

A
DICTIONARY
OF
RELIGION AND ETHICS

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among the early Fathers, notably in Justin Martyr and Origen. It is possibly intended in John 9:2, and seems to have been held by the Essenes. In Greece it played a conspicuous part in the speculations of Pythagoras, Plato and their followers. See TRANSMIGRATION. W. E. CLARK

PREFECT.—A frequent designation in the R.C. church for ecclesiastical dignitaries with supervision of some church enterprise or some specific field of activities.

PRELATE.—In mediaeval times, a person in high authority whether secular or ecclesiastical. In modern times, a R.C. dignitary with episcopal or quasi-episcopal jurisdiction who is distinguished by a violet robe. There are four classes: great exempt (heads of monastic order themselves), exempt (from ordinary jurisdiction), active Roman, and honorary Roman.

PREMILLENNARIANISM.—The belief that the personal visible return of Christ will precede his reign for a thousand years on earth. See MILLENNARIANISM.

PREMONSTRATENCIAN CANONS.—A R.C. order of regular canons founded by St. Norbert (ca. 1080–1134) in the diocese of Laon, organized on the Cistercian plan and following the rule of Augustine. Also called Norbertines and white Canons.

PREPARATION, DAY OF.—In Judaism, the day preceding a holy day as the Sabbath or Passover; in some Christian churches the day preceding the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

PRESBYTER.—Literally, an "older" person, used as a substantive, in heathen and Jewish circles alike, of both a municipal and a religious functionary, and in the New Testament, of a member of the board of officials by which each settled Christian congregation was governed, an "elder." An officer in the Christian church, holding, in non-prelatical churches, the highest place, in prelatical churches the second highest, above a deacon and below a bishop. See ORDER, HOLY.

As reflected in the N.T. each primitive local church (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5) was governed by a board of officials called indifferently "presbyters" or "bishops" (Acts 20:17, 28; I Pet. 5:1, 2; I Tim. 3:1–7; 5:17–19; Tit. 1:5–7); the former designation was the name of dignity, the latter of function. All shared in the oversight of the church, and some of them labored also in word and doctrine (I Tim. 5:1). The differentiation thus already begun issued later (seen complete e.g., in Ignatius, early 2nd. century) in one of the presbyters drawing to himself the higher functions of the board, together with the distinctive title of bishop; leaving to the presbyters, now their distinctive name, a lowered rank and diminished function. By a still further development (late 2nd. century) the presbyter regained some of his lost dignity and function by becoming the head, ordinarily the single head, of the local church. Meanwhile, he had also become a "priest" (etymologically only a shortened form of "presbyter" but actually absorbing into itself the sense of *sacerdos*). In this final development, the presbyterate is defined as the highest of the seven orders, that is to say, the office and dignity of those clerics who possess the priesthood (*sacerdotium*) in the literal sense. In this definition, it is observable, the presbyterate still embraces both bishops and presbyters.

In non-prelatical churches, presbyter, when used instead of the more common "elder," continues to bear its New Testament sense of the highest permanent official in the local church.

BENJAMIN B. WARFIELD

PRESBYTERIANISM.—One of the three principal systems of ecclesiastical polity, occupying an intermediate position between episcopacy and congregationalism, or independency. With the one it shares the unifying principle that the entire church is a single entity and should function as a whole; with the other the democratic principle that what should function in the church as a whole is the entire membership of the churches. Its characteristic feature whence it derives its name, is that in it the government of the church is exercised exclusively by "presbyters" or "elders." These officers of the local churches, combined in conciliar courts, administer the affairs of the whole body of churches thus compacted into one.

I. PRESBYTERIAN POLITY.—1. *The New Testament basis.*—Presbyterians look upon their polity as imposed by the Apostles, the agents of Christ in establishing his Church in the world, on the churches which they founded, as part of their equipment as the pillar and ground of the truth. Its chief feature was the installation in each church of a college of "elders" or "bishops"—the equivalence of the titles is clear—to whom were committed its teaching and government; by the side of whom, however, a similar college of "deacons" was placed, whose duty it was "to serve tables." Following this pattern, the local Presbyterian church is organized with a plurality of "presbyters," or "elders" elected by the congregation to rule, and a plurality of "deacons," similarly elected by the congregation to serve.

2. *The pastor of the local church.*—In the Presbyterian polity, the pastor is one of the elders, who while he does not differ from the others in office, differs greatly from them in function. To him is committed the ministration of the Word and the Sacraments; he presides by right over all the meetings of the "Session," as the college of elders is called; and he is by right one of the two representatives of the session in the higher court, or Presbytery. He differs from his fellow elders also in not being a member of the local congregation which he serves, or responsible to it for his efficiency in his service or amenable to its discipline. He is not responsible even to the session of which he is a member and whose presiding officer he is, for either his personal or official department. His membership is in the higher body, the Presbytery; and to it he is directly responsible. He comes into the local congregation from without; by its free "call," that is to say by election of the congregation; but not without the explicit consent of the Presbytery to which he belongs; and by formal installation by it alone can he enter upon the pastorship of the church which calls him. Here we see an aristocratic element entering into the Presbyterian system and modifying its democracy.

3. *The higher courts.*—In the higher courts the local churches are united into one general body. In the Presbyterian system, delegates from the local churches within a prescribed area—these delegates consisting of the "teaching elder" of each church as a matter of right, and one "ruling elder" selected from their own number by each session—unite to form a "Presbytery" which has jurisdiction over all the churches within its area. Delegates similarly selected from a larger area, including several Presbyteries—the number of "teaching elders" and "ruling elders" being kept always as nearly as possible equal—a "Synod," having jurisdiction

over the Presbyteries within its bounds. Finally delegates of "teaching elders" and "ruling elders," as nearly as possible in equal numbers, from all the Presbyteries, form the "General Assembly" which has jurisdiction over the whole Church. The aristocratic element which exists in the Presbyterian system, is maintained, through the whole series of its graded "courts"; an equal representation of "teaching" and "ruling" elders is sought through them all above the session, despite the great numerical preponderance of "ruling elders" in the Church.

II. HISTORY OF PRESBYTERIANISM.—1. *Early and Mediaeval Church.*—The development of church organization along monarchical lines in the sub-apostolical age, deprived the Presbyterian principle, impressed on the Apostolic churches, of all history for a millennium and a half, although there were revivals here and there of practices reminiscent of the Presbyterian past.

2. *The Reformation.*—In their reversion to the Scriptures as the sole authoritative guide it was inevitable that the monarchical organization of the Church should be rejected by the Reformers. But the earlier Reformers showed no great zeal in reorganizing the infant evangelical churches on more biblical lines. The result was that the government and discipline of these churches fell largely, in the several countries in which they were planted, into the hands of the local secular authorities; all cohesion among them was lacking; and accordingly the greatest confusion and weakness reigned among them.

3. *John Calvin.*—A Presbyterian polity was introduced by Calvin into Geneva on a biblical basis, an achievement accomplished only by a hard conflict which endured through his whole life (1536-1564). From Geneva, this polity spread to the other Reformed Churches and thus became characteristic of Reformed as distinguished from Lutheran Protestantism. With local variations it became the polity of the Reformed Churches not only in Switzerland and Reformed Germany, but (to name only the main branches) of Bohemia, and Hungary, and France, and the Netherlands and Scotland.

4. *England.*—Only in England did a national church which had adopted a Reformed creed (the Thirty-Nine Articles) retain a hierarchical constitution. This was the source of constant irritation, and kept alive a conflict in the Church between the more and the less advanced Protestantism which culminated in the middle of the 17th. century in what is known as "the second Reformation." In this great national movement the hierarchical constitution of the Church of England was for a moment overturned, and, with help obtained from Scotland, the Presbyterian polity set up in its stead. The instrument by which the revolution was accomplished was the Westminster Assembly of Divines, from the labors of which dates a new era in the history of Presbyterianism in Britain and its daughter-lands.

5. *The Westminster Assembly.*—The Westminster Assembly undertook to prepare formularies for the unification of the national churches of England, Scotland and Ireland along the lines of the best Reformed tradition—and this alike in doctrine, government, discipline and worship. It failed in this purpose. The restoration of the monarchy in the person of Charles II. threw the Church of England back into its old hierarchical constitution and this carried with it the restoration of the hierarchical form in Ireland also. Even in Scotland, it was precisely the Assembly's work in church government which met with least acceptance. Nevertheless the debates on the proper

organization of the church, carried on in the Assembly, bore good fruit.

6. *American Presbyterianism.*—The name Presbyterian in America is borne only by those Presbyterian churches which derive their origin from Great Britain, where alone this feature of the Reformed tradition has given both churches of this order their distinctive name; American Presbyterian churches deriving their origin from the continent of Europe designate themselves as "Reformed Churches" (q.v.). The largest of American Presbyterian churches is the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America which enrolls now more than a million and a half of communicant members, or, in connection with the sister church the Presbyterian Church in the United States (Southern), which was separated from it only on issues connected with the war between the States, about 2,000,000. The total number of communicant members in the Presbyterian Churches in the United States is about 3,000,000. The most important bodies in addition to the above named, with membership (1919), are: the United Presbyterian Church (155,994); the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Synod (16,564); the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Old School (8,750); the Reformed Presbyterian Church, General Synod (2,400); the Cumberland Presbyterian Church (61,452); and the Colored Cumberland Presbyterian Church (13,077).

In 1875 the Alliance of Reformed Churches throughout the World Holding the Presbyterian System was organized. It embraces about 7,000,000 church members.

BENJAMIN B. WARFIELD

PRESBYTERY.—In Presbyterian churches, a body composed of the ministers and pastors and one ruling elder appointed from each church in a district. It has the ecclesiastical and spiritual oversight of such a district. See PRESBYTERIANISM.

PRETA.—A disembodied helpless ghost which has not yet acquired a new other-worldly body. The *pinda* (q.v.) offering made in the home for ten days after death is supposed by the Hindu people to give the ghost the new body and so make it one of the *pitris* (q.v.). If the food is not given the ghost remains a wandering, dangerous *preta*.

PRIDE.—A conscious high valuation of one's own ability, accomplishments, social status, or possessions. Pride may express a noble sense of personal independence, as when one resents the idea of accepting favors. On the other hand, it may lead to an anti-social attitude. Christian ethics, especially in the R.C. church, has contrasted pride with that humility (q.v.) which is essential to true virtue. Pride is regarded as the root of a refusal of a person to subject himself to divine authority. As such it is "the most grievous of sins" (Thomas Aquinas).

PRIEST, PRIESTHOOD.—A religious functionary and order, mediating between deity and man.

I. IN GENERAL.—The basis is worship of superhuman power, springing from necessity to secure that power's favor and avoid his displeasure. Since religion always reflects social environment, representatives—the head of a family, the chief, and the king—came to conduct worship in behalf of their respective circles. At this stage priesthood is a function, not an office or order. This condition persists or reappears in advanced civilization. Usually under such circumstances, however, the function is limited to restricted aspects. In China