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## ARTICLE VI.

## THE HISTORIC EPISCOPATE.

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THERE never was an institution on earth lasting through a long stretch of time without change. The change may be simply that of growth or that which comes from an adjustment to new circumstances. In these cases it is of a kind with the changes that come to individual men. The boy grows into the man; and the man adapts himself to the changing conditions of life. His continuity is not broken; his identity is not destroyed. Sometimes, however, institutions so change as to lose their original character. Their spirit changes; their functions change; they are not what they were.

The United States government furnishes an example of change of the first kind. Its power has increased, and the sphere of its operations has widened. Whereas it was the government of a new and weak people, it has come to be the government of a great and powerful people. It has to do things which its founders did not foresee; but these things are not alien from its spirit. It is the same government because it has kept itself in the line of normal development.

It would be easy to find institutions illustrating changes of the second kind; cases in which the servant has come to be the master; in which the temporary and occasional have come to be permanent; cases in which, if the original purpose and spirit have not been forgotten, the organization and methods have been greatly perverted. The Catholic Church, claiming to be always the same, has been the subject of changes

of this second kind. In its long history it has changed as a whole, and it has changed in its parts—especially has it changed in its organization. Its offices have multiplied and some of them have got to themselves new and strange functions. It is my present purpose to speak particularly of the office of Bishop as illustrating this change.

A bishop has not always been a bishop. As we know him he was not made or constituted or appointed. He was developed or evolved. Before he was a bishop he was something else. He was indeed called a bishop, but he was not a bishop as we know bishops, or as bishops have been known for centuries. He was an elder, or presbyter, or priest. He was not an elder with certain peculiar functions added: he was simply an elder: any elder was a bishop and any bishop was an elder. The two names designated the same person or office. The New Testament writers use them interchangeably. In Acts xx. 28 the apostle calls all the Ephesian elders bishops. "Take heed," he says, "to yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you *bishops*."<sup>1</sup> There is no place in the Acts or the Epistles in which all the three orders, bishop, elder, and deacon, are named together. If bishop is mentioned, nothing is said of elder; and if elder is mentioned, nothing is said of bishop. If the two words appear in the same general connection, it is evident that they are to be taken as synonymous. Both occur in the twentieth chapter of Acts, where Paul expressly calls the elders bishops. Both occur, too, in the first chapter of the Epistle to Titus, where the apostle directs his young friend to "ordain elders in every city, as (he says) I appointed thee." He then mentions the qualifications of an elder (ver. 6), and adds, "For a bishop must be blameless as the steward of God."<sup>2</sup> See also

<sup>1</sup> Ἐπισκόπους.

<sup>2</sup> "Ordain *elders* in every city, as I had appointed thee: if any man be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children, not accused of riot, or unruly. For the *bishop* must be blameless," etc.—Titus i. 5-7.

Phil. i. 1, and 1 Tim. iii. 1-7, where bishops and deacons (not elders) are mentioned.

Leaving the New Testament, and coming down to the first of the apostolic fathers, the same usage seems to be preserved. Clement of Rome, who wrote a letter to the Corinthians near the close of the first century, does not mention "the three orders" together. He writes in the name of the church at Rome, rebuking the Corinthians for their contentious opposition to the church officers. He says, "The apostles received the gospel for us from the Lord Jesus Christ; Jesus Christ was sent forth from God. So, then, Christ is from God, and the apostles are from Christ. . . . Preaching everywhere, in country and town, they appointed their first-fruits, when they had proved them by the Holy Spirit, to be *bishops and deacons* unto them that should believe."<sup>1</sup> He contended that these men, so appointed, "with the consent of the whole church," ought not to be thrust out. Their appointment was virtually from God; and they had been faithful. "It will be no light sin for us," he says, "if we thrust out those who have offered the gifts of the bishop's office unblamably and holily."<sup>2</sup> He adds immediately, "Blessed are those presbyters who have gone before, seeing that their departure was fruitful and ripe." Later, he says, "Submit yourselves unto the presbyters, and receive chastisement, bending the knees of your heart."<sup>3</sup> He does not speak of a single bishop in Corinth, but of those who held "the bishop's office"; and who were then exposed to insult and wrong. He compares their situation with that of the *presbyters* who had gone before, who had filled their office without opposition; and finally the people are exhorted to submit to the *presbyters* whom they were unjustly opposing. The natural (and

<sup>1</sup> The First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians, chap. xlii. It will be useful to us hereafter to note that bishops and deacons were appointed "in country and town."

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, chap. xlii.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, chap. lvii.

almost irresistible) inference is that presbyters in Corinth were filling the bishop's office; and that Clement makes no distinction between bishops and presbyters.<sup>1</sup>

So late as the fourth century, the church was still conscious of the original identity of bishops and elders. In his comment on Titus i. 7, St. Jerome says, "An elder, therefore, is the same as a bishop." Jerome was a witness for what was thought in his time. Bishop Lightfoot is a witness for what ought to be thought in our time. He says, that "Irenæus entirely overlooks the identity of the terms 'bishop' and 'presbyter' in the New Testament, which later fathers discovered."<sup>2</sup> Dean Howson<sup>3</sup> is a witness of the same kind. He says: "The next in rank to that of the apostles was the office of overseers or elders, more usually known as bishops and presbyters. These terms are used in the New Testament as equivalent, the former denoting the duties, the latter the office.

Yielding to the weight of testimony, all pointing in the same direction, scholars are now generally agreed that elder and bishop in apostolic times were the same.<sup>4</sup> This being taken for granted, the inquiry is, How did a bishop, at first only an elder, get to be a bishop in the usual ecclesiastical sense? As we have no definite and explicit account of the matter, we are left largely to conjecture, in our attempts to an-

<sup>1</sup> In chapter xlvii., Clement says: "It is shameful, dearly beloved, yes, utterly shameful, and unworthy of your conduct in Christ, that it should be reported that the very steadfast and ancient church of the Corinthians, for the sake of one or two persons, maketh sedition against its presbyters." In chapter lviii., quoted above, "Ye, therefore, that laid the foundation of the sedition, submit yourselves unto the presbyters," etc.

<sup>2</sup> Apostolic Fathers, Part ii. vol. i. p. 392.

<sup>3</sup> Life and Epistles of Paul, Vol. i. pp. 433-434.

<sup>4</sup> This was written before the publication of "Opinions by Bishops of the Protestant Episcopal Church" (Independent, March 8, 1894). The writer had in mind such Episcopal writers as Professor Hatch, Bishop Lightfoot, Dean Stanley, Dean Howson, and others. Of course, he did not mean to exclude the Bishops of the *Independent* from the class "scholars."

swer this question. We are shut up to the method so familiar in scientific investigation, the method of hypothesis and verification. That is, we put ourselves, as best we can, back into the apostolic and subapostolic times, and, knowing something of the condition of things, imagine how in the peculiar circumstances one presbyter might have been lifted above his fellow-presbyters; and how a distinction at first incidental and personal, came at last to be regarded as essential and official. We begin at the beginning, with the original church at Jerusalem. For some years, that is, until the persecution that arose at the time of Stephen's death, it was the only church in the world. All the apostles remained in the city, and the number of the brethren came to be many thousands. Probably all the converts did not remain; but those who did remain were far too many to meet together in any one place. Most likely they had many meeting places, few of which could be regarded as permanent, or as belonging to the church. The very fact that they were divided into many small and changing congregations, and that there were no places in which large numbers of them could meet stately, as in a church home, brought it about that the whole brotherhood was regarded as one church. Then, as all the apostles were together, no one of them could be regarded as the pastor or bishop of that one church. It was only after the rest of them had departed from the city, that the apostle James seems to have become the responsible leader. In that great church the assistants of the apostles were called by the general name of elders or presbyters.<sup>1</sup>

In what I have here said about the church at Jerusalem, I am in substantial agreement with Mosheim and Neander, but I do not consider it necessary to refer to them as authorities. I have mentioned such things as submit themselves to the judgment of any intelligent reader. In some respects the

<sup>1</sup> "And the apostles and elders came together," etc. (Acts xv. 6). "It pleased the apostles and elders, with the whole church" (ver. 22).

first church would be a model for all the churches. In others it stood alone. It was the first church, having to make an entirely new beginning; it was without fixed meeting places; it was subject to annoying persecutions from the Jewish rulers; it was under the personal supervision of the apostles. But, with all its peculiarities, that which it sought to accomplish, was what all the churches were to seek to accomplish, and its methods were substantially those which they were to employ. When the gospel was introduced into any great city, it had its small beginnings, its growth, and afterwards its multitudes. As in Jerusalem, there was no meeting place for all; and the many small congregations formed one church. It was necessary, too, that there should be many elders or bishops to shepherd the great and scattered flock. And so it came to be the rule that, in great cities, however numerous the brethren, they were regarded as constituting one body. There was one church at Rome, one church at Alexandria, one church at Carthage, one church at Milan, and so on, as at Jerusalem.

That there should at first be only one church in great cities was natural, if not necessary; and it was suggested by the example of the church at Jerusalem. It was this condition of things that led to the first step towards the development of bishops as distinct from elders. In a great and growing community, in some cases increasing in wealth as in numbers, there would be conflicting interests, jealousies and parties; and there must be some one to whom all could look as the representative of all. This some one would naturally be one of the elders; and naturally he would be chosen because he may have founded the church, or on account of his age, or wisdom, or ability, or character, or all combined, by the whole multitude of elders and brethren. So chosen, he was the pastor, the bishop.

What I have here suggested as likely is what St. Jerome says actually took place.<sup>1</sup> It is also substantially what takes

<sup>1</sup> "Before, by the instigation of Satan, jealousies arose in religion, and it

place in the missionary work of the present time. However many churches may have been gathered among the Burmese or Karens or Telugus, the missionary had the general oversight of them. The native pastors looked to him for advice and instruction. He was their superintendent, their pastor. It would have been easy for Carey or Judson to become a bishop in the ecclesiastical sense. In fact their position was very nearly that of a bishop of the second century. I will mention another case that will not be without interest. In Geneva, in the first workings of the Reformation, there were six preachers who constituted "the venerable company of pastors." Over these Calvin always presided. He always presided, too, in the meetings of the consistory. He wished Beza, his successor in the pastorate, to succeed him also in this presidential office. If he had done so, there might have come to be a permanent presiding officer, and what at first was given to Calvin on account of his work and character, might have become vested in an office. Beza saw the danger and was unwilling to comply with Calvin's wishes. The pastors, too, saw it, and, in order to avoid it, adopted the plan of electing their presiding officers week by week. They did not want a bishop.<sup>1</sup>

It is well known that Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, martyred at Rome in the reign of the emperor Trajan, is the first to mention distinctly the three orders, bishop, elder, and deacon. It is also known that his epistles have long been the occasion of controversy among the critics. As first known in modern times, they were suspected of being either spurious or greatly corrupted. The grounds of suspicion were, that they were supposed to represent a development of church

was said, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, the churches were governed by the common council of the elders. But after each one began to claim those whom he had baptized as his own, rather than Christ's, it was decreed in the whole world that one of the presbyters should be chosen and placed over the rest, to whom the care of the whole church should belong."

<sup>1</sup> Henry's *Life of Calvin*, Vol. i. p. 401.



order far in advance of the age in which Ignatius lived. As to the epistles first known, the suspicions of the critics have been fully confirmed. There are, however, three forms of them,—a short form, consisting of three, a middle form, consisting of seven, and the long form, consisting of fifteen epistles. The last has been entirely discredited. The question now is between the short and the middle form. Some years ago Bishop Lightfoot favored the short form; later study and investigation led him to accept as genuine and uncorrupted the seven epistles of the middle form. My present purpose does not require me to have an opinion on the question. It suits me well enough to agree with Lightfoot. I am only concerned that we should know and understand what Ignatius taught. He says: "Everyone whom the Master of the household sendeth to be steward over his own house, we ought so to receive as him that sent him. Plainly therefore, we ought to regard the bishop as the Lord himself."<sup>1</sup> "It is meet for you in every way to glorify Jesus Christ, who glorified you; that being perfectly joined together in one submission, submitting yourselves to your bishop and presbyters, ye may be sanctified in all things."<sup>2</sup> In another epistle he says: "When ye are obedient unto the bishop as Jesus Christ, it is evident to me that ye are living, not after men, but after Jesus Christ, who died for us. . . . It is therefore necessary that you should do nothing without your bishop, but be ye also obedient to the presbyters as to the apostles of Jesus Christ, our hope. . . . and those likewise who are deacons of the mysteries of Jesus must please all men in all ways. For they are not deacons of meats and drinks, but servants of the church of God. . . . Let all men respect the deacons as Jesus Christ, even as they should respect the bishop as being a type of the Father, and the presbyters as the council of God and as the college of the apostles."<sup>3</sup> "Give heed to the bishop that

<sup>1</sup> Epistle to the Ephesians, chap. vi.    <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, chap. ii.

<sup>3</sup> Epistle to the Trallians, chaps ii. and iii.

God may give heed to you." "It is not lawful either to baptize or to hold a love feast without the bishop."

In quoting from Ignatius I have used Lightfoot's translation. In the quotations, and all through the epistles, we find no hint that bishops are successors of the apostles in the sense of having apostolic power or authority. It is the presbyters who are likened to the college of the apostles. And even the deacons are to be respected as Jesus Christ: they are the servants of the church of God. The language of the epistles is that of a man, of fervent piety, who has a nervous dread of schism, and a profound sense of the importance of preserving the unity of the church. There must indeed be obedience to the bishop, but obedience to the presbyters and deacons as well. All the officers of the church act in a representative capacity, and must be treated accordingly. If the language in reference to bishops is extravagant, it is also extravagant when it refers to presbyters and deacons. The bishop is not the autocrat, ruling alone in the church; but only one of the church's representatives; the chief, but only one.

It is easy to feel that the words of an ancient writer meant for him just what they mean for us. But can any of us really think that a bishop was to Ignatius exactly what he was in the Middle Ages, or in our own time? He wrote *bishop*; if he had written *pastor*, it would have meant nearly the same. He claims nothing for the bishop that such a man might not claim for any pastor. He would not regard the pastor as simply the servant of the church, whose business it is to preach, to visit the sick and bury the dead, and to make himself generally useful and agreeable. To him the church was a divine institution, and the pastor in it was the servant of God, and representative of Jesus Christ. It was his business to see that nothing was to be taught or done that was contrary to sound doctrine; and that no unsuitable person should be admitted to the church. Hence nothing was to be done without his approval: no one was to be baptized, no

love feast was to be held, contrary to his will. If Ignatius emphasized the pastor's or bishop's authority, we must remember that that authority had been given him for the express purpose of maintaining discipline and unity. Even in our time it would be irregular and disorganizing for any one to baptize or hold meetings, without consulting the pastor. In times when doctrines were undefined, when jealousies were bitter, when a church was a great multitude, with no common meeting place, and great funds were to be administered, such things would be far worse.<sup>1</sup>

Thus far, in thinking of bishops we have been thinking of the presiding officers of the churches in great cities. The truth is, however, that the presiding officer in any separate, distinct church was a bishop. In early times, even in cities, the churches must often have been small, and of course the bishop of it was only the pastor of one congregation. In small towns the churches were necessarily small all the time. The canons of various synods furnish an interesting proof of the poverty and weakness of some of these early bishops. They forbid a bishop to wander from his parish or diocese; or to attempt to supplant a brother bishop. The disposition among them to seek better places for themselves was checked by forbidding a bishop to leave his original church. In some cases, no doubt, the laws were designed to protect the weak against the encroachments of the strong. Bishops sometimes refused to take the churches to which they were assigned; sometimes the churches refused to accept the bishops sent them, asserting their original right of choice. I refer to no particular canons because they are so numerous, having been passed by synods all through the third and fourth centuries, that is, during the time when ecclesiastical usages were grow-

<sup>1</sup> The reader might profitably consult Cyprian's letters on the state of episcopacy in his time. See particularly chap. iv., in which he exhorts the presbyters and deacons to discharge both his office and theirs, and chap. v., in which he speaks of his fellow-presbyters, etc.—Cyprian's Works, Vol. i. (Translation, T. & T. Clark.)

ing into definite and settled shape. Among the three hundred and eighteen bishops at the Council of Nicæa some had very small churches. In North Africa in the beginning of the fifth century there were nearly six hundred bishops, Catholic and Donatist. Of course most of these were simply pastors of village or town churches. They could not have been diocesan bishops.

The one thing common to all bishops, and that made them bishops, was the fact that they were the independent and uncontrolled heads of their churches. Each one was the pastor, or shepherd, or overseer of his flock, whether it was large or small. Officially all bishops were equal in rank; they were far from being equal in the power and responsibility of their positions. The village bishop had his one congregation and his few members; the city bishop had his many congregations, his thousands of members, and his many presbyters. It was impossible that this difference in wealth and power should not after a while lead to a change in conceptions. Either a single congregation with its pastor or bishop must come to be regarded as the normal church; or the bishop of a single congregation must cease to be regarded as a bishop. That the single congregation should come to be the normal church was contrary to all probability. The great cities give law to the country, not the country to the cities. It is what the cities do that fixes the custom; development follows the line of city precedent. The popular conception of a bishop was therefore derived from a city bishop. It hardly seemed proper that the bishop of a small congregation should be of equal weight and rank with the bishop of many congregations. Then, too, the city presbyter might be the head of a much larger congregation than his country brother; his duties were of the same general kind and more exacting and difficult, and yet he was only a presbyter and his country brother was a bishop. The whole thing was incongruous; there must be a new distribution, and like go to like. The country bishops

must take rank with the city presbyters, whom they most resembled, and the city bishops get exclusive possession of the name. The bishop must be no longer simply the pastor of an independent church: he must have, not a parish, as formerly, but a diocese, only the word diocese was not yet in use.<sup>1</sup>

The process by which the name bishop came to be applied exclusively to city bishops is not obscurely revealed in history. In the third century we meet with the name *Chor-episcopus*, country bishop. It was not used, Gieseler tells us, everywhere. "In Africa, where the country bishops were particularly numerous, they were not at all distinguished from others, not even by a peculiar name."<sup>2</sup> And Hefele tells us that they seem to have been considered in ancient times as quite on a par with the other bishops, so far as their position in synods was concerned.<sup>3</sup> They took their places in the first general council, at Nicæa (325); and in the third, at Ephesus (431), but not in the fourth, at Chalcedon (451). They received the same ordination as other bishops, and the only thing against them was that they were bishops in the country. They came to be slighted by the great city bishops on the one hand, and by the great city presbyters on the other. The synods began to legislate against them. The synod of Antioch (341) did not permit them to ordain a priest or deacon, although they may have received episcopal ordination, and if they should dare to do so, they were to be deprived of their dignity.<sup>4</sup> Somewhat later, the synod of Laodicea forbade the appointment of bishops in the villages and in the

<sup>1</sup> *Parish* as an ecclesiastical division has remained substantially unchanged; but it is now a priest who has a parish; formerly it was a bishop. The 21st canon of the synod of Antioch (A. D. 341), according to the edition of Dionysius, says: "Let not a bishop go from one *parish* to another." The later edition of Isidore reads, "A bishop ought not to pass from one *diocese* to another." The change is significant.

<sup>2</sup> Church History, Vol. i. p. 235.

<sup>3</sup> History of Councils, Vol. i. p. 17.

<sup>4</sup> Hefele, Vol. ii. p. 69.

country. Those already appointed must be in subjection to the city bishop: like the priests, they must do nothing without his consent.<sup>1</sup> The synod of Sardica, a great western synod, did not permit a bishop to be appointed in a village or small town where one priest suffices, "in order that the episcopal dignity might not suffer." If, however, the town is so populous as to appear worthy of a bishop, it shall obtain one."<sup>2</sup> That is, wherever there is only one congregation there must be a priest; where there are several, a bishop. And so by the laws on the subject we may trace how a bishop in the old gave place to a bishop in the new sense. There was a change in two directions: in one case, upward; in the other, downward. The great bishops became greater; and the little bishops came to be no bishops at all.

With the passing out of the country bishop, the old conception of the bishop as the pastor of one church also passed out. Henceforth a bishop was the head of a diocese, the ruler of several, it may be of many churches. The first stage in the development was completed, and the organization of the church as a whole was made to conform to the organization of the great city churches. The bishops had come to be a separate and distinct class. Presbyters quietly accepted their position of subordination in rank as well as in duties. The bishops were no longer jealous of them; and they were no longer restless under the ever advancing powers of the bishops. The position of the deacons, too, was changed. In the beginning they had been the assistants of the pastors in single congregations. In the great churches they were still the pastor's especial aids. They were always in close relations to the bishops; they were his ministers, his advisers, and his helpers in the conduct of public worship as well as in the distribution of alms. In representations given of a church service of the third and fourth centuries the presbyters stand or sit silent. It is the bishops and the deacons who take pub-

<sup>1</sup> Hefele, Vol. ii., p. 321.    <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 135.

lic part. Their nearness to the bishop brought it about that the deacons were often more influential than presbyters; and the archdeacon was in the direct line of succession to the bishop. He was next to the bishop in power and influence. But the development which fixed the presbyter's position as inferior to that of the bishop, restored him to his old position of superiority to the deacon. The three orders—first, second, and third—deacon, priest, bishop—were now recognized and clearly defined.

It would be a great mistake, however, to think of the three orders of the fourth century as exactly representing the three orders in all subsequent times. The law of change continued to operate, affecting all classes. As our business is with the bishops, we say nothing of what happened in the case of deacons and presbyters. But the bishop continued to grow; at first he was the head of associated congregations in one city. As the congregations were gathered around and near the city, they also came under his control. As other congregations were added to the great brotherhood, they were also added to the bishop's jurisdiction, until he had a whole section or province under him. This was inevitable when it came to be recognized that there must be a bishop, and that the country bishop, the pastor of one church, was not a bishop. But it happened that there were in some provinces several great cities in which from old times there were churches and bishops. How would these bishops be related to each other? Just as in cities one presbyter came to be the head or bishop over the other presbyters, so in provinces one bishop came to be the head of the other bishops. This chief bishop was naturally the bishop in the civil capital, the metropolis; and hence the metropolitan bishop got to be the head of his brethren. The great public gatherings of the church, the semi-annual synods, met in the capital, and he presided over them and had the chief direction in framing canons and executing discipline. The development did not end with the metro-

politan, but went on to the patriarch, and ultimately, in the West, to the pope, the head of the whole church, the bishop of all the bishops.

The law of the resultant of forces which, operating in relation to the church, first developed a bishop, continuing to operate, changed him from age to age. In the West he came to be a féudal lord and to have civil jurisdiction. He had his court for the dispensing of justice; he furnished his military contingent and sometimes commanded it in the field, and he was a member of assembly or parliament. As circumstances changed him from a presbyter to a bishop, so circumstances made him a secular as well as an ecclesiastical lord. Always with changing circumstances the bishop has changed.<sup>1</sup> In England he is still a civil lord, member of the upper house of Parliament. In America he has no civil functions; he is only the superintendent of the clergy of his diocese.

We have thus far considered only the way in which a presbyter came to be a bishop. Another and not less interesting question remains to be considered, viz., What were the bishop's peculiar functions? What was it that he could do that no one else could do? As bishop and presbyter were originally identical, the peculiar duties of a bishop must have begun when a bishop first began to be discriminated from a presbyter. We bear in mind that the pastor or bishop was created for a special purpose. He was to be the recognized, authoritative leader in the church. His appointment was to prevent confusion and to secure unity and efficiency of action. Whatever was essential to the successful performance of his office must be granted to him. Some things that were originally common to all the presbyters must be granted to him exclusively. If before the appointment of the pastor the presbyters had been in the habit of ordaining presbyters and

<sup>1</sup> The writer's studies in church history justify his saying this on his own authority, but the reader is invited to consult Hatch's chapters on the "Diocese" and the "Diocesan Bishop," in *Growth of Church Institutions*.



deacons, that custom must be changed. For if officers could be chosen and ordained by any one other than the pastor, it would be impossible for him to maintain his authority. Parties might be raised against him; the church might be divided; scandal might arise; and he would be helpless. Especially would it be dangerous to permit the presbyters of a church to ordain at will a pastor or bishop. Such a thing would make easily possible, if it did not invite, the election of opposition bishops in the great cities. Hence it was naturally brought about that ordinations, but especially the ordination of a bishop, was regarded as belonging alone to the bishops. Even when it was conceded that bishops alone might ordain bishops, the danger of schisms was not altogether removed. A schismatic party might procure ordination at the hands of a neighboring bishop, and thus get to itself a regular ecclesiastical standing. To avoid this, there arose a custom, afterwards taking the form of law, that no one should be ordained a bishop without the approval and consent of all the bishops of the province. So carefully did the church of the third and fourth centuries hedge about the office and privileges of a bishop.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, revolts sometimes occurred.<sup>2</sup>

What took place in reference to ordination, in some measure also took place in reference to baptism. We have seen that Ignatius taught that no one was to baptize or hold a love feast without the bishop. This rule was simply in the interest of order and propriety. It was intended to strengthen the bishop's authority and to give him a rightful influence in the church. No one contended that the right to baptize or to

<sup>1</sup> The fourth canon of the Council of Nicæa says: "It is especially proper for a bishop to be appointed by all the bishops of the province; but if such a thing should be difficult either on account of pressing necessity, or on account of the length of the journey (the votes of all having been taken and all having agreed by letter), three at least should come together and perform the ordination; but the confirmation of what is done belongs to the metropolitan of the province."

<sup>2</sup> The schisms of Felicissimus at Carthage, and of Hippolytus and Novatian at Rome in the third century, are cases in illustration of this fact.

authorize baptism belonged originally only to the bishop; the restriction was a matter of discipline. Tertullian, in his treatise on baptism, is a witness of this. He says: "The chief priest, that is the bishop, has the right of giving baptism; in the next place, presbyters and deacons, yet not without the bishop's authority, on account of the honor of the church, which being preserved, peace is preserved. Besides these," he continues, "even laymen have the right, for what is equally received can be equally given."<sup>1</sup> There was no official qualification necessary to administer the rite; but the fitness of things required that the bishop should be consulted. Any one may know of churches at the present day in which there are ordained ministers qualified to baptize; but no one of them would dare to baptize in that church without the consent of the pastor. The baptism would be valid, but the pastor's rights would be invaded, and the church dishonored. No church that would permit such a thing could maintain discipline or unity. In the light of modern instances we may interpret the old feeling.<sup>2</sup>

Baptism had been in the church from the first, and the right to baptize had been freely enjoyed by presbyters and deacons. It was, therefore, difficult to restrict it, and the bishop could not in all cases be conveniently consulted. But what in some cases must be done without the bishop could be afterwards submitted to him for ratification. He "confirmed" what had been done by the laying on of hands.<sup>3</sup> It

<sup>1</sup> Chap. xvii.

<sup>2</sup> The writer of this has long been a member of the Baptist church at Upland, Pa. By the courtesy of his friend, the late Dr. J. M. Pendleton, he baptized four of his children in that church. If Dr. P. had not requested him to do so, he would not at all have thought of doing it. The right to baptize belonged to the pastor.

<sup>3</sup> "That the laying on of the bishop's hands served to give the bishop a check on unauthorized or irregular baptisms, is proved by the fact that those who were baptized by heretics were required to receive the imposition of hands before they were recognized as members of the church. In the same way, returning penitents had hands laid on them."—Hefele, *History of Councils*, Vol. i. pp. 188-189.

was a public acknowledgment, similar to the giving of the right hand of fellowship in non-Episcopal churches at the present day. The bishop's connection with it, however, was not from the first; nor did it come from the apostles. Tertullian mentions it, and says that it was "derived from the old sacramental rite in which Jacob blessed his grandsons."<sup>1</sup> Originally it immediately followed the unction, which immediately followed the baptism, and might be given by the baptizer, whether bishop or not.<sup>2</sup> The present custom of the Eastern Church is for the priest to "confirm" the person baptized, whether infant or adult, immediately after baptism. The confirmation was not considered essential to the efficacy of baptism: the lack of it did not endanger the salvation of the soul; and even in the fifth century and in the West, in cases of necessity a priest might anoint and confirm as well as baptize.<sup>3</sup> The unction, once symbolizing the baptism of the Holy Spirit, has passed out in non-Catholic churches. The confirmation in the West usually follows baptism at a long interval.

Presbyters were never denied the right to administer com-

<sup>1</sup> Tertullian on Baptism, chap. viii.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, chap. vii.: "After this, when we have issued from the font, we are thoroughly anointed with the blessed oil, after the old discipline, wherein, on entering the priesthood, men were wont to be anointed with oil," etc. "In the next place," he says, "the hand is laid on us, invoking and inviting the Holy Spirit by benediction."—chap. viii.

<sup>3</sup> "If heretics in a mortal sickness wish to become Catholics, then in the absence of the bishop a priest may mark them with the chrism and benediction." That is, as Hefele explains, may give them confirmation. This is canon 1, of the synod of Orange, a western synod in 445.—Hef. iii. 160. The 77th canon of the synod of Elvira (A. D. 305) says that a man, baptized by a deacon, dying before confirmation, is saved by virtue of the faith which he professed on receiving baptism.—Hef. i. 170. "Of what may be called the modern, Protestant idea of confirmation, as the ratification by the baptized child, when he has attained an age capable of deliberate choice, of the promises made for him by his sponsors, there is not the slightest trace in Christian antiquity."—Dictionary of Christian Antiquities (Smith and Cheatham), *sub* *con.*

munion. In great churches, however, they did it when the bishop was present, only at his direction. Episcopal control in this is so fully acknowledged to be merely a matter of order, that nothing more need be said about it. As time went on, whatever restriction there was in the case was removed. And the restriction was removed in all cases except where it was useful in maintaining the bishop's authority.<sup>1</sup> After his position was assured, the bishop might freely permit his priests and deacons to baptize, and his priests to celebrate mass, or the Lord's Supper. Restriction in these matters was not necessary to his control of them. But there must be some things that they could not do. If he should surrender his claim to confirm and ordain, churches and priests might easily get on without him. As confirmation bound the people, so ordination bound the clergy to him. If priests were permitted to confirm and ordain, bishops would no longer have any special and peculiar functions. If there should be bishops at all, they would be of the Methodist, and not of the Episcopal order.

The fact that the development of diocesan episcopacy began so early, that it goes back so near to apostolic times, has been taken by some as an indication that it has something of divine authority. The answer to this is that, as it is a continuous development, if it has divine authority for one part of it, there is divine authority for all its parts. If we accept the development of the third century, so must we accept the development of the ninth, and the thirteenth, and the nineteenth. And if, by the operation of new forces, the development should, after a while, get to itself an entirely new character, it must still be accepted as of divine sanction and authority. In a word, we must agree that whatever is or may yet be in the

<sup>1</sup> The fact that there was no restriction at first as to baptism and the eucharist, then restriction, and then again no restriction, proves that the restriction was for a temporary purpose; no doubt, as stated above, to maintain the bishop's authority.

church, is of God. In fact there have always been two parties in the church, one holding that all developments are of divine right, the other that they are all of human right. Besides, there is in the Catholic Church an intelligent party which consciously holds that divine guidance is confined to the development of doctrine, and that matters of order and discipline may be determined by the wisdom and prudence of men. This last view more nearly conforms to the practice of the Catholic Church, which has always held that all doctrines must be defined by the unanimous vote of synod or council; while ecclesiastical rules may become laws by a majority vote. The laws may be changed; and need not be universally operative; the dogmas must be believed by all, and always.

We need not undertake to decide between these conflicting parties. It is certain that, whether a bishop (as we know him) is by divine or by human right, he is a development: he came to be a bishop from having been something else. I have endeavored to indicate the circumstances which made the transition in a measure necessary. When the great city churches were once taken as the church unit, what followed was a matter of course. But, if instead of taking the city church the town or village church had been taken as the unit, the development would have been very different. And the single congregation was the natural unit. The city church was the outcome of temporary and warping conditions. Peculiar circumstances determined its methods of activity and forced it into a complex and abnormal organization. It was just as if the temporary and provisional arrangements of churches in heathen lands, in our day, should be taken as the model of what is to come after them. Great numbers, many elders, and many meeting places never were necessary to constitute a church. The little congregations in villages and country places were churches, actually or potentially exer-

cising all the functions that ever could belong to any church.<sup>1</sup> They had their pastors, and their pastors were recognized as bishops among bishops. When the time came that there might be fixed places of meeting, the great city churches themselves were divided into congregations, which were churches in all respects, except that they were dependent on the city bishop. A great church spontaneously dividing into many congregations was a virtual protest against the permanence of what ought to have been only a temporary organization; and as far as possible a reversion to the simple specific church unit.

The development on the model of the great city church having once begun, there were many things to favor and stimulate it. When the church began to have property, it was held, not by individual city congregations, but by the whole Christian community. An undivided property favored an undivided church. Monarchy in the state also suggested ecclesiastical monarchy. Later the social organization of Europe, with its grades of nobility, modified the ecclesiastical organization. But everywhere, and all the time, the type was preserved: it was the city church; not the pastor and his congregation, but the bishop and his diocese. This conception of the church held undisputed possession of the world for a thousand years. It has been built into the framework of European civilization; it has moulded European institutions; it is almost an inseparable part of European life. Where nothing but an episcopal organization has been known, bishops seem to be a necessary order, and it scarcely enters into the thoughts of men that there can be a church without diocesan bishops. A change can only come in some violent upheaval, as in Germany and Scotland in the days of the Reformation; or by the slow and patient growth of a different formative conception. England furnishes an example of the wonderful

<sup>1</sup> Exceptional cases do not vitiate the inference which the mass of facts forces upon us, that in the greater part of the Christian world each community was complete in itself. Every town, and sometimes every village, had its bishop. Hatch's *Growth of Church Institutions*, p. 18.

persistence of an ecclesiastical type. After the assaults of dissenters for two hundred years, the outworks of her diocesan episcopacy have not been shaken. The citadel has scarcely been conscious of attack.

The slow growth of dissent in England is one of the noteworthy things in ecclesiastical history. The explanation is that the ground was pre-occupied. To abolish diocesan episcopacy would be to effect a revolution in the social, political, and ecclesiastical life of the people. It would do away with the developments of centuries; it would involve a double process of annihilation and new creation. For the successful and rapid operation of a new formative conception of the church, there must be a new and unoccupied field. Such a field is found in America. Here none of those circumstances have existed which originally developed the diocese. The office of diocesan bishop, when it has existed, has been simply ecclesiastical. The bishop has had no organic place in government or in society; nor even in the church. The ordinary functions of a church—instruction, and baptism, and communion, and discipline, and charity—have largely gone on without him. He has, indeed, exerted no little influence, partly from his personal character, and partly from the traditional sentiment that attaches to the office; but otherwise he has not come into forceful contact with the people. His peculiar functions have been few, and they can be easily and sharply defined. As occasion requires, he visits churches and administers the rite of *confirmation*. This rite confers no spiritual grace; it is a post-apostolic development, derived, as Tertullian tells us, from the old law, that is from Judaism; and in the East it is to-day administered by a priest. Even in the West a priest might administer it; and all the rights of the bishop in regard to it were conferred by canon law. The only apparent reason for its being given exclusively to the bishop was that it was necessary to his authority in his diocese. What has been said of confirmation might equally be said of ordination,

the second ecclesiastical privilege of the bishop. It was a right given by canon law and was a part of the developed organization of the church. In the beginning there were no bishops as distinguished from elders, and there is no trace of proof in the New Testament that the apostles ordained any but elders.

The supposed divine or apostolic authority for diocesan bishops being out of the way, there is no imperative need for them in America. In this open, new, and free country we are rid, in large measure, of the obstructing influence of social, political, and ecclesiastical developments. In many things we have gone back to simple, fundamental principles. We have dissolved the long and supposed necessary connection of church and state, to the advantage of both; we have emphasized the spirituality of the church; and in many other things we have made new beginnings. As, at first, circumstances led to the adoption of the great, undivided city churches as the unit of development, so in this country they point to a return to the simple, natural unit, the single congregation. The American conception of a church is of a single congregation: it scarcely knows any other. This single congregation is a church complete in itself. It has no place for a diocesan bishop; for the simple reason that it has a bishop of its own, and all legitimate spiritual functions may be as validly and truly performed by the pastor of the humblest village church in America as by the grandest mitred bishop of the Old World.

Whatever valuable services the developed hierarchy may have performed in the past, it was certainly responsible for much of the tyranny and corruption of the church; and if the church should ever again become a menace to civil rights and privileges, it would be because of hierarchical assumptions. We in America have thus far had no generally accepted hierarchy. We have had many churches, but no church. Single Christian congregations fit into our political system just



as single families fit into the social order. As the families are free and independent of each other, so for the most part are the churches. The state, as such, knows no church; and the churches know no state. It is God who has given us this happy political and ecclesiastical order. To seek or to wish for another development is to be ignorant of his favor and blessing. In the pastors of our thousands of churches we have the American, which is likewise a true, "historical episcopate."