

UTILITY OF EPISCOPACY.

NO 3.

PART IV.

BUT what is the practical use of Episcopacy to-day?

It is useful to-day in the same way, and for the same reasons that it was useful in the Primitive Church.

1st. It is a centre of union. 2nd. It is a means—and as far as experience goes—the best means for the preservation of the faith of the gospel in its entirety.

In the conversion of Europe, St. Ulphilas, St. Patrick, St. Columba, St. Columbanus, St. Willebrod, St. Boniface, were towers of strength, because they were centres of union. The work of these great Apostles of Europe is a grand model for modern missionary work. From the 4th to the 8th century the future Bishop was the *first* in the field, at the head of his fellow-workers. The practical failure of the Church in America is no argument against Episcopacy. For ages the Church in her completeness did not exist in America, congregations of "Episcopalians," indeed there were, but no Bishops. Instead of men of marked aptitude for organization and government being sent to establish the Church, each assisted by fellow-workers, and each becoming a centre of union and work, and afterwards the founder of a See, the whole thing was left to chance. So we see old dioceses labouring to establish those diocesan institutions, such as a Cathedral and Cathedral Chapter,—things which grew *naturally* when the missionary work had been done in a Primitive manner. We find nominal "Episcopalians" existing for ages on a vast continent without a Bishop. This way of doing things has left its mark upon the American Church; this lack of lawful authority at the first has produced that "individualism," which we see in the use of the word "Episcopalian" for "Churchman." For what does the word "Episcopalian" suggest? A man who professes to believe in Episcopacy, without obedience to the Bishop. The early history of "Episcopalians" on this continent is a simple history of congregationalism.

But when the Apostolic institution is honestly tried it is always successful. And it is successful because it is the acknowledgement of a *fact*, and that fact is that some men have an aptitude for organization and government. Of course whenever the Apostolic order is worked without regard to this fact, a blow is struck at Episcopacy. In any religious society a man so gifted makes his presence felt—and felt too with very injurious consequences, when this fact not being acknowledged by the presence of Episcopacy—the safe guards of a constitutional Episcopacy are absent. St. Paul clearly tells us this talent is a "gift of the Spirit."

This being so it seems to us bodies possessed of the power of election to the Episcopate should sincerely pray for another "gift," viz., that of "the discerning of Spirits."

THE LAITY IN THE SCOTTISH EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

THE pressing of the Penal Laws told heavily upon the spirit and energies of the Episcopal clergy and laity in Scotland during the end of last century. Such in fact was their object, and their direct severity continuing for nearly fifty years, explains how so many members fell away to Presbyterianism. During the first three decades of this century the slender incomes of the clergy were eked out from sundry small funds and gifts from English friends, that were generally at the disposal of the Bishops, and in by gone days the clergy and their families used to tell of the hardship they had to endure through pinch of poverty, and what joy there was in the parsonage when a chance benefaction came in from the Bishop or friendly layman. While some of the laity were noted for their energy on behalf of the clergy, the majority were either luke-warm and broken spirited, or ignorant of what duties a layman could and should perform. Fifty years ago the clergyman had practically to carry on the work of the church both financially and spiritually. But about that period a movement was taking shape for the better support of the clergy, and chiefly through the exertions of the late Dean Ramsay of Edinburgh. "The Scottish Episcopal Church Society" was established in 1838. This was of great and immediate value to the poorer congregations, and indirectly was the means of training the laity to a truer estimate of their influence and duties in the Church. They naturally came more and more to feel that the clergy and laity could work and assist one another in different but co-ordinate spheres of useful labour, and that the temporalities could most congruously be managed by laymen. In 1864, therefore, the old *Church Society* was superseded by a new scheme called the *Representative Church Council*, which partook of a wider character both in its objects and in its membership. The chief aim of the Church Society was to provide "general aid for congregations struggling with pecuniary difficulties," and subscription was the mark and means of membership for the laity. The Representative Church Council embraces the whole Church, is the organ of the Church in all matters of financial administration, and collects and distributes money for all church purposes of general or corporate character. In this council, while the Bishops and clergy are constituent members, the strength of the organization lies in there being "a lay representative from each congregation and mission in the Church," and other laymen, who for special reasons are co-opted. It meets annually at different places by a pre-arranged circuit, as this year in Aberdeen, and last year in Dundee; it takes cognizance of all money matters, makes every church and mission have an interest in its success, and seeks to provide a decent maintenance for every clergyman by means of an equal dividend to all. Here the laymen are in their proper sphere, and it is truly surprising to see the interest that year after year the representatives take in all mat-

ters relating to the Church. In the council there is no priority in voting; the Primus is usually chairman, or the Bishop of the diocese is. But again under the Representative Church Council there are the *Diocesan Council* and the *Congregational Committees* which have their lower fields and functions, and are based on the same general scheme, except in so far as the Congregational Committee consists almost entirely or even wholly of laymen. It cannot be said that all the anticipations of 1864 have been verified, yet there is little doubt but the latter scheme has conferred a great benefit on the whole Scottish Church, and perhaps as much upon the laity as the clergy. It has made them feel more vividly that they are members of the Church in duty as well as in privilege, and that the prosperity of the whole system depends upon the smooth working of pinion and crank in every part. The Scottish layman has his place and influence at the present time in the election of his Bishop, and in the management of all the financial affairs of the congregation, diocese, and whole Church. He is excluded from membership in the Synods alone, as the members there consist solely of ecclesiastical persons. Thirty years ago there was every appearance of a strong effort being made to introduce the laity into the Synods, but the question was shelved in 1863, and the Representative Church Council being organized soon after, has absorbed the superabundant energy that was waiting to be engaged, and was becoming dangerous in its explosive tendencies. J. G.

LAY READERS.

FROM several letters in our columns we gladly learn that the Lay Readers known to many of our clergy are not open to the reproaches to which some of them have been made subject of aping a clerical style of address and discharging clerical functions unlawfully. This only shows how grievous and how cruel is the wrong done to their co-workers by those few Lay Readers who are or have been justly censurable. It also shows how blameable are certain of our clergy, who knowing of the irregular conduct of a Lay Reader, do not promptly bring him to task, and if necessary introduce the offender to the notice of his Bishop. Our semi-church contemporary of course defends the Lay Readers who assume ministerial functions. But he makes a characteristic blunder by associating evangelicalism with an utter breaking down of the barrier between the clergy and laity. It is not usual for an Evangelical Churchman in Orders to take the stand of the organ of his party in pooh-pooing the distinction between laymen and men ordained—that is a form of radicalism alien to the Church of England, although under our broad discipline it dares to promulgate such Plymouthism in the name of the Church. The Church has a large sphere for lay workers, but they, as we have already said, are *scandalously unworthy of being honored by such work* if they assume clerical functions in any way. It is most deplorable that such conduct should