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THE
CHURCHMAN

OCTOBER, 1899.

ART. I.—ON THE RESUMPTION OF DIOCESAN
SYNODS.

AS every so-called "crisis in the Church" matures and develops, one is repeatedly impressed with the impotency of the great bulk of the clergy to make their influence felt, or even their voice heard. The exactly opposite conditions prevailing in the Scottish National Establishment prevent any "crisis" from being either reached or declared there. Its organization, given a presbyterian basis, is unimpeachably perfect for its purpose. That is what makes that body practically unassailable by the civil power. No legislation touching the externals of its worship, the punishment of its "criminous clerks," or the constitution of its courts, is ever even mooted in the British Parliament. Aggressions which would lash the calm and serious population into frenzy if attempted there, may be deliberately perpetrated any Session in England, and regarded as a matter of course.

Why, then, is that great body of our clergy which is ever in closest touch with the popular masses, and is so largely credited individually with parochial powers, collectively so impotent that you may search history in vain for a parallel? The Lower House of each Convocation is supposed to embody their *placita*; but each is formulated on a basis derived from property in benefices, and derived from a time when the clergy voted separately their own taxes. Thus each remains antiquated. In the York Province some reforms under Archbishop Longley modified this, but insufficiently for modern requirements. But even given the large measure of reform which would make these bodies effectively representative, such reform would be inefficient without a vigorous machinery to mature, formulate, and maintain at an adequate

pressure an adequate volume of clerical opinion behind the reformed Convocations. These latter cannot represent more than exists, viz., clerical opinion in the nebulous, inert, and unconcentrated state merely. And until Bishops and clergy resume their oldest collective function, that of meeting to deliberate on all Church questions in their Diocesan Synods, in that it will remain. The analogue of this, which we have *not*, is exactly what the Scotch have in their so-called Provincial Synods. It is the (with us) missing link of vitalizing connection which should ensure the due circulation of opinion until it gathers head. Thus the English organization stands a perfect model of "how not to do it." For what have we? A series of ruri-decanal Chapters, each a small arc, as it were, or segment, of a wheel; but all detached, all in perfect severance each from other. Far in the distance lies, remote and again unconnected with these, the central body, the Convocation itself. Of course, the clergy proctors—suppose two for the archdeaconry—will have seats in some two out of the dozen or the score or more of these segmentary Chapters which the archdeaconry contains. But there is no collective body in which the clergy proctors of the diocese meet either each other or their representatives. The body in which they *should* meet is the Diocesan Synod, in which every priest and deacon, too, of the diocese has his place and voice. There they would keep touch of each other all round; and all, through the proctors, with the Lower House of Convocation; and through their Bishop with the Upper House. The Synod would supply that sustained connection, for lack of which our spiritual organization is exactly what a wheel would be without the spokes. The primary ruri-decanal fragments never coalesce. Their wisdom or unwisdom begins and ends for each in itself. It contributes nothing to the deliberations of the ultimate body. Each spends itself like a desert rivulet trickling away and lost in the sands, and never becoming an affluent to reinforce the great stream of opinion; while the consciousness of this inconsequential result reacts on the primary fragment, and also on the ultimate body. The former feel that whatever they think, say, or vote, has no determinative influence. The latter feels itself "up in the air," bereft of the solid backing which alone could give weight to its resolutions; and its own *gravamina* and *reformanda* are barely more than academic echoes. And this will surely remain, in spite of all other reforms of old machinery or tinkering of it by new, so long as this *gravamen gravaminum*, the suppression, viz., of the *vox cleri* in its oldest organ of expression, remains unredressed.

I say "its oldest," because the diocese is ever the initial unit of the whole Church. Out of it by division and sub-

division springs the parish, and by coalition the province and the exarchate. The primary idea of an organized spirituality lies in the Bishop and clergy. The Bishop in Synod is thus the maximum of authority competent to it. When the lay voice has due weight in the selection and institution of each of these, then they become its organized representatives. The lay voice has wholly lost that due weight. It is confiscated and usurped by the intrusion of the Crown above and of patrons below. To recover that due weight, and restore a system in which the laity were consciously represented by Bishop and clergy, would require a revolution upheaving and displacing the usage of some twelve centuries. But this by the way only. The voice of the Bishop and clergy, the Church's oldest organ, remains, save in some two or three dioceses of each province, under the gag, by a mutual consent of Bishop and clergy to shirk their oldest duty. The resumption of this is the one Church reform which is absolutely within the competency of those whose functions it concerns. It would pave the way to, and keep an open door for, all others. No consent of Crown, Parliament, or Privy Council, is needed to effect it. Whereas there is not an item in the programme of the Church Reform League which is not liable to be thwarted by one or more of these embodiments of the secular state. That, I suppose, is the reason why that League and its leaders give this initial point of all Church reform a back place. Surely common-sense would suggest, "Do *first* what you can do for yourselves. See how far the inherent powers, *which you neglect*, will carry you; and then, and not before, you will have earned a title to be heard in your appeal for help from without." Instead of this, the *pièce de résistance* of the reformists is to formulate some co-operative organization of the laity. That may well come in its own place and time, when the clergy have recognized and resumed their own duties *first*. What the clergy who support the League are now doing is really to shirk their own oldest function, and to seek to devolve on the laity that duty, or a part of it, which is really theirs—that, viz., of forming a deliberative organ for the benefit of the whole Church. They are, from the worldly standpoint, "putting in the shot before the powder," a blunder sure to entail grievous consequences; from the spiritual, they are evading the primary function of that "office and work of a priest in the Church of God" to which they stand solemnly pledged, and to which they professed to have been called by the Holy Ghost.

Place the office of Bishop above presbyter as high as you will, you cannot place it higher than that of Apostle above presbyter; and we see from Acts xv. and xvi. † that the

relations of these last were based upon joint deliberation, and were embodied in a decree running in their joint names, and claiming the guidance of the Holy Ghost. What the Bishops practically now claim is the monarchical episcopate of the Middle Ages, excluding the clergy of the other orders from their share and voice in diocesan administration. That monarchical episcopate is the outcome of all the absolutisms which have darkened history—the Cæsarism of ancient Rome and the Papacy of mediæval, the Byzantinism of the East, the Norman tyranny and the Tudor prerogative among ourselves. All these have contributed to stiling up our Anglican Bishops into that “prelacy” which provoked the earliest reaction of the Puritans and issued in the Presbyterian secession. If that first wave of the deluge of separatists had been stayed, who can tell how much of the torrent which succeeded might have been spared? The fact was that our Reformation took over the three orders of ministry as it found them, and did nothing to readjust their relations *inter se*. The difficulties of the Elizabethan situation were enormous; but the result shows that an opportunity was missed. The Bishops *would* not convoke their Synods and throw themselves upon the support of their clergy. If they had done so, the turbulent minority would have given, no doubt, some trouble at the moment; but the freedom of open debate in every diocese would soon have shown their insignificance, and the weight of reason and moderation would have been on the side of order and authority. As it was, the Bishops preferred a policy of *sic volo sic jubeo*, became themselves the puppets of prerogative, and administered the Church through the Court of High Commission. Thence followed by consequence the overthrow of Crown and Altar together. Then the Restoration and the dregs of the Stuart dynasty led on to the Revolution of 1689; and in less than a generation from this latter date the Convocations ceased to sit for nearly a century and a half! It is doubtful whether it would have been possible to thus suppress the spirituality, if Diocesan Synods had formed a norm of Church administration everywhere. To that suppression is mainly to be ascribed the last grand schism of the Wesleyans. But I suggest that that suppression itself was a corollary of the disuse of the Diocesan Synod; and that, if the revival of Convocational sessions had been followed at once, as it should have been, by the resumption of those Synods, we should have been spared the worst entanglements of the last half-century, and have seen the Convocations themselves reformed long ago.

Can anyone imagine Timothy or Titus discharging the duties entrusted to them by St. Paul, by holding a “Visitation” of the clergy of Asia or Crete, in which each of them

a solitary spokesman, addressed a silent assembly of presbyters—a chorus, as it were, of *personæ mutæ*? Will anyone produce a single instance which seems to favour the idea of a Bishop-choregus of silence?—the attitude best described by the words, from the “Rejected Addresses,”

“I am a blessed Glendoveer ;
'Tis mine to speak, and yours to hear.”

Look through the Apostolic, sub-Apostolic, post-Apostolic, and later ages, until we reach the dislocation of all institutions which followed the break-up of the Western Empire; the attestation is everywhere the same. Our monarchical episcopate dates from this latter period of convulsion and confusion. At such periods only the stronger elements survive. The weaker ones are absorbed into them, or else perish and drift away in wreckage. That period yielded the prototype of the “blessed Glendoveer” in lawn sleeves, as we know him. He prevails to this day, in spite of all the evidence of the New Testament being dead against him; and that in a Church which yet professes before all things to ground itself on the teaching and examples of the New Testament and the purest ages. I beg to repeat on this behalf the challenge¹ of Bishop Jewel to the Romanists, the terms of which are too well known for me to need to repeat them here. Take the well-known declaration of St. Cyprian, that he had made it his rule “to do nothing *sine consilio vestro* [sc., *presbyterorum*] *et sine consensu plebis*.” I have seen the words quoted again and again recently in favour of some formulation of the lay voice in Church Councils, but never once as proving the status of the presbyterate, as forming the standing council of the Bishop. Take, again, what is a virtual echo of Cyprian’s words, from the Fourth Council of Carthage: “*Irrita erit sententia episcopi nisi clericorum presentia confirmetur*” (Can. xxii.). Or go back to St. Paul’s words to Timothy (1 Tim. iii. 13): “They that have served a good diaconate win for themselves a higher grade [*i.e.*, the presbyterate] and great boldness [*παρρησίαν*] in the faith,” etc. I draw attention to the Greek word: it means “freedom of speech.” If accorded on matters of “the faith,” how is it possible to exclude it from matters of discipline and ritual? Yet our Bishops *act as if* they believed that it rests, by some Divine right, solely with them to decide whether the clergy are to be consulted at all, and if so, when. They cannot really believe this. The men who reject the Papacy as an unjustifiable absolutism cannot, I say, really believe that a secondary

¹ The proofs on which I rest will be found given in a pamphlet, “Excommunication of the Clergy,” etc., published by Messrs. Parker and Co., Oxford and London, 1883.

absolutism has been accorded to *them*, so as to extinguish the *παρρησίαν* aforesaid, and treat St. Paul's words as an open question. If they search the Scriptures, they will find that the Divine right lies on the other side. Those pastoral Epistles, from one of which this is quoted, abound with evidence that free discussion was the rule as between Timothy and his subordinate clergy. What else the purport of the numerous cautions against unwise logomachy? Yet in spite of this, our modern prelates treat the clergy, by the hundred and by the thousand, as men whose "mouths must be stopped," called to listen in silence to the utterances of superior wisdom. It is unhappily impossible to vindicate the nearly effaced rights of the presbytery without seeming to fling stones at the higher order. Of course, they share the blame of suppressing the Synod with the clergy who acquiesce in the suppression; but I am inclined to ascribe the greater sin to the clergy, who contentedly ignore the primary function of their sacred office. It is for them to demand their rightful share in Church government, of which share the Synod is the oldest embodiment. They are asking for no favour, starting no novelty, uttering no party "shibboleth." The plea is for a restoration of the oldest Catholic landmark of their order, and the restitution of rights more ancient than the New Testament itself in its collected form, which hang fixed on firm nails of precedent through all the ages down to the close, or nearly so, of the Middle Ages. The plea is for resuming a dropped branch of the Reformation itself. In the report of successive Royal Commissions under Henry VIII. and Edward VI., known as the *Reformatio Legum Ecclesiasticarum*, sections 19 to 23 are devoted to directions for holding Diocesan Synods. That report sleeps deep in the dust of three centuries, and with it lie buried the constitutional rights of the spirituality. But there is no one document which exhibits the animus of our Reformers so completely in regard to all points of administration. It was meant to be the governing code of the whole period since, subject, of course, to amendment all along. It was intended as a barrier against the encroachments of prerogative; therefore Tudor prerogative shelved and shunted it off the line of progress. It would have been as effective against Parliamentary absolutism now as against royal absolutism then. And it is owing to the suppression of all the guarantees which, had it become law, it would have maintained, that we are what we are—a Church without a code of her own, and hardly knowing where to pick the law which regulates her from the mass of antiquated canons and intrusive statutes. It contained elements, the loss of which we feel to this day in a lowered vitality and a reduced activity

of the whole spiritual estate; but no single item of that total loss is more deplorable than that of the continuous provision for the Diocesan Synod as a working institution. For lack of this, we have lost view of a primary principle which should govern all the relations of the clergy to nation, Crown, or Parliament, viz., that *their own consent is a pre-requisite to all Church legislation which is to bind them.* No prerogative of crosier or mitre rests on such clear and absolute grounds, alike of Divine appointment and natural equity, as that of the clerical body in every diocese to have a voice and a vote on all that concerns the duties of their office. This is a right before and above all canons, and out of this all canons rise and on this depend for their validity. I gravely doubt whether a Bishop, who suppresses that right, but more especially who refuses that concession when demanded by his clergy, has any claim on their canonical obedience. So far as in him lies that Bishop is maintaining the subversion and prostration of that which it is his duty to uphold; he is treating the imprescriptible rights of the presbyterate precisely as the Roman Curia has for centuries treated the rights of the episcopate. I hope this is plain speaking; and I claim the right to use it as part of that *παρρησία* which we inherit from the teaching of St. Paul. Among his most solemn valedictory words to the Ephesian presbyters at Miletus (Acts xx. 28) was the reminder that "the Holy Ghost had made them overseers" (*ἐπισκόπους*, which the Revised Version rightly renders "bishops"). And if "the gifts and the call of God are *ἀμεταμέλητα* (Rom. xi. 29), the same call of the Holy Ghost and the same qualifying gifts are ours at this day as then were theirs. When the same Apostle set Timothy over these same presbyters, he was set to superintend and guide their use of those gifts, not to thwart, or extinguish, or suspend their exercise. This last would be a "quenching of the Spirit" in His own chosen vessels. The power conferred on Timothy could not be greater than the Apostle's own, which he himself declares as "given to edification and not to destruction" (2 Cor. xiii. 10). The early Church harmonized these powers by the machinery of a Synod, with the Bishop (in the later individual sense) as its president. And this was so completely the accepted norm, that in a vacancy of that presidency the Synod administered the diocese until it was filled. The primary unit of all Church government being thus the diocese, and its primary governing organ being the Synod, any scheme of Church government which fails to include the free voice of the clergy in such Synod is inconsistent with every principle and precedent which the New Testament, followed by the sub-Apostolic and all the purer ages, has bequeathed to us. It was no novel rule of

action which Cyprian laid down, and which the contemporary Canon of Carthage (as cited above) embodied, but the genuine voice of the Church from the beginning. Why is that voice silenced now?

Is not Church history, and that of our Church in particular, full of testimony to the weight of the presbyteral voice on all questions affecting and directing Church life? There is no such monumental name since the Reformation as that of Richard Hooker, whose vast repertory of argument is neither antiquated nor exhausted. In the eighteenth century the most influential leaders of religious thought were William Law, author of the "Serious Call," and John Wesley. At its close, the Evangelical school of thought was led by Venn, Romaine, Cecil, Simeon, and their associates, of whom not one rose to the mitre. The chiefs of the Oxford Movement, Froude, Keble, Newman, Pusey, and their later exponents—Liddon and Dean Church—were all similarly below the line of high preferment. Go back before the Reformation, and the pioneer name of Wicliff stands out self-luminous. What a mass of useful influence made useless, let run to waste, or stagnating in holes and corners, throughout the order to which they all belonged, do these names suggest! What a reserve of forces never mobilized, and what fountains of counsel choked up by stony silence! The most deplorable fact is that, because they never meet, therefore no voice of warning and exhortation from among their own ranks can reach the clergy collectively; and the more they need rousing to the due sense of their primary duty, left in the abeyance of neglect for centuries (and more so since the Reformation even than before), the more impossible it becomes to rouse them. Each man lives with his head hid in the parochial hole, and drawn out once a year to croak for an afternoon in the ruri-decanal puddle. The governing organ is a loquacious oligarchy of Bishops, each heading (*exceptis excipiendis*) a democracy of dummies, whom he summons triennially to sit silent at his feet. This is what the *πολλή παρρησία* of the Apostolic presbytery has drifted into.

Here is a vital function suppressed, a primary organ congested—why waste remedies on the surface or the extremities? Restore its action, and that will, as the frame recovers tone, restore the rest. By the resumption of synodical action the Bishops themselves, in the first place, would be the greatest gainers. They would substitute a volumed weight of voice for an isolated utterance; they would substitute the maximum of authority competent to a diocese for a showy autocracy which veils an inherent weakness; they would wield the pastoral staff of Polycarp, of Irenæus, of Cyprian and Cornelius,

instead of holding out to their clergy the iron hand of the House of Commons in the velvet glove of the House of Lords.

How long will they prefer to go on engrossing the functions of organic unity? Do they not know that the laws of vertebration are against the assumption? Why sink back into a structure of the cephalopod or the jelly-fish type, when the Church has given us a nobler organism—the central column in the Bishop, with the lateral processes in the attached clergy, all sustaining and enfolding the pulmonary and circulatory structures on which life depends—the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and the ceaseless beat of the untiring heart of love, while the Head above is Christ Himself? To this the faithful laity attach themselves as the members and extremities, in a frame “fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth.” For it is a mistake to suppose that the Synod involves the exclusion of the lay voice; indeed, its most complete norm, as shown in the pamphlet referred to in the note above, expressly provides for their inclusion, *deinde introducantur laici*, etc. I suppose, if any of the great early Bishops named could revisit the Church Militant, and measure this its Anglican branch by his own experience in the flesh, he would be astonished at finding Bishops everywhere, but their Synods hardly anywhere; the heads lively enough, but the rest a mere heap of *disjecta membra Synaxis*, the great majority torpid, the rest quivering in convulsions. He might admonish us thus: “My brethren, all Church history since my time on earth shows no such spectacle as you exhibit, that of some twenty thousand presbyters deemed individually so worthy of trust as you, and yet collectively so impotent and helpless—for why? You have let go your oldest right and duty. You are a presbytery first—τὸ πρεσβυτέριον of the blessed Paul—and parish priests afterwards. The Synod is your normal state—no mere confluence of units before distinct, but the original expression of that unity of the body which is its essence. Solidarity, not dispersion, is the ideal of your office. The accident of local distribution has, in your conception of it, destroyed the essential idea. You act as if the second part of your commission had swallowed up the first; as if the ‘preaching the Word and ministering . . . in the congregation’ appointed to you were everything, and ‘the office and work of priest in the Church of God,’ beyond this, were nil.” And in this your Bishops, our much-mistaken successors, uphold and encourage you, thereby weakening their own authority, which in their Synods should find its amplest expression.”

By his isolation the Bishop, who should be the keystone of an arch, not a monolith erected on a pavement, weakens the

whole Church fabric which he should support. But there is a deeper source of weakness even than this in our modern episcopate. The Bishop is, in the eye of the world, the tool of the civil power. We all know of the Apostolic succession and Bishop Stubbs' genuine pedigree; but there comes in the bend-sinister of the ballot-box origin of our modern prelate. He is chosen and placed by the Prime Minister, who fluctuates with the popular majority, which depends on "the swing of the pendulum" at over six hundred polling centres. That is the grim fact which, in this sham-loving generation, nobody cares to enounce. I use my *πολλῇ παρρησίᾳ* to call attention to it. There is in the choice and posting of the prelate a conspicuous absence of every spiritual element whatever; nay, an ostentatious mockery of contempt waits, as we know, on every attempt to give the spiritual voice even a checking power *ex post facto*. This is the stupendous fact, in this day of "freedom of conscience" elsewhere all round, which gives the Pope and his satellites in England the weight of influence which they wield. The one thing which, under these circumstances, would strengthen episcopal authority at its weakest point would be for every Bishop to throw himself fully on all those Apostolic elements of spiritual life which the Synod includes, and gather them into his pastoral staff; to take his clergy frankly and fairly into partnership in the diocesan administration, and invite their united counsels for the good of the Church. This would go a long way to convert him, from a stepfather imposed by fiat of the civil power, into a spiritual Father in God; and would breathe into a diocese, where the Synod with full *παρρησίᾳ* of all members met yearly or half-yearly, the vigour of the renewed youth of the Church, the restored model of the Apostolic age.

Yet, further, if the comparatively few men now alleged as "troubling Israel" had to meet with equal frequency the full court of opinion amongst their brethren, they would *toties quoties* be virtually on trial before their peers for any eccentricities of preaching or practice laid to their charge. With such an institution flourishing in its vigour in every diocese, it would be next door to impossible that our present chapter of troubles could ever have arisen. Idle novelties would have been nipped in the bud by the wholesome frost of the sober-minded majority of moderation; or, so far as they have reason—and who shall say that, with our antiquated standards of rubric and canon, they are *all* mere unreason?—they would be winnowed, sifted, and recognized as wholesome. As it is, innovators have, at any rate, a *primâ-facie* case, against which episcopal autocracy shows a weak side. The secession of the more impatient and impulsive of our brethren is followed

by the growth of party spirit among those that remain. Men hoist the flag of faction and exchange shots in the columns of a newspaper, who might, within the Church's council-chamber, heal their differences in the balm of brotherhood. The individual of decided but one-sided views might derive from the voice of brethren in Synod that element of balance and temper of which he is now unjustly and mischievously deprived. For lack of this, men think their own thoughts apart, start on solitary or centrifugal orbits, and conceive antipathies and alienations, until, in proportion to their power of original thought, they become either party leaders or isolated and perhaps recalcitrant units.

Men who dislike being recalled to a forgotten standard of primary duty are always fertile in "practical difficulties." Strange indeed it would be if, where you have to dig out entire masses of men from the frozen ruts of centuries of prejudice and oblivion, there were not practical difficulties in the way. But some nine hundred clergy could meet under Bishop Borromeo of Milan for eleven or more years successively in the seventeenth century. How can such a thing, with our improved locomotion, raise any difficulty worth naming in England at this end of the nineteenth? Besides, the thing is done in Scotland before our eyes. There analogous institutions have prevailed for two centuries at least. Of course, if a diocese becomes so unwieldy, or in parts so congested, as to make gatherings difficult, that is a reason at once for dividing it, but none at all for depriving its presbytery of their rights. The same sort of argument, which would be scouted with contempt, if applied to the suppression of any civil franchise, is by some thought good enough for denying the clergy their primary right, older by centuries than the earliest germ of the rights of Englishmen as such.

HENRY HAYMAN, D.D.

ART. II.—JAMES BONNELL.

THE Bishop of Salisbury in his book on the Holy Communion (*note*, p. 184) refers to an inhabitant of the city of Dublin at the close of the seventeenth century as "that excellent Irish Churchman." The individual thus spoken of was James Bonnell, Accountant-General of Ireland from 1684 to 1699, a name we suspect that few will recognise at the present day. James Bonnell, however, merits the high eulogium he has received at the hands of Dr. Wordsworth. We propose in this paper to give some account of his life and