

didates for popular favour. Wholly to preclude this most unhappy tendency is indeed impracticable on any scheme; yet we should certainly avoid a system which, in a direct and powerful manner, stimulates personal ambition. Neighbouring congregations, founded on the congregational principle, hardly avoid grudges and disagreements, transmitted often from one generation to another, like the feuds of Arabian hordes. Then again, the spirit of this system, irritated by a false jealousy on the subject of the rights of conscience, impels division and separation, often on trivial grounds. Dislikes or predilections, personal bickerings, and family discords, lead to outbursts of independency; and thus a sect propagates itself, not always by natural growth or offset, like a tree; but by bisecting or rending, like certain orders of the animal kingdom.

Excluding then the arbitrary theory which insulates each congregation, and makes it a church; and assuming that the communion and organization of neighbouring congregations necessarily involves some species of hierarchical combination, we have to make a choice between those two schemes which (small distinctions overlooked) embody the only general principles we can well have recourse to, that is to say, *presbyterianism and episcopacy*.

To decide between the two on the ground of the ancient usage of the Church, might seem an easy thing to those who are conversant with the Christian literature of the first three centuries. The broad concurrent evidence which favours the episcopal form of government may indeed (like every other kind of evidence on every sort of subject) be excepted against in particulars, or be evaded, or rendered seemingly ambiguous, by cross circumstances. But still, those who read church history purely as history, and who care little what present interest it may favour, will not, we imagine, hesitate to conclude that, nine out of ten of the churches of the first century were episcopal; or that nineteen out of twenty of those of the second century, and almost all of the third acknowledged this form of government. The orthodoxy of the great mass of Christians in those ages, and their episcopacy, are two prominent facts, that meet us, directly or implicitly, on almost every page of the extant remains of those times. The same method of quotation, and the same misrepresentation of evidence, which enabled the ingenious author of the "History of Early Opinions" to throw a shade over the first of these important facts, may enable an opponent of episcopacy to put us in doubt concerning the second. But no method sanctioned by truth and honesty will do it.

On the other hand, if a choice were to be made between two actual forms of presbyterianism and of episcopacy, whereof the first admits the laity to a just and apostolic place in the management and administration of the Church, while the second absolutely rejects all such influence, and at the same time retains, for its bishops, the baronial dignities, and the secular splendour, usurped by the insolent hierarchs of the middle ages; then indeed the balance would be one of a difficult sort; and unless there were room to hope for a correction and reform of political prelacy, an honest and modest Christian mind would take refuge in the substantial benefits of presbyterianism.

That system which places a living centre as the personal object of reverence and love in the room of a presbytery, or a convocation, secures an advantage which, so long as human nature remains what it is, ought to be esteemed of the highest price. It is granted indeed that ecclesiastical business may be managed efficiently, and economically, and equitably, by a presbytery; but it is affirmed, on the strength of the known motive of our nature, that such a management foregoes benefits of a refined sort, which spring up around a patriarchal chair.—

To assign to all the same duties, and to reduce all to the same level, is to affront reason and nature in an egregious manner. The Church needs services to be performed, not of one kind, but of many; and nature actually provides persons adapted to that diversity of service. Among fifty or a hundred clerical persons, some will be found whose bold and ardent zeal calls them into the field of labour and danger in carrying the Gospel upon new ground; some, whose taste for intellectual pursuits, and whose faculty of acquisition, mark them for the closet, or for the chair of catechetical instruction; some, whose powers of utterance and flow of soul challenge them for the pulpit; some, whose gentleness of spirit, and whose placid skill, fit them for the difficult task of the personal cure of souls; some, whose philanthropy and self-denying love forbid them to be happy any where but among the poor and wretched; and some, moreover, although it be a few, whose calmness of judgment and temper, whose comprehensiveness of understanding, whose paternal sentiments and personal dignity, declare them, without mistake, to be destined to the throne of government. We may decry episcopacy; but the Lord sends us bishops, whether or not we will avail ourselves of the boon. *

The Church has great need to use a much more wise economy of the various talents committed to her trust than any existing religious community exercises. On all sides, there is a most wasteful neglect of diversified abilities. Systems which, for the saving of some fond hypothesis, confound all natural distinctions of temper and power; and enforce an equality of rank, and an identity of employment upon all official persons, obstruct the common benefit, and hinder the progress of the Gospel, in a degree not to be calculated. The economy of powers, and the division of labour, is no where more imperatively needed than within the Church. Whatever may be ambiguous in the Pauline epistles, this surely is prominent, and unquestionable, that the apostle—always remarkable for his prompt good sense, and his respect for the actual constitutions of nature, recognises the diversity of gifts and powers, and supposes that this diversity, which springs from the Sovereign Wisdom, is to be turned to the best account possible in promoting the great and various purposes of the Gospel. We need ask for no other argument in favour of episcopacy. Many have the gifts requisite for the ordinary duties of a Christian teacher; not a few may beneficially administer the interests of a small circle; but it is only a few—yet there are such, who can sustain the burden of extensive government. The several parts of our argument converge here upon our conclusion.—If the Christians of a city or district are numerous, and constitute many congregations, these congregations must be combined under some fixed system of organization.—An organization of many congregations includes the association and co-operation of all clerical persons within such a circle, or diocese.—The combination of clerical persons, their concord, the distribution of services, and the apportionment to the highest advantage of their various talents, demands a centre of control, and an efficient administrative authority.—We may, it is true, stop short in a government by a council, or committee, or presbytery. But we do better in following the indication of nature, and the analogy of civil affairs, and in placing the supreme administrative power in the hands of a Father and Shepherd.—Such, as we cannot doubt, was the practice of the primitive Churches. * * *

* The few remarks which we intended to subjoin, illustrating the fact that the Presbyterian Government of the church of Scotland, is this scriptural episcopacy, and ensures all its advantages, free from the evils of the Popish scheme—we must defer till next number. Ed. Ex.