

"As between Presbyterians and Episcopalians, the question turns on whether the office of elder or presbyter really is the highest in the Christian church, or whether there is not another office, that of bishop or prelate, superior to it. In a general way, those who hold that there is no permanent office in the Christian church superior to that of presbyter, may be set down as Presbyterian; and those who hold that there is a superior office in the church, that of bishop or prelate, may be ranked on the other side.

"It is admitted, even by many Episcopalians, that, so far as Scripture indicates, the primitive church, constituted under the Apostles, was governed by elders. The office of apostle was temporary, and some other temporary arrangements were resorted to in the peculiar circumstances of the Church. But everywhere in settled churches there was a body of presbyters or elders; the terms presbyter and bishop were applied freely to the same individuals; and when the presbyters were addressed together, as those of Ephesus were addressed at Miletus, there was no hint of one of them having authority over the rest; they were called equally to feed and care for the church over which the Holy Ghost had made them overseers (Acts ix. 28).

"Before the end of the second century the church had departed from her early simplicity. The bishop had been raised above the presbyter; by and by the whole authority of the church was committed to his hands, and in process of time the system culminated in the supreme Pontiff or Bishop of Rome. Episcopacy became the only prevalent government of the church, although in some cases, as among the Cuddees and Waldenses, government by presbyters continued to prevail.

"When the Reformation took place in the sixteenth century, the attention of the Reformers was much more occupied with the promulgation of saving truth than with the question of church government. But the Protestant churches necessarily assumed an organization of their own, and it is an instructive fact, as showing the tendencies of that great movement, which sought to bring back the people in all points to the authority of the Word of God, that the restoration of the office of prelates in the church was not contemplated by the Reformers. The theory of Apostolic succession was indeed wholly discarded by them; they had an especial dislike to the notion of a *priesthood*, and they naturally favoured a system which gave to Christian laymen a share of the government, and checked the formation of a priestly caste. Usually, therefore, when left free from external control, the churches inclined to the Presbyterian model. The influence of Calvin was strongly exercised in this direction. The churches that were distinctively known as the "Reformed" adopted this system. But even the "Lutheran" churches, so called from their adopting Luther's views with regard to the sacraments and some other points, did not restore the office of prelate. The "superintendent" in the Lutheran churches is not properly a bishop; in all affairs of higher moment he is subject to the instructions of the "Consistories," in which laymen constitute a part. The Church of England is almost the only Protestant Church in which the office of prelate has been preserved, to the exclusion alike of the ordinary clergy and the laity, in the ordinary government of the church; but it is well known that this arrangement was the result of political considerations, and not of the convictions of