second century, we find the college of presbyters surrounding the bishop, supporting him, and acting as a council for guiding and judging the congregation. The episcopal-diaconate organization and the presbyterial, Harnack thinks\* thus balanced each other for a time, before they

\* *Die Quellen der sogenannten apostolischen Kirchenordnung*, Leipzig, 1886;

blended in one system of bishop, college of presbyters, and deacons. The state of transition reflected in the "Teaching" Harnack sums up thus: (1) The bishops and deacons, chosen by the congregation, were at first the stewards of the church; (2) The spiritual edification of the people remained, according to old tradition, in the hands of the partly wandering, partly settled prophets and teachers; (3) The "Teaching" was written when the travelling teacher was becoming rarer (xiii. 4), and when the duty formerly performed by him fell to the bishops and deacons; (4) Bishops and deacons doing the work of the prophet and teacher were to be honored as these were in the church. Bishops and deacons were at first essentially the same, in Harnack's view; they differed chiefly in the age of the officials—the older men, the bishops, taking the work of independent administration, the deacons, as younger men, taking the office of service. He widens Hatch's view of the bishop, and makes his office include, not only the administration of Christian gifts, but, further, the whole system of church duties, such as alms, worship, correspondence, etc. He then returns to the central question, as to how the local, executive bishops and deacons arose towards their place of future eminence in the early Catholic Church, and continues thus: "The administrative officials of the individual churches were indebted for the high position which they finally reached, not only to their reception into the college of presbyters, but, in much greater measure, to the circumstance that the significant predicates of the *ἡγούμενοι*, who were given to the church universal, the apostles, prophets, and teachers, in course of time, as these died off or lost their importance, were transferred to them." A threefold organization is thus found among the early churches: (1) The spiritual or religious under apostles, prophets, and teachers; (2) The patriarchal, or the congregation arranged as leaders and followers, and taking shape along the lines of the *πρεσβύτεροι* and the *νεώτεροι*, then within the elderly men a committee of leading presbyters taking official form in contradistinction to the laity, and finally such committeemen becoming an *Ordo*

and receiving appointment from the congregation for the work of discipline; (3) The administrative organization, in which the higher and lower functions of the congregation fell into the hands of bishops and deacons. In all this elaborate analysis there certainly seems some ground for the objection of Weizsäcker and others, that such an hypothesis complicates rather than simplifies the origin of the Catholic episcopacy. But Harnack replies that just these things—"the blending of a spiritual-enthusiastic, a patriarchal, and an administrative organization—constitute the essentials of a hierarchic constitution." The culminating point of such a system is the bishop—how did he arise? The reply is that the bishops very soon were regarded everywhere as belonging to the college of presbyters, and hence had a leading place in the congregation. Besides this, they were treasurers, brought the offerings, and, in general, were the executive officials. The "Teaching" shows that they could perform the work of prophets and teachers. That fact shows us the episcopate set on the line of its Catholic development, for its incumbents are recognized as qualified to take the place of prophets and teachers, and eventually of apostles also. The bishops are not, however, regarded anywhere as identical with the presbyters. On the other hand, in the second century, as Harnack learns from a document of that period worked over in the Apostolic Canons, they were not confined to elderly men, nor were they to refrain from marriage, as was recommended in the case of presbyters. From the same source we learn that, while it was desirable that the bishop be able to teach, yet it was not indispensably necessary; for an unlearned man if godly might be a bishop. We get, further, from this document, a glimpse of that point in the development of the presbyter-lay organization and of the episcopal-diaconate system at which the monarchical bishop as a single person in his sphere appears on the same level as the presbyter college; for we see that the bishop was head of the congregation, so far as he was its shepherd and cared for all its needs, especially for those of the poor; also in leading the liturgy, and, gen-

erally, in representing the church in the eyes of the world; and yet, at the same time, he was watched over by the presbyters, was supported by them in the distribution of gifts in public worship, and, though an independent steward of charities, stood somewhat under the supervision of the elders. This canonical fragment, which Harnack dates c. 150-180, A. D., gives, according to this critic, another step showing how the congregational episcopate passed over into ecclesiastical episcopacy. We there read, <sup>7</sup> "If there are few men, and twelve persons cannot be found in a place who are qualified to vote in the election of a bishop, then a letter is to be addressed to the neighboring churches, where there is a settled [*πεπηγυῖα*] church, that three chosen men may come from there and carefully examine him who is worthy," etc. This shows that an organized church was considered necessary, even if there were less than twelve male members in a place, and that it should have its own bishop. It shows the supreme right of the congregation, as late as the latter half of the second century, to choose its own bishop. It points to the simple method of calling a council from the churches of the vicinage by "letters missive" to advise in settling a pastor, and the care which was taken that at least twelve men should be present to set apart a bishop. The "three elect men" are not indicated as clergy; the election of a bishop was a free act of the brotherhood; others were simply invited to help examine the man chosen.

Harnack finds further evidence, that the charismatic church was first, and the official church second, in the new information given by the Canons, that the ecclesiastical leaders then were bishops, presbyters, lectors, and deacons. This third class has hitherto been regarded as an outgrowth of the diaconate at the close of the second century. But we now learn that the original lector had "the place of an evangelist," was to be examined for service very much as was the bishop, and preceded the deacon in importance late in the second century. In other words, the late reader is a degradation of an early

<sup>7</sup> L. c. pp. 7-8, where the Greek text is given.

charismatic office, which was reduced to its low estate by the bishops' seizing the exposition of Scripture and teaching, which were formerly connected with it. In this source, which stands midway between the *Διδαχὴ* and the end of the second century, we find the reader still remaining, but in a diminished activity; the prophets and teachers have disappeared before the bishops as *μύσται* and the presbyters as *συμμύσται*; the deacons appear as curators or servants, and encouragers of the congregation in daily life; the widows are divided, two being set apart for receiving revelations—reminding us of the prophets of the "Teaching." Looking back over the ground traversed so far, Harnack finds that a fully equipped church at the close of the apostolic times had as leaders: (1) Prophets and teachers, who were taught by the Spirit, and proclaimed the word of God; (2) A circle of elders, who had oversight of all matters in the congregation, especially in cases requiring discipline, advice, or consolation; (3) Officers of administration, bishops and deacons, who had the *charisma* of rule and service, particularly in public worship and alms. The bishops were also members of the presbytery. There was a great variety of charismatic gifts in the congregation; but only the apostles, prophets, and teachers were preëminently possessed of the Spirit. Among the "gifted" was also the lector, who stood in his work very near the prophets and teachers, though he did not have the right, like them, to give free addresses for edification.

In the second century, we are told, the system of government changed especially by three developments: (1) The prophets and teachers gradually died out; (2) Worship and other things requiring presidency made it necessary to put one man at the head of administration in the congregation—the bishops melted into the bishop; (3) The guiding college of elders became more and more an advisory council which supported the hands of the bishop.<sup>8</sup> So the ruling clergy—bishop, presbyter, deacon—arose. In different places this transition took place gradually or more rapidly. Hence differ-

<sup>8</sup> L. c., p. 87.



ent forms of transition appear. Weizsäcker agrees with Harnack in attaching great importance to the invasion of the office of teacher by the bishop. He thereby changed his position from that of a temporary president, dependent upon the will of the people, to that of a permanent leader and authority. The gift of the Spirit, once recognized as a free favor of Heaven, was now claimed as the concomitant of a particular administrative office. The man who secured the position of leader expected and received the honor which was shown at first only to the teacher extraordinarily called by God and confirmed by special signs in his ministry. In a word, the regular priest, the hierarchic bishop, entered into the place of the prophet; and the high claim to represent the Lord in the churches, and proclaim the message of Heaven to all ranks and conditions of men, was perverted to minister unto human ambition, and to build up an ecclesiastical oligarchy upon the ruins of original congregational liberties. Whether we accept the details of this discussion or not, two things shine forth with greater clearness than ever before: an apostolic system, in which every local church was free, self-governed, autonomous, and resting upon a holy brotherhood of believers; and a ministry that was called only of God, charismatic, prophetic, and in very few respects resembling its ordinary modern clerical successor.

### III.

THE VIEW THAT THE ORGANIZATION OF THE EARLY CHURCHES SPRANG ESSENTIALLY FROM CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLES, AND TOOK SHAPE ACCORDING TO THE FELT NEEDS OF THE CHRISTIAN SOCIETIES.

The limits of this article will not permit extended treatment of this division of the subject; but a detailed account is unnecessary, for the views of Kühl, the chief advocate of this view, can be briefly summed up.<sup>9</sup> Harnack, in his discussion of the *Διδαχή*,<sup>10</sup> says that the oldest form of clergy, that

<sup>9</sup> *Die Gemeindeordnung in den Pastoralbriefen*, Berlin, 1885.

<sup>10</sup> Page 110, note.

of apostles, prophets, and teachers, must, for the present at least, be regarded as a free product of the Apostolic Church, for, he adds, the officers in the synagogue present no parallel to them. Kühl takes up his argument at this point and urges that such theorists as Hatch, and still more so Holtzmann, after uniting different influences to explain the early church—influences from club, municipality, and synagogue—must all leave something which they ascribe to purely Christian initiative. This is especially true of the office of deacon, the most primitive and characteristic ecclesiastical position. Other writers, such as Lechler,<sup>11</sup> had pointed out the growth of the brotherhood—through the *πιστεύοντες*, then the *ἐκκλησία*, or united body of believers (Acts v. 2), subject to the general guidance of the apostles, under whom there formed a band of *νεώτεροι*, or young men, for work in the church. Next we hear of “the seven,” who were probably the forerunners of the deacons, but not deacons themselves. Kühl holds that in this same line of felt need and supply we must look for the first bishops. He thinks that Hatch has shown conclusively that the offices of deacon and bishop were very closely connected. But the diaconate was peculiarly and distinctively Christian. Hence, he argues, the bishopric was also a purely Christian growth, rising from certain circumstances. This view, it is maintained, does not conflict with the thought, that this office subsequently, in its duties and the rights of its incumbent, should recall similar things in the civil, social, and synagogue relations of the time. Every such system will be met by analogous cases, and any other view will prove too much, as appears when applied to the office of bishop.

Setting out, then, from the word *διδάκωνος*, we find that it points clearly to every-day life, to the relation of master and servant, just as the *διακονεῖν τραπέζης* of Acts vi. 2 reminds us of the waiter at table in the Greek family, who very often received the more polite designation of *διδάκωνος*. Now, if the office of bishop sprang from the same circle of needs and duties as did the deacon, Kühl insists we may

<sup>11</sup> *Das apostolische und das nachapost. Zeitalter*, 3te. Aufl. Leipzig, 1885, p. 75 ff.

look for the meaning of the name *ἐπίσκοπος* in the same place. The common name for a slave was *δούλος*; but the *διάκονοι* were those slaves who were more intimate with their master, and who were often mediators between him and the other slaves, especially in serving at table. Only the *διάκονοι* might mix the cup of wine for the lord while at table. For such service the most efficient and reliable slaves were selected. In the great number of bondmen these overseers, *οἰκονόμοι* or *ἐπιμελέται*, formed naturally a sort of council about their master and enjoyed his especial confidence. They, also, however, needed a subordinate head, and this was found in the *ἐπίτροπος*, or *προστάτης*, or *προϊστάμενος*, as the chief slave overseer was called. He had general direction of all domestic and business matters, and was chief steward. His duties are described as *ἐπισκοπεῖν*. The analogous female slave was called *σκοπός*; and it is nearly certain that the male was called *ἐπίσκοπος*. This word does not actually occur in this connection; but the LXX., which keeps close to the vernacular Greek, in translating such overseers in building the temple (2 Chron. xiv. 17 and elsewhere), designates them as *ἐπίσκοποι*. All the slaves in the ancient household, together with the master and his family, formed a totality called the *οἶκος*, or *familia*. These, then, are the relations which Kühn thinks were present to the mind of the early church when its organization took shape, and out of this fundamental form of family life the first ecclesiastical polity arose. The New Testament speaks of Christians as God's *οἶκος*, or family. They are both children and slaves. Paul describes himself as a *δούλος Χριστοῦ*, but when speaking of work in the service of Christ we hear of *διάκονος* (Col. iv. 7; 2 Cor. iv. 1; vi. 4). There are differences of *διακονιῶν* but the same *κύριος* (1 Cor. xii. 5). The apostles are *οἰκονόμοι θεοῦ*, and, as can be seen from 1 Peter iv. 10, *οἰκονόμον εἶναι* and *διακονεῖν* are correlative terms. The same predicates are also used of the activity of the bishops. This family terminology explains best *προστάτης*. It is not, Kühn holds, the

legal relation of patron vs. client which is expressed by it, as Holtzmann and Weingarten suppose, for that is too narrow a conception of it. How could such be said of Phœbe, who has *προστάτις* ascribed to her (Rom. xvi. 2), being a deaconess (Rom. xvi. 1)? It must mean the same when applied to bishops. Paul could not have Phœbe for his patron; he was a free man. She was recommended to hospitable reception in Rome because she had herself been hospitable, as a good steward, to Paul and others. Hence, Kühn concludes, the Christian bishop was, in name and office, like the chief steward, the slave manager, in the ancient household. He had general oversight of the needs of the whole church, and, in a special sense, a certain supervision of the *διδάκονοι*. The duties and rights of the bishops follow naturally from such a definite relation. And that, it is claimed, is just the view presented in the Ignatian Epistles. They regard the bishop as God's agent or representative in the church, and as such he is to be obeyed. Otto Ritschl, in his review of Kühn's book, accepts his explanation of the origin of the congregational episcopate.

The next question is, Where did the presbyters come from? Kühn sets out from the *νεώτεροι* and the *πρεσβύτεροι*, who appear in the New Testament as closely connected officials (Acts v. 6; Tit. ii. 6; 1 Pet. v. 5). We thus have a particular committee from the younger men, as the presbyters were from the older men. The elders here (1 Pet. v. 5) have the duties of the later bishops; while the *νεώτεροι* have the place of the later deacons. It is to be noticed in this connection—Harnack, as we have seen, lays stress upon the same point—that, whenever the idea of *διδάκονος* or *διακονεῖν* in the proper sense appears, it is connected with the thought of youth. Hence Kühn holds that both *νεώτεροι* and *διδάκονοι* were from the beginning the same office and the same persons; only regarded from different points of view of age or duties. In like manner, he argues that originally presbyter and bishop were the same—the one the name of age, the other of duties. This view, he thinks, is made

incontrovertible by two facts: (1) We have in the New Testament passages which show bishops and presbyters to have been identical, and suggesting the distinction in names as referring to age and duties; and (2) In Polycarp (v. 3) we find the two offices so spoken of that the predicates of each are given to the other. It is evident that the presbyters formed a committee of the elder men, and had the functions of the later bishops. "As long as there were bishops, they were chosen from the older men, and were actually *πρεσβύτεροι*; and so long as these were presbyters did they exercise the office of bishops; they were from the beginning on *πρεσβύτεροι ἐπισκοποῦντες*." Both names may not have been used everywhere for the same persons, but it is certain, Kūhl says, that where both occur they do mean the same persons. Weizsäcker<sup>12</sup> admits that this view is most plausible, and that Clement of Rome (chap. xlv., liv., lvii.), calls elders bishops; but in view of chap. xxi., where it is said *τοὺς προηγουμένους ἡμῶν αἰδεσθῶμεν, τοὺς πρεσβυτέρους τιμῶμεν, τοὺς νέους παιδεύσωμεν, κ.τ.λ.*, he thinks that we must accept three classes of officers and distinguish between elders and bishops. All bishops were presbyters, but all presbyters were not bishops; the latter were chosen from the former, and were not different in kind though not identical in position. Lightfoot,<sup>13</sup> however, finds no bishops in the Epistle of Clement; they were all presbyter-bishops, the monarchical bishop having not yet arisen. Kūhl agrees with Harnack in thinking that the movement did not run towards a single bishop within the college of presbyters, but rather towards one bishop beside the college of presbyter-bishops. Such a bishop, representing doctrinal unity, would come naturally from the special teachers outside the congregational presbytery. The *Didache* here comes to our help and tells us of official *διδάσκαλοι*, who received special honor. The bishops came more and more to serve the church as teachers, and for this reason they received the respect once given to the

<sup>12</sup> *Das Apost. Zeitalter*, Freiburg, i. B., 1886, p. 638.

<sup>13</sup> L. c. p. 96.

honored *διδάσκαλοι*. From these two factors, the original bishop, as described above by Kühn, and the charismatic teacher, arose the monarchical bishop, who should embody unity of doctrine in the church against incoming heresies. Such men as Ignatius and Polycarp gave rise, apparently, to this idea of centralization, and through their united efforts it came to full recognition.

We close our investigations at this point. The extent of territory traversed and the variety of views met with have occupied so much of our space that little room has been left for criticism. But it has been felt to be very important to get, first of all, a general idea of the questions involved and the present state of inquiry. Further sifting and weighing of results and comparison of opinion must be left for future study. So little attention seems to have been paid in recent American ecclesiastical literature to the whole subject of early church polity, that it seemed the more needful to approach the field first of all from the side of historic description.