

The Church Guardian

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CALENDAR FOR MAY.

- MAY 1st—St. Philip and St. James. A. & M.
 " 5th—2nd Sunday after Easter.
 " 12th—3rd Sunday after Easter.
 " 19th—4th Sunday after Easter.
 " 26th—5th Sunday after Easter.

[Notice of Rogation Days and of Ascension Day].

- " 27th—
 " 28th— } Rogation Days.
 " 29th— }

- " 30th—Ascension Day. Pr. Pas. M. P. 15
 21; Evg. 24, 47, 108. Athanasian Creed. In Communion Service, Pr. Pref. till June 6th, inclusive.

THE HISTORIC EPISCOPATE.

What is the Historic Episcopate? Such was the questions which lately attracted our notice in the "Correspondents" columns of a contemporary. If we remember aright the question was put in this way, 'What is the historic Episcopate which has been so often referred to in connection with the recent Lambeth Conference?' The reply was necessarily very brief, and was to the effect that the historic Episcopate is the line of Bishops which has come from the Apostles in regular succession down to the present day. This answer does not seem to us to tell the tale as fully as it ought to be told, and we propose to supplement it by a few words of explanation; especially because the term is one which, through adventitious circumstances, has had a much more extended currency than could have been foreseen when it was revived at the Lambeth Conference last summer. It is no epigram; nor is it one of those happy flashes of genius which cast in an iron mould for all time, something that a great number of people have been long vainly struggling to utter. On the contrary, the words are almost as old as the hills, and the general ignorance as to their meaning is but a typical instance of how the great majority of mankind forget what they ought to remember, and are ignorant of what they ought to know. Churchmen, of a certain kind, will sometimes sneer-

ingly ask, 'What is the use of the Bishops?' and even go so far, sometimes, as to suggest that without any very great loss to the Church, they might be abolished! It is not unnatural or surprising to hear Dissenters taking up such an attitude, nor, indeed, considering their position, is it a matter of astonishment when they do so, but it is surprising, and not a matter for small sorrow, when so-called Churchmen display so fatuous an ignorance of the foundations of the principles which they profess. Perhaps a few words may show some of these that the Episcopate, which they so lightly value, is not non-essential, but a *cardinal doctrine* of the Church, and that *without the Episcopate there can be no Church*.

The first Bishop, besides the twelve, was, we learn from Acts, i. Matthias, who was chosen by lot to the ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell. Matthias was then the first of those not chosen by our Lord Himself to be witnesses unto Him into the uttermost parts of the earth. He is the link which connects us with the Apostles. The solemn and deliberate way in which he was selected is a point which ought to be especially observed. It may be regarded as the testimony of the Apostles themselves, that men cannot continue the work commenced by Christ without being properly commissioned to do so, and that the Apostles regarded the *Apostolic i. e., the Episcopal*, office as indispensable for the right performance of that work. If this were not the case, there would have been no reason to fill the vacancy which the treachery and death of Judas had occasioned. It might have been left to any one, or all, of the hundred and twenty who, we are told, were gathered together in Jerusalem at that grave and momentous conference, to adopt any means which he or she thought fit for carrying the glad tidings of their faith to all people. That they were not so left may be considered positive and indisputable proof that the Apostles regarded their ordinance as necessary, and intended it to be perpetual.

Holy Scripture and ancient authors abundantly prove that the *precedent* which this action of the Apostles created became the *rule* of the Church in selecting the overseers of the faithful. The act was indeed the *beginning of Apostolic succession*, and there are few historical matters which are supported more strongly by contemporary evidence than this fact of the Apostolic succession. It is one of those things about which there is no more reasonable ground of doubt than the continuance of the monarchy in Great Britain. It is the continuance, the prolongation, of the Apostolic office through such men as Timothy, Simeon, Titus, Polycarp, Ignatius, and others, who were ordained by the Apostles, and who in turn passed on their ordinance to others, that makes the historic episcopate. The bishops of the Church to-day all over the world represent the Apostolic succession carried on through different lines. For instance, the bishops of Rome and the other bishops in Italy represent such a succession protracted through a line of Italian bishops, the bishops of France a line protracted through a succession of Gallican bishops, the bishops of England through a line of Anglican bishops, from which have sprang lines of bishops in the United States, Canada, Australia, Africa, and elsewhere. These lines will in their turn give rise to other lines; and this fact, which is evident to any one, explains the *impregnable position of Episcopacy*. It is the *repetition of what happened in the early days of Christianity*. Each bishop had a certain territorial district placed under his superintendence, whence the city was termed his see (*sedes*), and the district his parish, and subsequently his diocese. In the course of time the districts were subdivided again and again, and other bishops appointed. The more ancient sees seem to have grouped around them the bishops of the later sees, and to have exercised some sort of spiritual authority over

them, and these first bishoprics became metropolitan and primatial sees. History and the ancient authors prove that Episcopacy was an *integral part* of Church life. Eusebius, for instance (born A. D. 264), refers to Episcopacy in this way, 'About this time, i. e., about A. D. 100, flourished Polycarp in Asia, an intimate disciple of the Apostles, who received the Episcopate of the Church at Smyrna at the hands of the eye witnesses and servants of the Lord. . .

. . . Ignatius also, who is celebrated by many even to this day as the successor of Peter at Antioch, was the second that obtained the Episcopal office there.' There is also the well-known and often-quoted saying of Ignatius' written to St. Polycarp before A. D. 115, 'My soul be for those who obey the bishops, priests, and deacons, and may my portion be with them in God! Apart from these there is no Church.'

There is also the notable fact that bishops were every where co-eval with the introduction of Christianity. The Bishopric of London is said to have been founded in the *second* century; in the same century bishops are said to have been consecrated in Ireland, and in the fourth century in Scotland. If the fringe of Episcopacy in these early days reached what was then the end of the world, how numerous and vast must have been its ramifications at and about its cradle! It is not, as is sometimes represented, and as hostile critics delight to misrepresent it, a *chain* stretching from St. Peter or St. Paul down to the present day. This is not a correct symbol. It is indeed no type at all of the actual state of the case. The strength of the chain is the strength of its weaker link, and if one link is broken the chain is irretrievably destroyed. To any one familiar with the Canons of Consecration of bishops the symbol would be not that of a chain, but that of a vast network spreading over and encompassing the whole of Christendom. Meshes, not links, are here, beyond numbering or computing. A tear here or a tear there—such as has doubtless at different times happened—are, in such a net, of no more consequence than the snapping of a single strand in the net of a fisherman.

The possibility, or probability, of such a network having been at any time altogether lifted off, or put away from a nation, is absurd, and if those who feel doubtful will put away the false symbol of a chain, and replace it by the correct one of a net, most if not all of their doubts will be removed. It must not be forgotten that the Historic Episcopate is a cardinal doctrine and one of the *bases* of the Church, and that it cannot be set aside without destroying the pillars of Christianity and severing the link which through St. Matthias joins us to the Apostles, and through them to Christ.—H.E.S. in *Church Bells*.

BISHOP MACLAGAN ON THE COMMUNION SERVICE.

The following letter from the Bishop of Lichfield to his clergy appears in the *Diocesan Magazine*:—

'There are one or two matters connected with the Communion Service to which I think it desirable to call your attention.

'As far as I can ascertain, it would appear that in a very large number of the churches in the diocese, the Exhortation, to be addressed to the communicants at the time of the celebration, is habitually omitted. This cannot be without serious loss. The Church of England, more than any other branch of the Catholic Church, shows throughout our beautiful Communion Service her anxious care to guard against the profanation of the Holy Sacrament by any unworthy receiving of it; and in this Exhortation presses on the intending communicants the great responsibility, as well as the blessing, involved in the reception of the Holy Sacrament.