

The Church Guardian

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CALENDAR FOR DECEMBER.

- Dec. 7th—2nd Sunday in Advent.
" 14th—3rd Sunday in Advent. [Notice of
Ember Days. Ember Coll. daily]
" 17th—
" 19th—
" 20th—
" 21st—4th Sunday in Advent. St. Thomas,
A. & M. [Notice of Christmas, St.
Stephen and St. John.]
" 25th—CHRISTMAS DAY. Athan. Creed.
" 26th—St. Stephen, First Martyr.
" 27th—St. John, Ap. & Evangelist.
" 29th—1st Sunday after Christmas. [No-
tice of Circumcision.]

THE HISTORIC EPISCOPATE.

Right Rev. William Crosswell Doane, D.D.,
LL.D., Bishop of Albany.

I propose to treat in this paper two questions, —first, "What we find about the Historic Episcopate"; and secondly, "Why we should naturally expect to find it." It is the case of an old friend, or to some people an old foe, with a new face. The long controversy has changed in many ways, prominently and particularly in terminology. The 'Apostolic succession,' which used to be ridiculed as a matter of magic and mummery, has got to be a question of history and fact; and the evidence of this is partly in the very change of terms. I may as well say that I firmly believe that Christ ordained the Historic Episcopate when He ordained the Apostolate; that the one included and involved the other; so that it does not seem to me to make an iota of difference when the Apostles set apart men for the carrying on of the work which Christ had assigned to them to do. The only question is, whether they did it; for it is incredible to me that they should have dared to invent, and intrude into the polity of the Church (that is to say, the government of the Kingdom of God on earth), anything of their own organization. And it being once granted that Bishops are found in the Apostolic age, by Apostolic appointment, and with Apostolic authority,—or, to put it more mildly, without

indignant Apostolic protest.—it seems to me to follow inevitably that Bishops were of Christ's own appointment. It is certainly a geological fact that in the earliest stratum of the most ancient earth the oldest fossil relic in the trilobite, which is a three-lobed or threefold thing. I believe it can be as thoroughly proven that in the most ancient stratum of the Holy Land—the oldest part and age, that is to say, of the Christian Church—the trilobite exists, in the threefold ministry of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons,—the first living organism of the Church.

This is the first point to be proved, or at any rate, that there existed an *Order* (*Bathmos*, St. Paul calls it, which we translate 'degree,' but by which the Eastern Church has always described the *Orders* of the ministry),—an *Order* of men, set apart for the two great acts of governing and perpetuating the ministry.

The statement which for a good many years has stood at the head of the English Ordinal is certainly a challenge, *hitherto not successfully contested*, of this truth. 'It is evident unto all men diligently reading Holy Scripture and ancient authors that from the Apostles' time there have been these Orders of ministers in Christ's Church: Bishops, Priests, and Deacons.' It looks a little bit as if the English Church meant by this to say that if people have not found these three Orders it is because they have either not read Holy Scripture and ancient authors *together*, or else they have not read them *diligently*. I am glad to say that Bishop Lightfoot has attained such an honorable reputation for thoroughness of research, and for impartiality of judgment, that one can safely appeal to him as an authority respected even by those who are not willing to accept or to act upon his conclusions. His vindication of the authenticity and authority of the Ignatian Epistles is one of the great masterpieces of honest and clear-headed criticism in the 19th century; and in his Commentaries to the Epistle to the Philippians he says: 'The result of my investigation into the origin of the Christian ministry has been a confirmation of the statement in the English Ordinal.' Over and over again he emphasizes this. For example: 'The threefold ministry can be traced to Apostolic direction;' and again: 'Unless we have recourse to a sweeping condemnation of received documents, it seems vain to deny that early in the second century the Episcopal office was firmly and widely established. Thus during the last three decades of the first century, and consequently during the lifetime of the last surviving Apostle, this change must have been brought about,' (that is to say, from a Presbyterate governed by Apostles to a Diocesan Episcopacy). And still again: 'The evidence for the early and wide extension of Episcopacy through proconsular Asia may be considered *irrefragable*.' When you add to this the fact that proconsular Asia was the scene of St. John's life and labors to the end, there comes a very marked emphasis to the matter of our Lord's intention; for certainly the Apostle whom Jesus loved could not have suffered the existence and extension of an institution in the Church, which was not according to 'the mind of Christ.' We do not wonder that Lightfoot should add: 'The prevalence of Episcopacy cannot be dissociated from the influence and sanction of the Apostles; and short of an express statement, we can possess no better assurance of a Divine appointment, or at least of a Divine sanction.'

I desire to add, in connection with this same region of the world, what always seemed to me a very strong bit of historical evidence in the same direction. In the Acts of the Fourth General Council held at Chalcedon A.D. 451, in the course of a debate respecting the filling up of the Ephesian Bishopric which had been declared vacant, Leonitus, Bishop of Magnesia, made the statement: 'That from Timothy to the time then present, there had been twenty-

seven Bishops of that See, all of whom had been ordained in Ephesus itself.*'

I am quite well aware that this question of the Diocesan Episcopate, as illustrated by S. Timothy's appointment to Ephesus, is a somewhat mooted point, and that Bishop Lightfoot, from whom any one would hesitate to differ, considers his office 'rather a movable than a localized Episcopate, so far as the Gentile Churches were concerned.' But the localized or Diocesan Episcopate among the Hebrew Christians seems to me hardly to admit of a doubt, for St. James, who presided in the Council of Jerusalem, was either one of the twelve (which I do not believe),—and if he was, then we have certainly the case of an Apostle set apart as a Diocesan Bishop and presiding over a single See,—or else he was not an Apostle at all; in which case we have an instance of a Diocesan Bishop, in the time of the Apostles, presiding over them, their equal in order because he was a Bishop, and their superior in local dignity, because he was the Bishop of the See city in which the Council met.

Of course it is perfectly possible that Episcopacy grew 'by way of development, as the needs of the extending church demanded it.' So did the Diaconate. But it does not follow from that, that it was not according to the policy of our Lord. Indeed, we must always use that word 'development,' not in the sense of discovery and promulgation of something, without, if not against, the original and Divine plan. A thing must be enveloped first, in order that it may be developed afterward. And there are positive and important steps, recorded in the book of the Acts as taken by the Apostles not in a slow, doubtful, hesitating way, but positively and promptly, as men act who have been thoroughly trained and prepared for emergencies which arise. One of these I propose to speak of in detail, as answering the second question of the two which head this article; namely, why we should expect to find the Historic Episcopate. I mean the ordinance, certainly Sacramental in its character, which is called 'the laying on of hands.' The others will naturally suggest themselves,—the change from the seventh to the first day of the week; from the evening Passover to the morning Eucharist; the institution of the Diaconate; and the resort to a Council representing the whole Church as the method of settling any question of doctrine or order.

And now as to the Holy ordinance known in Holy Scripture as 'the laying on of hands,' which has received, in the whole Western Church for nearly twelve centuries, the name of Confirmation; the Eastern Church calling it the Seal of the Lord, or the Unction. Our own name, venerable both for antiquity and for such authority as that of S. Ambrose and S. Gregory, is chiefly admirable because it is specific,—*laying on of hands* being of course used, not merely for confirming the grace and vow of the baptized, but for conveying Holy Orders, and indeed for any solemn act of benediction. My conviction and contention about this matter is, that if we can find it in Holy Scripture and ancient authors required, and confined, so far as its administration goes, to one order of the ministry, it must mean that we shall also find the Order of the ministry authorized to administer it.

Let me begin by saying that the argument for the institution of the laying on of hands by Christ Himself, runs, as do so many arguments of a similar sort, in parallel lines of what in one way were parallel lives. The action of S. Peter [S. John being associated with him] in Samaria, immediately after the day of Pentecost, as illustrating the doctrine of S. Peter in the sermon preached on the day of Pentecost, is to be studied side by side with the action of S. Paul in the city of Ephesus, as illustrating the doctrine which I believe S. Paul taught to the Hebrew Christians, in the