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Some Historical Facts Concerning Church Polity.

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1. Church Organization and Government in the Early Christian Church.

The church government of the early Christian Church was very simple. There was no need of elaborate constitutions, canons, rules of discipline, and the like, which are now considered so essential in many church-bodies. The word, "One is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren," Matt. 23, 8, was sufficient for all purposes. In the scheme of government and discipline which Christ had designed for His Church, simplicity was to be the prime factor in obtaining and maintaining efficiency. He wanted to be the sole Head and Director of all the affairs of the congregation, and within the congregation there should be no distinction as to greater and smaller before Him; all should be equal.

This truth is in no way jeopardized by the fact that Christ Himself chose a certain number of men as His servants, or apostles, by immediate call. "The apostles were the special messengers of Christ, chosen and called and commissioned directly and immediately by the Master whom they were to serve as His missionaries to the nations." (*Theol. Quarterly*, VII, 18.) The direct, or immediate, call is described Matt. 10, 2; Mark 6, 7; Luke 10, 2. In accordance with this call the men who received it designate themselves as apostles of Jesus Christ. 1 Pet. 1, 1; 2, 1; Jas. 1, 1; 2 John 1; 3 John 1; Jude 1; Gal. 2, 9. Matthias was chosen by lot under the immediate guidance of God. Acts 1, 23—26. And as for Paul, he emphasizes no point more strongly than this, that he was selected by Christ for the work of his apostleship. Acts 9, 15; Rom. 1, 1; 1 Cor. 1, 1; 9, 1, 2; 2 Cor. 1, 1; 11, 1—12, 9; Gal. 1, 1; Eph. 1, 1; 3, 7, 8; Col. 1, 1; 1 Tim. 1, 1, 2, 7; 2 Tim. 1, 1; Titus 1, 1. These apostles of Christ were divinely inspired in the capacity of teachers of all men. John 14, 26; 15, 26, 27;

Acts 1, 8; 2, 42; 8, 14; 1 Cor. 4, 1. 6. 9; Gal. 1, 12; 1 Cor. 11, 23; 2 Cor. 5, 20; Eph. 2, 20; 3, 5. In order that their preaching might not lack the necessary impressiveness and power, but be received by men on account of supernatural proofs and manifestations, they were endowed with special gifts from on high. Acts 2, 3. 4; 3, 1—11; 9, 32—42; 13, 10. 11; 14, 8—10; 19, 6. 11; 20, 10.

In spite of all these gifts and graces, however, the apostles did not presume upon any authority beyond that of the Word as ambassadors of Christ. Acts 5, 1—11; 2 Cor. 3, 6—10; Philemon 8. They speak of their work as the ministry, *διακονία*, of the saints. Acts 1, 17. 25. They expressly state that they have no dominion over the faith of the Christians, but are helpers of their joy. 2 Cor. 1, 24. St. Paul speaks to the Corinthians not by commandment, but to prove the sincerity of their love. 2 Cor. 8, 8. There is, in short, no evidence and no indication of a hierarchy or of hierarchical aspirations, as far as the apostles are concerned.

The special ministry of the apostles was the bringing of the Gospel to all nations. And from all accounts it appears that most of them soon left Jerusalem for that purpose. But it was necessary to have men in the increasing number of congregations who would build upon the foundations laid by the apostles. For this purpose the Lord provided servants of the Word. "He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; . . . for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." Eph. 4, 11. 12; Rom. 12, 6. 8; 1 Cor. 12, 28. The apostles, especially Paul, had assistants, who worked with them in the ministry. Notable examples were Barnabas, Acts 4, 36; 9, 27; 11, 22—30; 13, 2ff.; 1 Cor. 9, 6, and Silas, or Silvanus, Acts 15, 32; 15, 40; 1 Thess. 1, 1; 2 Thess. 1, 1. We must mention also the younger men, who are properly termed disciples of Paul: Timothy, Acts 16, 1. 21; 1 Cor. 4, 17; 16, 1; Phil. 1, 1; 2, 19; Col. 1, 1; 2 Thess. 1, 1; 3, 2. 6; Heb. 13, 23; and Titus, 2 Cor. 2, 13; 7, 14; 8, 16. 23; 12, 18; Gal. 2, 1. 3. Some of the men who were active in the service were called ministers, such as Mark, Acts 13, 5. 13; 15, 37. 38; Col. 4, 10; 1 Tim. 4, 11; Tychicus, Eph. 6, 21; Col. 4, 7; 1 Tim. 4, 12; Epaphras, Col. 1, 7; 4, 12; Epaphroditus, Phil. 2, 25; and Archippus, Col. 4, 17. We read also of evangelists, such as Philip, Acts 8, 5; 21, 8, and Apollos, Acts 18, 24. 25; 1 Cor. 1, 12; 16, 12. Prophets, too, are enumerated in the list of the servants of the Church. 1 Cor. 14, 3, 29—32; Acts 21, 10. 11. All these men seem

to have been used principally for missionary work, for the first founding and establishing of the congregations. If they were in charge of congregations, it was only temporarily. And whenever their work is spoken of, it is referred to as a service of the believers, never as governing and exacting obedience, except in so far as they demanded submission to the Word of God.

The permanent ministry of the Word was soon entrusted to a special class of church officers, the *bishops, elders, presbyters, or angels*, of the congregations (*ἐπίσκοποι, πρεσβύτεροι, ἄγγελοι*), who were not successors of the apostles, but labored by their side, having charge of local parishes. Relief was sent to the elders of the church at Jerusalem by the hands of Barnabas and Saul. Acts 11, 30. Barnabas and Paul ordained elders in the churches of Asia Minor. Acts 14, 23. The elders of Jerusalem are mentioned together with the apostles. Acts 15, 6. Paul addressed the elders of the church at Ephesus, calling them bishops, or overseers. Acts 20, 17. 28. When Paul made his last journey to Jerusalem, all the elders were present with James. Acts 21, 18. In the introduction to the letter to the Philippians, Paul addresses all the saints at Philippi together with the bishops and deacons. Phil. 1, 1. In the Pastoral Letters, Paul discusses the qualifications of bishops and elders. 1 Tim. 3, 1—7; 4, 14; 5, 17—22; Titus 1, 5. 7—9. And Peter exhorts the elders as one of their own number to do the work of their office with all faithfulness. 1 Pet. 5, 1—4. Finally, in Revelation, John addresses the angels of the seven churches of Asia Minor, admonishing them to do the work of their calling with all zeal. Rev. 1, 20; 2, 1. 8. 12. 18; 3, 1. 7. 14; cf. 1, 11. "While the apostles were still active in their peculiar ministry, the churches throughout Christendom had their elders, and the apostles themselves saw to it that the congregations everywhere should be provided with faithful stewards of the mysteries of God." (*Theol. Quart.*, VII, 18.)

Another office which was created very early in the Church, due to a specific need, was that of *deacons* and *deaconesses*. During the first weeks or months after Pentecost the apostles had charge not only of the ministry of the Word, but also of the daily ministrations to the widows. But the congregation grew so rapidly that they were not able to discharge the double duty. It was then that the congregation chose seven men for this service at tables, who were installed by the apostles with *the laying on* of hands. Acts 6, 1—6. This institution was copied by other churches and became such a general custom that Paul devotes a section to the discussion of

their work. Both men and women were employed. 1 Tim. 3, 8—13; Rom. 16, 1. "These deacons were subsidiary, or assistant, officers in the churches. Their office was not properly a second ministry, with different duties or functions, as the functions of a secretary differ from that of a treasurer. . . . Certain functions of the ministry were delegated to a sufficient number of men, who were qualified for the performance of these particular duties." (*Theol. Quart.*, VII, 22; cf. pp. 17—29. *Synodalbericht* of Nebraska Dist., 1903, 29—47.)

There was, then, in the Church at the time of the apostles no hierarchy nor any attempt to rule the congregations through a hierarchical system. This feature is all the more striking since the apostles, as inspired ministers of God, might easily have arrogated to themselves a power over the Church which would have given them a position of supremacy, with almost unlimited external influence. Instead of that, they are willing to be considered, and labor as, servants of the congregations. The apostles are named with the brethren. Acts 11, 1. The whole church was gathered together to hear the report of Barnabas and Paul. Acts 14, 27. The same men were received of the church and of the apostles and elders of Jerusalem, and the question which they brought for consideration was laid before the apostles and elders with the whole church. Acts 15, 4, 22, 23. And upon the last arrival of Paul in Jerusalem the multitude was called together. Acts 21, 17—22. All the members of the congregation had equal rights of discussion and vote in the matters pertaining to the work of God's kingdom, and only such restrictions were observed as God Himself had made. 1 Cor. 14, 34.

This ideal condition of affairs lasted throughout the first century, or as long as the apostles and their disciples were living. But the end of the century brought the first indications of an approaching change, which became more noticeable in the sub- or post-apostolic age. Thus, in the *First Epistle of Clement* it is stated that "the apostles appointed their first converts to be bishops and deacons of the future believers" (chap. XLII; Lake, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 81), although he adds, a few chapters later, that such appointments were made with the consent of the whole church (p. 85). The words of Ignatius, in his *Epistle to the Ephesians*, might well cause more concern, since he exhorts the members to "live in harmony with the will of the bishop" (chap. IV, p. 177) and urges them to be "careful not to oppose the bishop, that we may be subject to God" (chap. V, p. 179). He has a similar exhor-

tation in his *Letter to the Magnesians* (chap. IV, p. 201). That Ignatius goes beyond the doctrine of the New Testament becomes clear a few chapters later, where he writes: "Be zealous to do all things in harmony with God, with the bishop presiding in the place of God and the presbyters in the place of the Council of the Apostles, and the deacons, who are most dear to me, entrusted with the service of Jesus Christ." (Chap. VI, p. 203.) The same point is emphasized in the *Epistle to the Trallians*: "Likewise let all respect the deacons as Jesus Christ, even as the bishop is also the type of the Father, and the presbyters as the Council of God and the College of Apostles." (Chap. III; cf. chap. II, p. 215; chap. VII, p. 219.) In a similar manner, Ignatius treats of the same matter in the *Epistle to the Smyrneans*, chaps. VIII and IX, and in the *Epistle to Polycarp*, chap. VI. The *Didache*, on the other hand, seems to adhere closely to the apostolic idea, for it mentions the prophets and teachers as the chief laborers in missionary work (chap. XIII) and the bishops and deacons as the men in charge of the work in the individual congregations (chap. XV).

So far, then, as the early postapostolic age is concerned, at least till about 150 A. D., the democratic form of church government remained in general use in the Church, though a tendency was becoming manifest to emphasize, on the one hand, the power of the bishop and, on the other hand, the obedience due to his word. The indiscriminate use of bishop and presbyter is also disappearing, the former word being used almost entirely to designate the chief officer of the church, or local congregation.

2. The Rise and Full Development of the Hierarchical System.

The germ of the hierarchical system, as we have seen, was contained in the form of the church offices which had been instituted in the time of the apostles. The idea of higher and lower clergy and of a difference between clergy and laity in the government of the congregation was brought out toward the end of the first and the beginning of the second century. It remained for the succeeding centuries, till the beginning of the Middle Ages, to take hold of this pleasant idea, to foster and to develop it, until it finally resulted in the complete hierarchical structure, which dominated the world for centuries and has kept a large part of its influence to the present day.

It is doubtful whether the *προεστώς* of Justin Martyr was intended to set the bishop apart as an official with executive powers. The description of the Christian services as given by Justin seems

to point more to a bishop or presbyter in the performance of the ministry of the Word, the deacons being portrayed as assistants, much in the same way as in the time of the apostles. But it is evident, also, as Hatch points out, that the division of labor between presbyters and deacons became definitely fixed. In other words, the ranks of the clergy were defined with greater exactness.

To what extent this was soon carried, appears especially from the *Apostolic Constitutions* and the *Canons of the Apostles*. A few passages will suffice to show the scope of the development from the third to the sixth century. "The deacon is to you Aaron, and the bishop, Moses. Let him not do anything at all without his bishop, nor give anything without his consent." (Book II, chap. XXX.) All disputes, according to the same authority, were to be settled by the bishops. According to Book VIII it was necessary that both presbyters and deacons (deaconesses) be ordained by the bishop. "A bishop blesses, but does not receive the blessing. He lays on hands, ordains, offers, receives the blessing from bishops, but by no means from presbyters. A bishop deprives any clergyman who deserves deprivation, excepting a bishop. A presbyter blesses, but does not receive the blessing, yet does he receive the blessing from a bishop or a fellow-presbyter. A deacon does not bless, baptize, or offer." (Book VIII, chap. XXVIII.)

This development is plainly illustrated also in the *Clementines* (end of 2d century). According to these homilies and letters the doctrine of church polity was definitely fixed as follows: The bishop occupies the place of Christ (*Χριστοῦ τόπον πεπίστευται*). Therefore any one offending the bishop sins against Christ; the honor given to him is given to Christ; he has power to bind and to loose. Upon the connection with him salvation itself depends; through him the individual believer is brought to Christ and by Christ to God. Whoever, therefore, yields obedience to the bishop will obtain salvation; he that refuses submission will be punished by God. On the other hand, it is the duty of the bishop not to exercise his power in a tyrannical manner, like the pagan princes, but to defend the insulted like a father, to visit the sick like a physician, to watch for his congregation like a shepherd, to have the welfare and salvation of all at heart. Secular business should not engage his attention; for business matters are properly taken care of by the laymen; all his care must be directed to heavenly things. His chief duty is to guard the purity of the doctrine.

The second rank was occupied by the presbyters. As commanding is the special function of the bishops, so the execution of

these commands is the principal duty of the presbyters. They also were required to urge young men to consummate early marriages; but also older people should be admonished to enter holy wedlock. Another duty of the presbyters is to act as *peacemakers* in all quarrels among the Christians.

The third rank included the deacons (and deaconesses). The moral condition of the congregation was their special care; they were to bring information received regarding any delinquency to the bishop. As a matter of course, visiting the sick and similar services were required of them.

The division between clergy and laity was strongly marked and absolute. If the Church resembles a ship, whose master is Christ, whose row-master is the bishop, and whose crew are the presbyters, then the lay people are the passengers. These are brought to Christ and thus to God by the bishop; their salvation is conditioned by their obedience to the bishop. They owe him absolute submission and the greatest respect because the honor given him is shown to Christ. They are in duty bound to provide for the maintenance of the bishop, presbyters, deacons, etc., since the bishop should be free from all secular duties. The matter of collecting dues was a duty of the deacons. (Schliemann, *Die Clementinen*, 248—250.)

From this and other evidence, especially from Tertullian, Chrysostom, Epiphanius, Jerome, Irenaeus, and others, it seems that the following situation obtained at the end of the fourth century: "A single officer came in time to monopolize the name which had been shared by members of the governing body in common." (Hatch, *The Organization of the Early Christian Churches*, 39.) He first held the position of president, or presiding elder, in the council of ministers or in church services. Later he was commonly, and at last he was exclusively, termed the bishop. He was the supreme almoner, the deacons working under his direction. His ministry was variously known as *οἰκονομία*, *διακονία*, *λειτουργία*.

The deacons were the assistants of the bishop in the service as well as in the parish or diocese. They were originally chosen to serve in the division of alms, *διακονεῖν τραπέζαις*. (*Apostolic Constitutions*, III, 19.) And they shared with the bishop and his council the duties of discipline in the capacity of officers of inquiry. They were subordinate in rank, a fact which at first was not so pronounced, but later was emphasized. [The status of the bishop was raised until he was placed on the level of the Old Testament priests and, later, the high priest, while the deacons were regarded

as corresponding to the Levites. They were in closer relation to the bishops than the presbyters. Their entire number in one congregation formed a college, headed by the archdeacon, who was the bishop's assistant in the ecclesiastical administration.]

The presbyters formed a council, or committee, of administration, *οἱ πρεσβύτεροι ἐπισκεπτόμενοι* (Polycarp, *Ad Philippenses*, 6. Hatch, p. 67). The presbyters were, in theory, the council of the bishop, even after the bishop had asserted a virtual autocracy. The conception of the office as essentially disciplinary and collegiate, which obtained in the second century, was later again superseded by the idea that the ministration of the Word and the Sacrament is the function of the presbyter. In earlier days, Baptism and the Eucharist administered by the presbyter had been valid, though, as a matter of fact, he baptized only in emergencies, and the bishop usually celebrated the Eucharist. Later the functions of the presbyter became more and more independent, and he was permitted to perform all the work of a pastor in charge of a congregation, the distinction being retained only in the case of confirmation.

But one fact was established during these centuries beyond the shadow of a doubt, namely, the supremacy of the bishop in his parish or diocese. The fact that a centralized administration materially aided in the governing of the congregation undoubtedly hastened this development, and the necessity of unity of doctrine demanded that some single person be made the protector of the faith. The bishops also claimed the right of readmitting the *lapsi* into membership as an inherent function of the episcopate. It soon became the rule to have only one bishop in a community. The bishop, as the custodian and conservator of apostolic teaching, took the apostles' place, succeeding not only to the "seat of the apostles," but also to their powers.

For a long time, in fact, till the Council of Nicaea, the distinction between clergy and laity was not marked, except in services. The whole body of Christians was upon the same level. At first the layman could not speak as a teacher if the bishop was present; then not, if any officer was present; finally not at all. At first he brought his own gifts to the altar, then he could only stand outside of the dais, and finally he could not even go beyond the iconastases, or rood-screen, to witness the "mysteries."

A factor which greatly aided in widening the gulf between clergy and laity was the power of monasticism. The celibacy of the clergy was advocated as being conducive to greater holiness; the tonsure was adopted as a further mark of distinction. Not

only all questions of doctrine, but also those regarding discipline were decided by the clergy without the laity. The congregation as such was ignored more and more in all the affairs of administration.

In the mean time the great Ecumenical, or General, Councils were being held — Nicaea, 325; Constantinople, 381; Ephesus, 431; Chalcedon, 451; Constantinople, 553 and 680; Nicaea, 787; Constantinople, 869. With each succeeding council and synod the laity was more decidedly set aside, finally being ignored altogether. They served to extend the assertion of Cyprian: "Within the limits of his own community a bishop has no superior but God." The decrees of a single bishop had meaning and power for his own diocese only. The decrees of a council were binding upon all the dioceses represented by bishops, either of the district or of the entire Church.

But the councils and synods had a further effect also upon the clergy and their rank. A gradation was recognized between the bishop of the chief city of a province, known as the metropolitan, and that of the chief city of a diocese, called exarch, or patriarch. Thus, in the East, Caesarea, Constantinople, and other cities became the seats of powerful bishops, also Alexandria in Egypt. And in the West, Milan, and especially Rome, soon assumed the leading rôle, the latter finally gaining the supremacy. As early as the second century the *Clementines* had spoken of a "bishop of bishops," applying the name, at this time, to James of Jerusalem. The bishops of Rome became more and more insistent that they had the right to bear this title, as successors of St. Peter. At the time of Leo I opposition to this assumption had practically ceased, and in the days of Gregory the Great the supremacy of the Roman See was universally conceded.

This development brought about a stricter organization of the parishes in a diocese and of the several dioceses in a metropolitan see. In Rome the city was divided into sections, each of which was entrusted to a deacon. There was only one consecration of the Eucharistic elements, to wit, by the bishop, these being sent to the several presbyters and congregations. When the bishop of Rome came to have a preponderating influence in Western Christendom, his council, or college, of clergy became so important that the greatest dignitaries were willing, at least nominally, to become members of it in order to name the successor of a bishop after his death. Thus the College of Cardinals came into existence.

In metropolitan dioceses the suburban districts were either

under the jurisdiction of the city bishop or had a *χωρεπίσκοπος*.¹⁵ In communities with many small scattered villages two presby^{ters} and two deacons were assigned to each church, the bishop traveling from one community to another. Later there was a bishop wherever there was a Roman municipality, and an archbishop wherever there was a provincial metropolis. The clergy of a diocese were supposed to convene with the bishop once a year. At first the bishop and the presbyters met; later the canons, including all the lower clergy on the church-roll, who lived under monastic rules with the intention of entering orders, were added, and so the *capitulum*, or chapter, often showed an imposing array of names.

During the Middle Ages the several ranks of the clergy were further fixed until finally the sequence stood as follows: Pope, archbishop, bishop, priest, deacon, subdeacon (to assist the deacon), acolyte (the personal servant of the bishop), exorcist (in charge of the energumens), lector (reader), ostiarius (in charge of the buildings). In addition to these members of the clergy many churches had special choirs in their employ, and the members of these choirs were included with, and wore the dress of, the lower clergy. The laity as such was entirely disregarded. Thus the hierarchical system reached its highest development. (Cf. Hatch, chaps. III—VII; Loehe, *Haus-, Schul- und Kirchenbuch*, 2: 10—13.)

3. Church Government in the Reformed Denominations.

The three types of church government, the episcopal, the presbyterian, and the congregational, are all represented in the Protestant churches of America, to which, for the sake of briefness, we confine ourselves in this chapter. There is also a certain amount of eclecticism. The general tendency seems to be toward a strong central administration in order to unify forces and do more effective work. But there is also a reactionary element apparent, as Sheldon says, which seeks greater power for the individual local organization.

The Protestant Episcopal Church of America received its form of government from the Anglican Church. The regulations governing the Church are contained in the *Constitution and Canons of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America*. The archbishop is at the head of a metropolitan see. The bishop is at the head of the urban, or municipal, see. His church is the cathedral. His duties are—to reside inside his jurisdiction, to visit each church in his see every three years, to

keep a record of all his official acts, and to issue a pastoral letter from time to time, the favorite season being that of Lent. In his absence the ecclesiastical authority devolves upon the bishop coadjutor. The head of the individual parish is the rector, with whom are associated ministers, or priests, among whom he occupies the position of *primus inter pares*. The control of worship and the spiritual jurisdiction of the parish are vested in the rector, whose duties also are to read the pastoral letters to the congregation, to keep a registry of baptisms, etc. The deacons are subject to the bishop of the diocese and are not to accept work outside the diocese. The deacons are often candidates for higher orders, but are not to be transferred until they have passed the examinations for the priesthood. Their studies as candidates embrace a period of three years. If there is no rector in a parish, the deacon acts under the direction of the priest. Next in order come the deaconesses, who may be either unmarried or widowed. They are appointed by the bishop after a preparation of two years. The postulants and candidates are such men as have made application for orders and are going through a course of preparation. Lay readers are employed upon occasion, especially in missionary parishes. Other laymen are permitted to make addresses upon special occasions. Thus the episcopal form of government is carried out very consistently. The Protestant Episcopal Church, like the Church of England, believes in the Apostolic Succession, deeming the ordination in an unbroken chain since the time of Peter and the apostles necessary for the validity of the priesthood.

The Presbyterian Church in America, like that of Scotland, has avoided the episcopal, or prelate, form of government, on the one hand, and the independent form, on the other. In the *Confession of Faith* (chap. XXX, I and II) this Church states that "the Lord Jesus Christ, as King and Head of His Church, hath therein appointed a government in the hand of church-officers, distinct from the civil magistrates. To these officers the keys of the kingdom of heaven are committed, by virtue whereof they have power, respectively, to retain and remit sins," etc. According to the "Form of Government," as contained in the *Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in America*, "the pastoral office is the first in the Church, both for dignity and usefulness. As the person who fills this office has the oversight over the flock of Christ, he is termed bishop. As he feeds them with spiritual food, he is termed pastor. As he serves Christ in his Church, he is termed minister. As it is his duty to be grave and prudent, . . . he is termed pres-

byter and elder. As he is the messenger of God, he is termed the angel of the Church. As he is sent to declare the will of God to sinners, he is termed ambassador. And he is also a steward over the mysteries of Christ." The ruling elders are the representatives of the people, ruling well, but not laboring in the Word and doctrine. They, together with the pastor or pastors of a particular congregation, form the church session (or presbytery), of which the pastor is the moderator. The deacons are distinct officers of the congregation, whose duty it is to take care of the poor and to manage the temporal affairs of the church. The presbytery proper consists of all the ministers of a district, not less than five being necessary to form such a body, together with one ruling elder from each congregation. The synod is a convention of bishops and elders within a larger district, embracing at least three presbyteries. The highest judicatory of the Church is the General Assembly, a representation of the whole Church, which governs and determines in regard to every part and to all parts united. But the real government is that of the local session, which maintains spiritual government, receives members, suspends and excludes from the Sacraments, and appoints delegates to the higher judicatories. The congregation as such does not take part in the government of the Church.

According to the *Doctrine and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (edited by Bishop Andrews, 1904) the form of church government in that church-body is patterned after that of the Anglican Church, with certain eclectic features. The bishop is elected by the General Conference and ordained by the laying on of hands of three bishops or at least one bishop and three elders. His duty is to preside at the annual conference, to form districts, fix appointments of preachers, and not allow a presiding elder to preside in the same district more than six consecutive years. A missionary bishop has charge of a specified Foreign Mission field. The presiding elders are chosen and appointed by the bishops. Their duty is to travel through the districts, visit the charges, change the appointments, etc. A minister, or elder, has authority to preach, to conduct worship, to solemnize marriages, and to administer Baptism and the Lord's Supper. A deacon is elected by the annual conference, followed by the laying on of hands by the bishop. He has authority to preach, to conduct divine worship, to solemnize marriages, to administer Baptism, and to assist the elder in administering the Lord's Supper. The pastor, or preacher, in charge has the oversight of all other preachers in

his parish. He appoints all leaders, accepts members, etc. Local lay preachers and exhorters for leading prayer and exhortation are licensed by the quarterly conference, under the chairmanship of the presiding elder. A deaconess must be unmarried and over twenty-three years of age. She must render two years of probationary service before being enrolled. The congregation as such has no part in its spiritual government nor in the choice of its own pastor, or minister.

The form of government in the Baptist Church belongs to the independent group, each congregation being a self-governing unit, actually and absolutely independent in the exercise of all its churchly rights, privileges, and prerogatives. This independence is limited only as each church is an administrative and interpretative body only, under the Word of God, each church, as a spiritual body, being its own highest tribunal. The pastorate and the ministry, according to Baptist policy, are related, but not identical. Evangelists and missionaries are without pastoral responsibility, but the ministerial service is identified with the pastorate. The local pastor is also called teacher or preacher. The deacons, faithful, prudent, experienced, devout men, are chosen by a free vote of the congregation, they have charge of the sick and needy, and, in general, of the temporal affairs of the congregation. (Hiscox, *The New Directory of Baptist Churches*, 1906.)

The form of government in the Congregational Church is also the independent form or that of pure democracy. Any company of people professing Christianity are thereby a true Church of Christ. The officers of each congregation are: 1) bishops, also called elders, evangelists, angels, pastors, and teachers; 2) deacons. The ministerial associations and the district conferences of the Congregational Church are altogether free. (Dexter, *A Handbook of Congregationalism*, 1880.)

4. Church Government in the Lutheran Church.

One of the first features which Luther attacked in the Roman Church after he had come to the knowledge of the truth was the hierarchical system with its many evils, including not only the papacy itself, but also nepotism, simony, and a general perversion of right. Luther's demand, in the face of the conditions then existing, was to make all the officers of the Church responsible to the Church as a whole and the individual pastors to their congregations, under the Word of God. He was, at first, by no means insistent upon a complete reformation of church government. He

even went so far as to state that he would not object to the Pope as supreme head of the Church *ex jure humano*, but he was opposed to the office as long as it was forced upon the Church *ex jure divino*. But when all his efforts to convince the hierarchy had failed and the Pope's Church had openly been branded as unbiblical and heretic, Luther worked most diligently for the introduction of a form of church government which would carry out the democratic ideas of the New Testament in a most consistent manner. How far his ideas had crystallized in 1523 may be seen from his *Ordnung eines gemeinen Kastens der Gemeinde zu Leissnig*. (10, 960—977.) The calling, choosing, installing, and dismissing of the incumbents of the pastoral office, according to this document, should be and remain in the hands of the congregation, according to the guidance of Holy Scriptures. All the rights of the Christian congregation should be vested and remain in the entire congregation as such, which, for that purpose, namely, of exercising these rights and watching over their proper discharge, should have stated meetings, three times a year.) A council of ten deacons were to have charge of the property of the congregation, paying the salary of minister, teacher, etc., take care of the poor and needy, and discharge all other work which was commonly done by deacons in apostolic times.

These ideas of Luther, with which he returned to the democratic church government of the early centuries, were in conformity with the statement of Christ. Matt. 23, 10. Article XIV of the Augustana stated clearly and succinctly: "In regard to church government we teach that no one shall publicly teach or preach or administer the Sacrament in the Church without a legitimate call." The usurpations of the hierarchy were condemned in Article XXVIII, "Of the Power of the Bishops." The Apology took up the question concerning the doctrine of the Church at length, making plain the distinction between the visible and the invisible church. In an improper and derived sense there is a visible Church, consisting of all those who profess Christianity and uphold its institutions. In this external, or visible, Church every local congregation has the right to call and install ministers of the Word. The ministry is the highest office in the Church (Art. XV), but it depends for its power upon the valid call of the congregation (Art. XXVIII, "De Potestate Ecclesiastica"). The same trend of thought is found in the Articuli Smalcaldici, Pars II, Art. IV, "De Papatu"; Pars III, Art. X, "De Initiatione, Ordine et Vocatione": "As the ancient examples of the Church and of

the Fathers teach us, we will and should ourselves ordain fitting persons for such office," in the *Formula Concordiæ*, Pars II, *Solida Declaratio*, Art. X, "De Ceremoniis Ecclesiasticis," and elsewhere.

Unfortunately, however, the practise of the Lutheran Church in Germany fell short of the theory, as the publications of Richter and Sehling show. From the first the princes, electors, and dukes of the various German countries that had accepted the Reformation were actively concerned in the propagation of the true Church. The idea of ecclesiastical courts having been broached and discussed at Smalcald in 1537, it was put into execution at Wittenberg in 1539. At first it was only a matrimonial and disciplinary court, but the jurisdiction of similar consistories was soon extended to include all cases of church discipline. In some instances these courts practically exercised episcopal jurisdiction; in other cases they were ecclesiastical courts, exercising the functions which were properly vested in the local congregation. At present the ecclesiastical consistories in the Lutheran sections of Germany are little more than councils for the adjudication of administrative business.

In other countries, such as Denmark, Norway, Sweden, where the state church is Lutheran, more of an episcopal form of church government obtains, the king, in the case of the last-named country, even being considered the *summus episcopus*, and the bishop of the oldest diocese being called the Archbishop of Upsala;

In America the democratic form of church government has had the best opportunity for a thorough application. Yet there is a considerable variation in the various Lutheran bodies. In some cases the presbyterian form is in use, in others the synodical, while some few have a thoroughly democratic government, the doctrine of the Church and of the office of the Word held by the general organizations coloring and influencing their polity.

The formula for the "Government and Discipline of the General Synod" (United Lutheran Church) names three judicatories governing the Church: "the *Council* of each individual church, the *District Synods*, consisting of the clergy and lay delegates from a particular district of country, and one *General Synod*," p. 834. "Pastors are amenable for their conduct to the synod to which they belong; and that synod is the tribunal which has the entire jurisdiction over them," p. 836. "The other officers of the church are elders and deacons, who are elected by the members of the church as their agents to perform some of the duties originally devolving on themselves," p. 837. "The Church Council is the lowest judicatory of the Church, consisting of the pastor, or

pastors, and all the elders and deacons of a particular church," p. 838.

In the Missouri Synod and those synods affiliated with it in the Synodical Conference the democratic form of government is carried out very consistently. All male members above the age of twenty-one years (in some cases, above eighteen) are admitted to voting membership. All the business of the congregation is transacted by the assembly of the voting members, such as the conferring of the pastoral office upon ministers, candidates, and teachers, etc. The congregation as a body has the supreme power in the external and internal administration and management of its own ecclesiastical and congregational affairs, limited in this power only by the Word of God and the Symbols of the Lutheran Church. The church wardens, elders, deacons, etc., at any time in office have no authority beyond that which has been conferred upon them by the congregation, and whatever power may have been delegated to them is at all times liable to change or rescission by the congregation. (*Theol. Quart*, I, 326—330.) The Synod also makes no laws, nor does it act as an ecclesiastical court. "In its relation to its members Synod is not a governing body, exercising legislative or coercive powers. In all matters involving the Christian congregation's right of self-government, Synod is but an advisory body. Accordingly, no congregation shall be bound by any resolution of Synod that imposes something which is either contrary to the Word of God or that to such congregation appears unsuited to its condition." (*Lutheran Witness*, XXXVI, 1917, p. 312.)