

CYCLOPÆDIA
OF
BIBLICAL LITERATURE

EDITED BY

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of Herod the tetrarch (Matt. xiv. 6), the celebration of whose birth-day cost John the Baptist his life, can scarcely be regarded as such, the family to which he belonged being notorious for its adoption of heathen customs. In fact, the later Jews at least regarded birth-day celebrations as parts of idolatrous worship (Lightfoot, *Hor. Hebr. ad Matt.* xiv. 6); and this probably on account of the idolatrous rites with which they were observed in honour of those who were regarded as the patron gods of the day on which the party was born.

BIRTH-RIGHT (בְּכֹרֶת; Sept. *πρωτοτόκια*). This term denotes the rights or privileges belonging to the first-born among the Hebrews. The particular advantages which these conferred were the following:—

1. A right to the priesthood. The first-born became the priest in virtue of his priority of descent, provided no blemish or defect attached to him. Reuben was the first-born of the twelve patriarchs, and therefore the honour of the priesthood belonged to his tribe. God, however, transferred it from the tribe of Reuben to that of Levi (Num. iii. 12, 13; viii. 18). Hence the first-born of the other tribes were redeemed from serving God as priests, by a sum not exceeding five shekels. Being presented before the Lord in the temple, they were redeemed immediately after the thirtieth day from their birth (Num. xviii. 15, 16; Luke ii. 22). It is to be observed, that only the first-born who were *fit for the priesthood* (i. e. such as had no defect, spot, or blemish) were thus presented to the priest.

2. The first-born received a double portion of his father's property. There is some difficulty in determining precisely what is meant by a double portion. Some suppose that half the inheritance was received by the elder brother, and that the other half was equally divided among the remaining brethren. This is not probable. The Rabbins believe that the elder brother received twice as much as any of the rest; and there is no reason to doubt the correctness of this opinion. When the first-born died before his father's property was divided, and left children, the right of the father descended to the children, and not to the brother next of age.

3. He succeeded to the official authority possessed by his father. If the latter was a king, the former was regarded as his legitimate successor, unless some unusual event or arrangement interfered.

After the law was given through Moses, the right of primogeniture could not be transferred from the first-born to a younger child at the father's option. In the patriarchal age, however, it was in the power of the parent thus to convey it from the eldest to another child (Deut. xxi. 15-17; Gen. xxv. 31, 32).

It is not difficult to perceive the reason why the first-born enjoyed greater privileges than the rest of the children. The peculiar honour attaching to them is easily accounted for. They are to be viewed as having reference to the Redeemer, the first-born of the Virgin. Hence in the epistle to the Romans, viii. 29, it is written concerning the Son, 'that he might be the *first-born* among many brethren;' and in Coloss. i. 18, 'who is the beginning, the *first-born* from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence' (see also Heb. i. 4,

5, 6). As the first-born had a double portion, so the Lord Jesus, as Mediator, has an inheritance superior to his brethren; he is exalted to the right hand of the Majesty on high, where he reigns until all his enemies shall be subdued. The universe is his rightful dominion in his mediatorial character. Again, he alone is a true priest: he fulfilled all the functions of the sacerdotal office; and the Levites, to whom, under the law, the priesthood was transferred from all the first-born of Israel, derived the efficacy of their ministrations from their connection with the great high priest (Jahn's *Biblical Archaeology*, § 165).—

S. D.

BISHOP. The active controversy in which the subject of episcopacy has been involved, although it has not reconciled conflicting opinions, has brought out the historical facts in their fullest clearness. The able and caudid on opposite sides can scarcely be said to differ as to the facts themselves; but they differ in their estimate of them.

The Apostles originally appointed men to superintend the spiritual, and occasionally even the secular wants of the churches (Acts xiv. 23; xi. 30; see also 2 Tim. ii. 2), who were ordinarily called *πρεσβυτεροι*, *elders*, from their age, sometimes *ἐπισκοποι*, *overseers* (bishops), from their office. They are also said *ἐπολιταρχεσθαι*, to *preside* (1 Thess. v. 12; 1 Tim. v. 17), never *ἄρχουσιν*, to *rule*, which has far too despotic a sound. In the Epistle to the Hebrews (xiii. 7, 17, 24) they are named *ἡγούμενοι*, *leading men* (comp. Acts xv. 22); and, figuratively, *ποιμένες*, *shepherds* (Ephes. iv. 11). But that they did not always teach is clear from 1 Tim. v. 17; and the name Elders proves that originally age, experience, and character were their most necessary qualifications. They were to be married men with families (1 Tim. iii. 4), and with converted children (Tit. i. 6). In the beginning there had been no time to train teachers, and teaching was regarded far more in the light of a gift than an office; yet St. Paul places 'ability to teach' among episcopal qualifications (1 Tim. iii. 2; Titus i. 9; the latter of which passages should be translated, 'that he may be able both to exhort men by sound teaching, and also to refute opposers'). That teachers had obtained in St. Paul's day a fixed official position, is manifest from Gal. vi. 6, and 1 Cor. ix. 14, where he claims for them a right to worldly maintenance: in fact, that the *shepherds* ordered to 'feed the flock,' and be its 'overseers' (1 Pet. v. 2), were to feed them with knowledge and instruction, will never be disputed, except to support a hypothesis. The *leaders* also, in Heb. xiii. 7, are described as 'speaking unto you the word of God.' Ecclesiastical history joins in proving that the two offices of teaching and superintending were, with few exceptions, combined in the same persons, as, indeed, the nature of things dictated.

That during St. Paul's lifetime no difference between elders and bishops yet existed in the consciousness of the church, is manifest from the entire absence of distinctive names (Acts xx. 17-23; 1 Pet. v. 1, 2). The mention of bishops and deacons in Phil. i. 1, and 1 Tim. iii., without any notice of elders, proves that at that time no difference of *order* subsisted between bishops and elders. A formal ceremony, it is generally believed, was employed in appointing elders, al-

though it does not appear that as yet any fixed name was appropriated to the idea of ordination. (The word *ordained* is inexcusably interpolated in the English version of Act i. 22. In Tit. i. 5 the Greek word is *καταορθοῦν*, *set, or set up*; and in Acts xiv. 23 it is *χειροτονήσαυτες*, *having elected*, properly, by a show of hands; though, abusively, the term came to mean simply, *having chosen or nominated* (Acts x. 41); yet in 2 Cor. viii. 19, it seems to have its genuine democratic sense). In 1 Cor. xvi. 15 we find the house of Stephanus to have volunteered the task of 'ministering to the saints'; and that this was a ministry of 'the word,' is evident from the Apostle's urging the church 'to submit themselves to such.' It would appear then that a formal investiture into the office was not as yet regarded *essential*. Be this as it may, no one doubts that an ordination by laying on of hands soon became general or universal. Hands were first laid on not to bestow an office, but to solicit a spiritual gift (1 Tim. iv. 14; 2 Tim. i. 6; Acts xiii. 3; xiv. 26; xv. 40). To the same effect Acts viii. 17; xix. 6;— passages which explain Heb. vi. 2. On the other hand, the absolute silence of the Scriptures, even if it were not confirmed, as it is, by positive testimony, would prove that no idea of consecration, as distinct from ordination, at that time existed at all; and, consequently, although individual elders may have really discharged functions which would afterwards have been called episcopal, it was not by virtue of a second ordination, nor, therefore, of episcopal rank.

The Apostles themselves, it is held by some, were the real *bishops* of that day, and it is quite evident that they performed many episcopal functions. It may well be true, that the only reason why no bishops (in the modern sense) were then wanting was, because the Apostles were living; but it cannot be inferred that in any strict sense prelates are *co-ordinate in rank with the Apostles*, and can claim to exercise their powers. The later 'bishop' did not come forward as a successor to the Apostles, but was developed out of the presbyter; much less can it be proved, or alleged with plausibility, that the Apostles took any measures for securing substitutes for themselves (in the high character of Apostles), after their decease. It has been with many a favourite notion that Timothy and Titus exhibit the episcopal type even during the life of Paul; but this is an obvious misconception. They were attached to the person of the Apostle, and not to any one church. In the last Epistle written by him (2 Tim. iv. 9) he calls Timothy suddenly to Rome, in words which prove that the latter was not, at least as yet, bishop, either of Ephesus or of any other church. That Timothy was an *evangelist* is distinctly stated (2 Tim. iv. 5), and that he had received spiritual gifts (i. 6, &c.); there is then no difficulty in accounting for the authority vested in him (1 Tim. v. 1; xix. 22), without imagining him to have been a bishop; which is in fact disproved even by the same Epistle (i. 3). That Titus, moreover, had no local attachment to Crete, is plain from Titus iii. 13, to say nothing of the earlier Epistle, 2 Cor. *passim*. Nor is it true that the episcopal power developed itself out of wandering evangelists any more than out of the Apostles.

On the other hand it would seem that the

bishop began to elevate himself above the presbyter while the Apostle John was yet alive, and in churches to which he is believed to have peculiarly devoted himself. The meaning of the title *angel*, in the opening chapters of the Apocalypse, has been mystically explained by some; but its true meaning is clear from the nomenclature of the Jewish synagogues. In them, we are told, the minister who ordinarily led the prayers of the congregation, besides acting as their chief functionary in matters of business, was entitled *מַלְאָךְ הַכְּנֶסֶת* [SYNAGOGUE], a name which may be translated literally *nuncios ecclesie*, and is here expressed by the Greek *ἄγγελος*. The substantive *מַלְאָךְ* also (which by analogy would be rendered *ἄγγελος*, as *מַלְאָךְ* is *ἄγγελος*) has the ordinary sense of *opus, ministerium*, making it almost certain that the 'angels of the churches' are nothing but a harsh Hebraism for 'ministers of the churches.' We therefore here see a single officer, in these rather large Christian communities, elevated into a peculiar prominence, which has been justly regarded as episcopal. Nor does it signify that the authorship of the Apocalypse is disputed, since its extreme antiquity is beyond a doubt; we find, therefore, the germ of episcopacy here planted, as it were, under the eyes of an Apostle. (Neander, *Pflanzung und Leitung*, ii. 468.)

Nevertheless, it was still but a germ. It is vain to ask, whether these angels received a second ordination and had been promoted from the rank of presbyters. That this was the case is possible, but there is no proof of it; and while some will regard the question as deeply interesting, others will think it unimportant. A second question is, whether the angels were overseers of the congregation only, or of the presbyters too; and whether the church was formed of many local unions (such as we call parishes), or of one. Perhaps both questions unduly imply that a set of fixed rules was already in existence. No one who reads Paul's own account of the rebuke he uttered against Peter (Gal. ii.), need doubt that in those days a zealous elder would assume authority over other elders, officially his equals, when he thought they were dishonouring the Gospel; and, *à fortiori*, he would act thus towards an official inferior, even if this had not previously been defined or understood as his duty. So again, the Christians of Ephesus or Miletus were probably too numerous ordinarily to meet in a single assembly, especially before they had large buildings erected for the purpose; and convenience must have led at a very early period to subordinate assemblies (such as would now be called 'chapels-of-ease' to the mother church); yet we have no ground for supposing that any sharp division of the Church into organic portions had yet commenced.

Episcopalians, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists agree in one point, viz. that (because of its utility and general convenience) it is lawful for Christians to take a step for which they have no clear precedent in the Scripture, that of breaking up a church, when it becomes of unwieldy magnitude, into fixed divisions, whether parishes, or congregations. The question then arises, whether the organic union is to be still retained at all. To this (1) Congregationalists reply in the negative, saying that the congrega-

tions in different parts of a great city no more need to be in organic union, than those of two different cities; (2) Presbyterians would keep up the union by means of a synod of the elders; (3) Episcopalians desire to unite the separate churches by retaining them under the supervision of a single head—the bishop. It seems impossible to refer to the practice of the Apostles as deciding in favour of any one of these methods; for the case had not yet arisen which could have led to the discussion. The city churches had not yet become so large as to make subdivision positively necessary; and, as a fact, it did not take place. To organize distant churches into a fixed and formal connection by synods of their bishops, was, of course, quite a later process; but such unions are by no means rejected, even by Congregationalists, as long as they are used for deliberation and advice, not as assemblies for ruling and commanding. The spirit of Episcopacy depends far less on the episcopal form itself, than on the size and wealth of dioceses, and on the union of bishops into synods, whose decisions are to be authoritative on the whole church: to say nothing of territorial establishment and the support of the civil government. If, under any ecclesiastical form, either oppression or disorder should arise, it cannot be defended; but no form is a security against such evils. Our experience may, in these later times, possibly show us which of these systems is on the whole preferable; but the discussion must belong to ecclesiastical history, and would be quite out of place here.—

F. W. N.

BITHRON (2 Sam. ii. 29). This name has the same meaning as Bethel. It probably denotes a region of hills and valleys, and not any definite place.

BITHYNIA (Βιθυνία), a province of Asia Minor, on the Euxine Sea and the Propontis; bounded on the west by Mysia, on the south and east by Phrygia and Galatia, and on the east by Paphlagonia. The Bithynians were a rude and uncivilized people, Thracians who had colonized this part of Asia, and occupied no towns, but lived in villages (κοιμοπόλεις, Strabo, p. 566). That Christian congregations were formed at an early period in Bithynia, is evident from the Apostle Peter having addressed the first of his Epistles to them (1 Pet. i. 1). The Apostle Paul was at one time inclined to go into Bithynia with his assistants Silas and Timothy, 'but the Spirit suffered him not' (Acts xvi. 7).

BITTER, BITTERNESS. Bitterness (Exod. i. 14; Ruth i. 20; Jer. ix. 15) is symbolical of affliction, misery, and servitude. It was for this reason that, in the celebration of the Passover, the servitude of the Israelites in Egypt was typically represented by bitter herbs.

On the day of bitterness in Amos viii. 10, comp. Tibullus, ii. 4. 11—

'Nunc et amara dies, et noctis amarior umbra est.' In Habakk. i. 6 the Chaldeans are called 'that bitter and swift nation'; which Schultens illustrates by remarking that the root *Merer* in Arabic (answering to the Hebrew word for bitter) is usually applied to strength and courage.

The gall of bitterness (Acts viii. 23) describes a state of extreme wickedness, highly offensive to God, and hurtful to others.

A root of bitterness (Heb. xiii. 15) expresses

a wicked or scandalous person, or any dangerous sin leading to apostasy (Wemys's *Clavis Symbolica*, &c.).

BITTER HERBS (ד'רר); literally *bitters*; Sept. *πίπιδες*; Vulg. *lactuca agrastis*. There has been much difference of opinion respecting the kind of herbs denoted by this word. On this subject the reader may consult Carpov, *Apparat.* p. 404, sq.

It however seems very doubtful whether any particular herbs were intended by so general a term as *bitters*; it is far more probable that it denotes whatever bitter herbs, obtainable in the place where the Passover was eaten, might be fitly used with meat. This seems to be established by the fact that the first directions respecting the Passover were given in Egypt, where also the first Passover was celebrated; and as the esculent vegetables of Egypt are very different from those of Palestine, it is obvious that the bitter herbs used in the first celebration could scarcely have been the same as those which were afterwards employed for the same purpose in Canaan. According to the Mishna (*Pesachim*, ii. 6), and the commentators thereon, there were five sorts of bitter herbs, any one or all of which might be used on this occasion. There were—1. חצרת *chazareth*, supposed to be wild lettuce, which the Septuagint and Vulgate make stand for the whole. 2. *עלישין* 'ulshin, endives; or, according to some, wild endives. 3. תמכה *thameca*, which some make the garden endive, others horehound, others tansy, others the green tops of the horse-raddish, while, according to De Pomis, in *Zemach David*, it is no other than a species of thistle (*carduus marianus*). 4. *חררבינה* *charchabina*, supposed to be a kind of nettle. 5. *מרר* *maror*, which takes its name from its bitterness, and is alleged by the Mishnic commentators to be a species of the most bitter coriander. All these might, according to the Mishna, be taken either fresh or dried; but not pickled, boiled, or cooked in any way.

BITTERN. [KIPPOD.]

BITUMEN. [ASPHALTUM.]

BLACK. Although the Orientals do not wear black in mourning, they, as did the ancient Jews, regard the colour as a symbol of affliction, disaster, and privation. In fact, the custom of wearing black in mourning is a sort of visible expression of what is in the East a figure of speech. In Scripture blackness is used as symbolical of afflictions occasioned by drought and famine (Job xxx. 30; Jer. xiv. 2; Lam. iv. 8; v. 10). Whether this be founded on any notion that the hue of the complexion was deepened by privation, has not been ascertained; but it has been remarked by Chardin and others, that in the periodical mourning of the Persians for Hossein many of those who take part in the ceremonies appear with their bodies blackened, in order to express the extremity of thirst and heat which Hossein suffered, and which, as is alleged, was so great that he turned black, and the tongue swelled till it protruded from his mouth.

In Mal. iii. 14 we read, 'What profit is it that we keep his ordinances, and that we have walked in blackness (Authorized Version 'mournfully') before the Lord of Hosts;' meaning that they had fasted in sackcloth and ashes. 'Black' occurs as a symbol of fear in Joel ii. 6.—'All