

THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

LIGHTFOOT.

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CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

BY

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THE kingdom of Christ, not being a kingdom of this world, is not limited by the restrictions which fetter other societies, political or religious. It is in the fullest sense free, comprehensive, universal. It displays this character, not only in the acceptance of all comers who seek admission, irrespective of race or caste or sex, but also in the instruction and treatment of those who are already its members. It has no sacred days or seasons, no special sanctuaries, because every time and every place alike are holy. Above all, it has no sacerdotal system. It interposes no sacrificial tribe or class between God and man, by whose intervention alone God is reconciled and man forgiven. Each individual member holds personal communion with the Divine Head. To Him immediately he is responsible, and

from Him directly he obtains pardon and draws strength.

It is most important that we should keep this ideal definitely in view, and I have therefore stated it as broadly as possible. Yet the broad statement, if allowed to stand alone, would suggest a false impression, or at least would convey only a half truth. It must be evident that no society of men could hold together without officers, without rules, without institutions of any kind; and the Church of Christ is not exempt from this universal law. The conception, in short, is strictly an *ideal*, which we must ever hold before our eyes, which should inspire and interpret ecclesiastical polity, but which nevertheless cannot supersede the necessary wants of human society, and, if crudely and hastily applied, will lead only to signal failure. As appointed days and set places are indispensable to her efficiency, so also the Church could not fulfil the purposes for which she exists without rulers and teachers, without a ministry of reconciliation—in short, without an order of men who may in some sense be designated a priesthood. In this respect the ethics of Christianity present an analogy to the politics. Here also the ideal conception and the actual realization are in-

commensurate and in a manner contradictory. The Gospel is contrasted with the Law, as the spirit with the letter. Its ethical principle is not a code of positive ordinances, but conformity to a perfect exemplar, incorporation into a divine life. The distinction is most important, and eminently fertile in practical results. Yet no man would dare to live without laying down more or less definite rules for his own guidance, without yielding obedience to law in some sense ; and those who discard or attempt to discard all such aids, are often farthest from the attainment of Christian perfection.

This qualification is introduced here to deprecate any misunderstanding to which the opening statement, if left without compensation, would fairly be exposed. It will be time to inquire hereafter in what sense the Christian ministry may or may not be called a priesthood. But in attempting to investigate the historical development of this divine institution, no better starting-point suggested itself than the characteristic distinction of Christianity, as declared occasionally by the direct language but more frequently by the eloquent silence of the apostolic writings.

For in this respect Christianity stands apart from all the older religions of the world. So

far at least, the Mosaic dispensation did not differ from the religions of Egypt or Asia or Greece. Yet the sacerdotal system of the Old Testament possessed one important characteristic, which separated it from heathen priest-hoods, and which deserves especial notice. The priestly tribe held this peculiar relation to God only as the *representatives* of the whole nation. As *delegates* of the people, they offered sacrifice and made atonement. The whole community is regarded as "a kingdom of priests," "a holy nation." When the sons of Levi are set apart, their consecration is distinctly stated to be due under the divine guidance not to any inherent sanctity or to any caste privilege, but to an act of delegation on the part of the entire people. The Levites are, so to speak, ordained by the whole congregation. "The children of Israel," it is said, "shall put their hands upon the Levites." The nation thus deposes to a single tribe the priestly functions which belong properly to itself as a whole.

The Christian idea, therefore, was the restitution of this immediate and direct relation with God, which was partly suspended but not abolished by the appointment of a sacerdotal tribe. The Levitical priesthood, like the

Mosaic law, had served its temporary purpose. The period of childhood had passed, and the Church of God was now arrived at mature age. The covenant people resumed their sacerdotal functions. But the privileges of the covenant were no longer confined to the limits of a single nation. Every member of the human family was *potentially* a member of the Church, and, as such, a priest of God.

The influence of this idea on the moral and spiritual growth of the individual believer is too plain to require any comment ; but its social effects may call for a passing remark. It will hardly be denied, I think, by those who have studied the history of modern civilization with attention, that this conception of the Christian Church has been mainly instrumental in the emancipation of the degraded and oppressed, in the removal of artificial barriers between class and class, and in the diffusion of a general philanthropy untrammelled by the fetters of party or race ; in short, that to it mainly must be attributed the most important advantages which constitute the superiority of modern societies over ancient. Consciously or unconsciously, the idea of an universal priesthood, of the religious equality of all men, which, though not untaught before, was first

embodied in the Church of Christ, has worked and is working untold blessings in political institutions and in social life. But the careful student will also observe that this idea has hitherto been very imperfectly apprehended ; that throughout the history of the Church it has been struggling for recognition, at most times discerned in some of its aspects, but at all times wholly ignored in others ; and that therefore the actual results are a very inadequate measure of its efficacy, if only it could assume due prominence and were allowed free scope in action.

This, then, is the Christian ideal ; a holy season extending the whole year round—a temple confined only by the limits of the habitable world—a priesthood coextensive with the human race.

Strict loyalty to this conception was not held incompatible with practical measures of organization. As the Church grew in numbers, as new and heterogeneous elements were added, as the early fervor of devotion cooled and strange forms of disorder sprang up, it became necessary to provide for the emergency by fixed rules and definite officers. The community of goods, by which the infant Church had attempted to give effect to the idea of an

universal brotherhood, must very soon have been abandoned under the pressure of circumstances. The celebration of the first day in the week at once, the institution of annual festivals afterwards, were seen to be necessary to stimulate and direct the devotion of the believers. The appointment of definite places of meeting in the earliest days, the erection of special buildings for worship at a later date, were found indispensable to the working of the Church. But the apostles never lost sight of the idea in their teaching. They proclaimed loudly that "God dwelleth not in temples made by hands." They indignantly denounced those who "observed days and months and seasons and years." This language is not satisfied by supposing that they condemned only the temple worship in the one case, that they reprobated only Jewish sabbaths and new moons in the other. It was against the false principle that they waged war; the principle which exalted the means into an end, and gave an absolute intrinsic value to subordinate aids and expedients. These aids and expedients, for his own sake and for the good of the society to which he belonged, a Christian could not afford to hold lightly or neglect. But they were no part of

the *essence* of God's message to man in the Gospel : they must not be allowed to obscure the idea of Christian worship.

So it was also with the Christian priesthood. For communicating instruction and for preserving public order, for conducting religious worship and for dispensing social charities, it became necessary to appoint special officers. But the priestly functions and privileges of the Christian people are never regarded as transferred or even delegated to these officers. They are called stewards or messengers of God, servants or ministers of the Church, and the like ; but the sacerdotal title is never once conferred upon them. The only priests under the Gospel, designated as such in the New Testament, are the saints, the members of the Christian brotherhood.

As individuals, all Christians are priests alike. As members of a corporation, they have their several and distinct offices. The similitude of the human body, where each limb or organ performs its own functions, and the health and growth of the whole frame are promoted by the harmonious but separate working of every part, was chosen by St. Paul to represent the progress and operation of the Church. In two passages, written at two dif-

ferent stages in his apostolic career, he briefly sums up the offices in the Church with reference to this image. In the earlier, he enumerates "first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers, then powers, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, kinds of tongues." In the second passage the list is briefer: "some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers." The earlier enumeration differs chiefly from the later in specifying distinctly certain miraculous powers, this being required by the apostle's argument, which is directed against an exaggerated estimate and abuse of such gifts. Neither list can have been intended to be exhaustive. In both alike the work of converting unbelievers and founding congregations holds the foremost place, while the permanent government and instruction of the several churches is kept in the background. This prominence was necessary in the earliest age of the Gospel. The apostles, prophets, evangelists, all range under the former head. But the permanent ministry, though lightly touched upon, is not forgotten; for under the designation of "teachers, helps, governments" in the one passage, of "pastors and teachers" in the other, these officers must be intended. Again in both passages

alike it will be seen that great stress is laid on the work of the Spirit. The faculty of governing not less than the utterance of prophecy, the gift of healing not less than the gift of tongues, is an inspiration of the Holy Ghost. But on the other hand, in both alike there is an entire silence about priestly functions ; for the most exalted office in the Church, the highest gift of the Spirit, conveyed no sacerdotal right which was not enjoyed by the humblest member of the Christian community.

From the subordinate place, which it thus occupies in the notices of St. Paul, the permanent ministry gradually emerged, as the Church assumed a more settled form, and the higher but temporary offices, such as the apostolate, fell away. This progressive growth and development of the ministry, until it arrived at its mature and normal state, it will be the object of the following pages to trace.

But before proceeding further, some definition of terms is necessary. On no subject has more serious error arisen from the confusion of language. The word "priest" has two different senses. In the one it is a synonyme for presbyter or elder, and designates the minister who presides over and instructs a Christian congregation ; in the other it is equivalent to

the Latin sacerdos, the Greek *ἱερεὺς*, or the Hebrew *קָהֵן*, the offerer of sacrifices, who also performs other mediatorial offices between God and man. How the confusion between these two meanings has affected the history and theology of the Church, it will be instructive to consider in the sequel. At present it is sufficient to say that the word will be used throughout this essay, as it has been used hitherto, in the latter sense only, so that priestly will be equivalent to "sacerdotal" or "hieratic." Etymologically, indeed, the other meaning is alone correct (for the words priest and presbyter are the same); but convenience will justify its restriction to this secondary and imported sense, since the English language supplies no other rendering of sacerdos or *ἱερεὺς*. On the other hand, when the Christian elder is meant, the longer form "presbyter" will be employed throughout.

History seems to show decisively, that before the middle of the second century each church or organized Christian community had its three orders of ministers—its bishop, its presbyters, and its deacons. On this point there cannot reasonably be two opinions. But at what time and under what circumstances this organization

was matured, and to what extent our allegiance is due to it as an authoritative ordinance, are more difficult questions. Some have recognized in episcopacy an institution of divine origin, absolute and indispensable ; others have represented it as destitute of all apostolic sanction and authority. Some, again, have sought for the archetype of the threefold ministry in the Aaronic priesthood ; others in the arrangements of synagogue worship. In this clamor of antagonistic opinions, history is obviously the sole upright, impartial referee ; and the historical mode of treatment will therefore be strictly adhered to in the following investigation. The doctrine in this instance at all events is involved in the history.

St. Luke's narrative represents the Twelve Apostles in the earliest days as the sole directors and administrators of the Church. For the financial business of the infant community, not less than for its spiritual guidance, they alone are responsible. This state of things could not last long. By the rapid accession of numbers, and still more by the admission of heterogeneous classes into the Church, the work became too vast and too various for them to discharge unaided. To relieve them from the increasing pressure, the inferior and less

important functions passed successively into other hands ; and thus each grade of the ministry, beginning from the lowest, was created in order.

1. The establishment of the diaconate came first. Complaints had reached the ears of the apostles from an outlying portion of the community. The Hellenist widows had been overlooked in the daily distribution of food and alms. To remedy this neglect a new office was created. Seven men were appointed whose duty it was to superintend the public messes, and, as we may suppose, to provide in other ways for the bodily wants of the helpless poor. Thus relieved, the Twelve were enabled to devote themselves without interruption "to prayer and to the ministry of the Word." The apostles suggested the creation of this new office, but the persons were chosen by popular election and afterwards ordained by the Twelve with imposition of hands. Though the complaint came from the Hellenists, it must not be supposed that the ministrations of the Seven were confined to this class. The object in creating this new office is stated to be not the partial but the entire relief of the apostles from the serving of tables. This being the case, the appointment of Hellenists (for such

they would appear to have been from their names) is a token of the liberal and loving spirit which prompted the Hebrew members of the Church in the selection of persons to fill the office.

I have assumed that the office thus established represents the later diaconate; for though this point has been much disputed, I do not see how the identity of the two can reasonably be called in question. If the word deacon does not occur in the passage, yet the corresponding verb and substantive, *διακονεῖν* and *διακονία*, are repeated more than once. The functions, moreover, are substantially those which devolved on the deacons of the earliest ages, and which still in theory, though not altogether in practice, form the primary duties of the office. Again, it seems clear from the emphasis with which St. Luke dwells on the new institution, that he looks on the establishment of this office, not as an isolated incident, but as the initiation of a new order of things in the Church. It is, in short, one of those representative facts, of which the earlier part of his narrative is almost wholly made up. Lastly, the tradition of the identity of the two offices has been unanimous from the earliest times. Irenæus, the first writer who alludes

to the appointment of the Seven, distinctly holds them to have been deacons. The Roman Church, some centuries later, though the presbytery had largely increased meanwhile, still restricted the number of deacons to seven, thus preserving the memory of the first institution of this office. And in like manner, a canon of the Council of Neocæsarea (A. D. 315) enacted that there should be no more than seven deacons in any city however great, alleging the apostolic model. This rule, it is true, was only partially observed ; but the tradition was at all events so far respected, that the creation of an order of subdeacons was found necessary in order to remedy the inconvenience arising from the limitation.

The narrative in the Acts, if I mistake not, implies that the office thus created was entirely new. Some writers, however, have explained the incident as an extension to the Hellenists of an institution which already existed among the Hebrew Christians, and is implied in the "younger men" mentioned in an earlier part of St. Luke's history. This view seems not only to be groundless in itself, but also to contradict the general tenor of the narrative. It would appear, moreover, that the institution was not merely new within the

Christian Church, but novel absolutely. There is no reason for connecting it with any prototype existing in the Jewish community. The narrative offers no hint that it was either a continuation of the order of Levites or an adaptation of an office in the synagogue. The philanthropic purpose for which it was established presents no direct point of contact with the known duties of either. The Levite, whose function it was to keep the beasts for slaughter, to cleanse away the blood and offal of the sacrifices, to serve as porter at the temple gates, and to swell the chorus of sacred psalmody, bears no strong resemblance to the Christian deacon, whose ministrations lay among the widows and orphans, and whose time was almost wholly spent in works of charity. And again, the Chazan, or attendant in the synagogue, whose duties were confined to the care of the building and the preparation for service, has more in common with the modern parish clerk than with the deacon in the infant Church of Christ. It is therefore a baseless, though a very common, assumption that the Christian diaconate was copied from the arrangements of the synagogue. The Hebrew Chazan is not rendered by deacon in the Greek Testament; but a different word is

used instead. We may fairly presume that St. Luke dwells at such length on the establishment of the diaconate because he regards it as a novel creation.

Thus the work primarily assigned to the deacons was the relief of the poor. Their office was essentially a "serving of tables," as distinguished from the higher function of preaching and instruction. But partly from the circumstances of their position, partly from the personal character of those first appointed, the deacons at once assumed a prominence which is not indicated in the original creation of the office. Moving about freely among the poorer brethren and charged with the relief of their material wants, they would find opportunities of influence which were denied to the higher officers of the Church, who necessarily kept themselves more aloof. The devout zeal of a Stephen or a Philip would turn these opportunities to the best account; and thus, without ceasing to be dispensers of alms, they became also ministers of the Word. The apostles themselves had directed that the persons chosen should be not only "men of honest report," but also "full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom;" and this careful foresight, to which the extended influence of the

diaconate may be ascribed, proved also the security against its abuse. But still the work of teaching must be traced rather to the capacity of the individual officer than to the direct functions of the office. St. Paul, writing thirty years later, and stating the requirements of the diaconate, lays the stress mainly on those qualifications which would be most important in persons moving about from house to house, and intrusted with the distribution of alms. While he requires that they shall hold the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience—in other words, that they shall be sincere believers—he is not anxious, as in the case of the presbyters, to secure “aptness to teach,” but demands especially that they shall be free from certain vicious habits, such as a love of gossiping, and a greed of paltry gain, into which they might easily fall, from the nature of their duties.

From the mother Church of Jerusalem the institution spread to Gentile Christian brotherhoods. By the “helps” in the First Epistle to the Corinthians (A. D. 57), and by the “ministration” in the Epistle to the Romans (A. D. 58), the diaconate solely or chiefly seems to be intended; but besides these incidental allusions, the latter epistle bears more significant

testimony to the general extension of the office. The strict seclusion of the female sex in Greece and in some Oriental countries necessarily debarred them from the ministrations of men ; and to meet the want thus felt, it was found necessary at an early date to admit women to the diaconate. A woman-deacon belonging to the Church of Cenchreæ is mentioned in the Epistle to the Romans. As time advances, the diaconate becomes still more prominent. In the Philippian Church, a few years later (about A.D. 62), the deacons take their rank after the presbyters, the two orders together constituting the recognized ministry of the Christian society there. Again, passing over another interval of some years, we find St. Paul, in the First Epistle to Timothy (about A.D. 66), giving express directions as to the qualifications of men-deacons and women-deacons alike. From the tenor of his language, it seems clear that, in the Christian communities of proconsular Asia at all events, the institution was so common that ministerial organization would be considered incomplete without it. On the other hand, we may, perhaps, infer from the instructions which he sends about the same time to Titus in Crete, that he did not consider it indispensable ; for

while he mentions having given direct orders to his delegate to appoint presbyters in every city, he is silent about a diaconate.

2. While the diaconate was thus an entirely new creation, called forth by a special emergency, and developed by the progress of events, the early history of the presbyterate was different. If the sacred historian dwells at length on the institution of the lower office but is silent about the first beginnings of the higher, the explanation seems to be, that the latter had not the claim of novelty, like the former. The Christian Church, in its earliest stage, was regarded by the body of the Jewish people as nothing more than a new sect springing up by the side of the old. This was not unnatural ; for the first disciples conformed to the religion of their fathers in all essential points, practising circumcision, observing the sabbaths, and attending the temple-worship. The sects in the Jewish commonwealth were not, properly speaking, non-conformists. They only superadded their own special organization to the established religion of their country, which, for the most part, they were careful to observe. The institution of synagogues was flexible enough to allow free scope for wide divergences of creed

and practice. Different races, as the Cyrenians and Alexandrians ; different classes of society, as the freedmen ; perhaps also different sects, as the Sadducees or the Essenes—each had or could have their own special synagogue, where they might indulge their peculiarities without hindrance. As soon as the expansion of the Church rendered some organization necessary, it would form a “synagogue” of its own. The Christian congregations in Palestine long continued to be designated by this name, though the term “ecclesia” took its place from the very first in heathen countries. With the synagogue itself, they would naturally, if not necessarily, adopt the normal government of a synagogue, and a body of elders or presbyters would be chosen to direct the religious worship, and partly also to watch over the temporal well-being of the society.

Hence the silence of St. Luke. When he first mentions the presbyters, he introduces them without preface, as though the institution were a matter of course. But the moment of their introduction is significant. I have pointed out elsewhere, that the two persecutions, of which St. Stephen and St. James were respectively the chief victims, mark two important stages in the diffusion of the

Gospel. Their connection with the internal organization of the Church is not less remarkable. The first results directly from the establishment of the lowest order in the ministry, the diaconate. To the second may probably be ascribed the adoption of the next higher grade, the presbytery. This later persecution was the signal for the dispersion of the Twelve on a wider mission. Since Jerusalem would no longer be their home as hitherto, it became necessary to provide for the permanent direction of the Church there ; and for this purpose the usual government of the synagogue would be adopted. Now, at all events, for the first time we read of “presbyters” in connection with the Christian brotherhood at Jerusalem.

From this time forward all official communications with the mother Church are carried on through their intervention. To the presbyters Barnabas and Saul bear the alms contributed by the Gentile churches. The presbyters are persistently associated with the apostles, in convening the congress, in the superscription of the decree, and in the general settlement of the dispute between the Jewish and Gentile Christians. By the presbyters St. Paul is received many years later

on his last visit to Jerusalem, and to them he gives an account of his missionary labors and triumphs.

But the office was not confined to the mother Church alone. Jewish presbyteries existed already in all the principal cities of the dispersion, and Christian presbyteries would early occupy a not less wide area. On their very first missionary journey the Apostles Paul and Barnabas are described as appointing presbyters in every church. The same rule was doubtless carried out in all the brotherhoods founded later ; but it is mentioned here, and here only, because the mode of procedure on this occasion would suffice as a type of the apostles' dealings elsewhere under similar circumstances.

The name of the presbyter then presents no difficulty. But what must be said of the term "bishop"? It has been shown that in the apostolic writings the two are only different designations of one and the same office. How and where was this second name originated ?

To the officers of Gentile churches alone is the term applied, as a synonyme for presbyter. At Philippi, in Asia Minor, in Crete, the presbyter is so called. In the next generation the title is employed in a letter written by the

Greek Church of Rome to the Greek Church of Corinth. Thus the word would seem to be especially Hellenic. Beyond this we are left to conjecture. But if we may assume that the directors of religious and social clubs among the heathen were commonly so called, it would naturally occur, if not to the Gentile Christians themselves, at all events to their heathen associates, as a fit designation for the presiding members of the new society. The infant Church of Christ, which appeared to the Jew as a synagogue, would be regarded by the heathen as a confraternity. But whatever may have been the origin of the term, it did not altogether dispossess the earlier name "presbyter," which still held its place as a synonyme even in Gentile congregations. And when at length the term bishop was appropriated to a higher office in the Church, the latter became again, as it had been at first, the sole designation of the Christian elder.

The duties of the presbyters were twofold. They were both rulers and instructors of the congregation. This double function appears in St. Paul's expression "pastors and teachers," where, as the form of the original seems to show, the two words describe the same office, under different aspects. Though *government*

was probably the first conception of the office, yet the work of *teaching* must have fallen to the presbyters from the very first, and have assumed greater prominence as time went on. With the growth of the Church, the visits of the apostles and evangelists to any individual community must have become less and less frequent, so that the burden of instruction would be gradually transferred from these missionary preachers to the local officers of the congregation. Hence St. Paul in two passages, where he gives directions relating to bishops or presbyters, insists specially on the faculty of teaching as a qualification for the position. Yet even here this work seems to be regarded rather as incidental to than as inherent in the office. In the one epistle he directs that double honor shall be paid to those presbyters who have ruled well, but *especially* to such as “labor in word and doctrine,” as though one holding this office might decline the work of instruction. In the other, he closes the list of qualifications with the requirement that the bishop (or presbyter) hold fast the faithful word in accordance with the apostolic teaching “that he may be able both to exhort in the healthy doctrine and to confute gainsayers,” alleging as a reason the pernicious activity and growing

numbers of the false teachers. Nevertheless, there is no ground for supposing that the work of teaching and the work of governing pertained to separate members of the presbyteral college. As each had his special gift, so would he devote himself more or less exclusively to the one or the other of these sacred functions.

3. It is clear, then, that at the close of the apostolic age the two lower orders of the threefold ministry were firmly and widely established ; but traces of the third and highest order, the episcopate properly so called, are few and indistinct.

For the opinion hazarded by Theodoret and adopted by many later writers, that the same officers in the Church who were first called apostles came afterwards to be designated bishops, is baseless. If the two offices had been identical, the substitution of the one name for the other would have required some explanation. But in fact the functions of the apostle and the bishop differed widely. The apostle, like the prophet or the evangelist, held no *local* office. He was essentially, as his name denotes, a missionary, moving about from place to place, founding and confirming new brotherhoods. The only ground on which Theodoret builds his theory is a false interpretation of a

passage in St. Paul. At the opening of the Epistle to Philippi the presbyters (here called bishops) and deacons are saluted, while in the body of the letter one Epaphroditus is mentioned as an "apostle" of the Philippians. If "apostle" here had the meaning which is thus assigned to it, all the three orders of the ministry would be found at Philippi. But this interpretation will not stand. The true apostle, like St. Peter or St. John, bears this title as the messenger, the delegate, of Christ himself: while Epaphroditus is only so styled as the messenger of the Philippian brotherhood; and in the very next clause the expression is explained by the statement that he carried their alms to St. Paul. The use of the word here has a parallel in another passage, where messengers (or apostles) of the churches are mentioned. It is not, therefore, to the apostle that we must look for the prototype of the bishop. How far, indeed, and in what sense the bishop may be called a successor of the apostles, will be a proper subject for consideration; but the succession, at least, does not consist in an identity of office.

The history of the name itself suggests a different account of the origin of the episcopate. If bishop was at first used as a syno-

nyme for presbyter, and afterwards came to designate the higher officer under whom the presbyters served, the episcopate properly so called would seem to have been developed from the subordinate office. In other words, the episcopate was formed, not out of the apostolic order by localization, but out of the presbyteral by elevation ; and the title, which originally was common to all, came at length to be appropriated to the chief among them.

If this account be true, we might expect to find in the mother Church of Jerusalem, which as the earliest founded would soonest ripen into maturity, the first traces of this developed form of the ministry. Nor is this expectation disappointed. James the Lord's brother alone, within the period compassed by the apostolic writings, can claim to be regarded as a bishop in the later and more special sense of the term. In the language of St. Paul he takes precedence even of the earliest and greatest preachers of the Gospel, St. Peter and St. John, where the affairs of the Jewish Church specially are concerned. In St. Luke's narrative he appears as the local representative of the brotherhood in Jerusalem, presiding at the congress, whose decision he suggests and whose decree he appears to

have framed, receiving the missionary preachers as they revisit the mother Church, acting generally as the referee in communications with foreign brotherhoods. The place assigned to him in the spurious Clementines, where he is represented as supreme arbiter over the Church universal in matters of doctrine, must be treated as a gross exaggeration. This kind of authority is nowhere conferred upon him in the apostolic writings; but his social and ecclesiastical position, as it appears in St. Luke and St. Paul, explains how the exaggeration was possible. And this position is the more remarkable if, as seems to have been the case, he was not one of the Twelve.

On the other hand, though especially prominent, he appears in the Acts as a member of a body. When St. Peter, after his escape from prison, is about to leave Jerusalem, he desires that his deliverance shall be reported to "James and the brethren." When again St. Paul on his last visit to the Holy City goes to see James, we are told that all the presbyters were present. If in some passages St. James is named by himself, in others he is omitted and the presbyters alone are mentioned. From this it may be inferred that, though holding a position superior to the rest, he was

still considered as a member of the presbytery ; that he was in fact the head or president of the college. What power this presidency conferred, how far it was recognized as an independent official position, and to what degree it was due to the ascendancy of his personal gifts, are questions which in the absence of direct information can only be answered by conjecture. But his close relationship with the Lord, his rare energy of character, and his rigid sanctity of life, which won the respect even of the unconverted Jews, would react upon his office, and may perhaps have elevated it to a level which was not definitely contemplated in its origin.

But while the episcopal office thus existed in the mother Church of Jerusalem from very early days, at least in a rudimentary form, the New Testament presents no distinct traces of such organization in the Gentile congregations. The government of the Gentile churches, as there represented, exhibits two successive stages of development tending in this direction ; but the third stage, in which episcopacy definitely appears, still lies beyond the horizon.

(1) We have first of all the apostles themselves exercising the superintendence of the churches under their care, sometimes in per-

son and on the spot, sometimes at a distance by letter or by message. The imaginary picture drawn by St. Paul, when he directs the punishment of the Corinthian offender, vividly represents his position in this respect. The members of the church are gathered together, the elders, we may suppose, being seated apart on a dais or tribune ; he himself, as president, directs their deliberations, collects their votes, pronounces sentence on the guilty man. How the absence of the apostolic president was actually supplied in this instance, we do not know. But a council was held ; he did direct their verdict “ in spirit though not in person ; ” and “ the majority ” condemned the offender. In the same way St. Peter, giving directions to the elders, claims a place among them. The title “ fellow-presbyter, ” which he applies to himself, would doubtless recall to the memory of his readers the occasions when he himself had presided with the elders and guided their deliberations.

(2) As the first stage, then, the apostles themselves were the superintendents of each individual church. But the wider spread of the Gospel would diminish the frequency of their visits and impair the efficiency of such supervision. In the second stage therefore we

find them, at critical seasons and in important congregations, delegating some trustworthy disciple who should fix his abode in a given place for a time and direct the affairs of the church there. The Pastoral Epistles present this second stage to our view. It is the conception of a later age which represents Timothy as bishop of Ephesus and Titus as bishop of Crete. St. Paul's own language implies that the position which they held was temporary. In both cases their term of office is drawing to a close, when the apostle writes. But the conception is not altogether without foundation. With less permanence but perhaps greater authority, the position occupied by these apostolic delegates nevertheless fairly represents the functions of the bishop early in the second century. They were in fact the link between the apostle whose superintendence was occasional and general, and the bishop who exercised a permanent supervision over an individual congregation.

Beyond this second stage the notices in the apostolic writings do not carry us. The angels of the seven churches indeed are frequently alleged as an exception. But neither does the name "angel" itself suggest such an explanation, nor is this view in keeping with

the highly figurative style of this wonderful book. Its sublime imagery seems to be seriously impaired by this interpretation. On the other hand, St. John's own language gives the true key to the symbolism. "The seven stars," so it is explained, "are the seven angels of the seven churches, and the seven candlesticks are the seven churches." This contrast between the heavenly and the earthly fires—the star shining steadily by its own inherent eternal light, and the lamp flickering and uncertain, requiring to be fed with fuel and tended with care—cannot be devoid of meaning. The star is the suprasensual counterpart, the heavenly representative; the lamp, the earthly realization, the outward embodiment. Whether the angel is here conceived as an actual person, the celestial guardian, or only as a personification, the idea or spirit of the church, it is unnecessary for my present purpose to consider. But whatever may be the exact conception, he is identified with and made responsible for it to a degree wholly unsuited to any human officer. Nothing is predicated of him which may not be predicated of it. To him are imputed all its hopes, its fears, its graces, its shortcomings. He is punished with it, and he is rewarded with it. In one passage espe-

cially the language applied to the angel seems to exclude the common interpretation. In the message to Thyatira the angel is blamed, because he suffers himself to be led astray by "his wife Jezebel." In this image of Ahab's idolatrous queen some dangerous and immoral teaching must be personified ; for it does violence alike to the general tenor and to the individual expressions in the passage to suppose that an actual woman is meant. Thus the symbolism of the passage is entirely in keeping. Nor again is this mode of representation new. The "princes" in the prophecy of Daniel present a very near if not an exact parallel to the angels of the Revelation. Here, as elsewhere, St. John seems to adapt the imagery of this earliest apocalyptic book.

Indeed, if with most recent writers we adopt the early date of the Apocalypse of St. John, it is scarcely possible that the episcopal organization should have been so mature when it was written. In this case probably not more than two or three years have elapsed from the date of the Pastoral Epistles, and this interval seems quite insufficient to account for so great a change in the administration of the Asiatic churches.

As late therefore as the year 70 no distinct

signs of episcopal government have hitherto appeared in Gentile Christendom. Yet, unless we have recourse to a sweeping condemnation of received documents, it seems vain to deny that early in the second century the episcopal office was firmly and widely established. Thus during the last three decades of the first century, and consequently during the lifetime of the latest surviving apostle, this change must have been brought about. But the circumstances under which it was effected are shrouded in darkness; and various attempts have been made to read the obscure enigma. Of several solutions offered, one at least deserves special notice. If Rothe's view cannot be accepted as final, its examination will at least serve to bring out the conditions of the problem; and for this reason I shall state and discuss it as briefly as possible. For the words in which the theory is stated I am myself responsible.

“ The epoch to which we last adverted marks an important crisis in the history of Christianity. The Church was distracted and dismayed by the growing dissensions between the Jewish and Gentile brethren, and by the menacing apparition of Gnostic heresy. So long as its three most prominent leaders were living,

there had been some security against the extravagance of parties, some guarantee of harmonious combination among diverse churches. But St. Peter, St. Paul, and St. James were carried away by death almost at the same time and in the face of this great emergency. Another blow, too, had fallen : the long-delayed judgment of God on the once Holy City was delayed no more. With the overthrow of Jerusalem the visible centre of the Church was removed. The keystone of the fabric was withdrawn, and the whole edifice threatened with ruin. There was a crying need for some organization which should cement together the diverse elements of Christian society and preserve it from disintegration.

“ Out of this need the Catholic Church arose. Christendom had hitherto existed as a number of distinct isolated congregations, drawn in the same direction by a common faith and common sympathies, accidentally linked one with another by the personal influence and apostolic authority of their common teachers, but not bound together in a harmonious whole by any permanent external organization. Now at length this great result was brought about. The magnitude of the change effected during this period may be measured by the difference

in the constitution and conception of the Christian Church as presented in the Pastoral Epistles of St. Paul and the letters of St. Ignatius respectively.

“By whom then was the new constitution organized? To this question only one answer can be given. This great work must be ascribed to the surviving apostles. St. John especially, who built up the speculative theology of the Church, was mainly instrumental in completing its external constitution also; for Asia Minor was the centre from which the new movement spread. St. John, however, was not the only apostle or early disciple who lived in this province. St. Philip is known to have settled in Hierapolis. St. Andrew also seems to have dwelt in these parts. The silence of history clearly proclaims the fact which the voice of history but faintly suggests. If we hear nothing more of the apostles' missionary labors, it is because they had organized an united Church, to which they had transferred the work of evangelization.

“Of such a combined effort on the part of the apostles, resulting in a definite ecclesiastical polity, in an united Catholic Church, no direct account is preserved, but incidental notices are not wanting; and in the general pau-

city of information respecting the whole period more than this was not to be expected.

“(1) Eusebius relates that after the martyrdom of St. James and the fall of Jerusalem, the remaining apostles and personal disciples of the Lord, with his surviving relations, met together and after consultation unanimously appointed Symeon, the son of Clopas, to the vacant see. It can hardly be doubted, that Eusebius in this passage quotes from the earlier historian Hegesippus, from whom he has derived the other incidents in the lives of James and Symeon ; and we may well believe that this council discussed larger questions than the appointment of a single bishop, and that the constitution and prospects of the Church generally came under deliberation. It may have been on this occasion that the surviving apostles partitioned out the world among them, and ‘Asia was assigned to John.’

“(2) A fragment of Irenæus points in the same direction. Writing of the holy eucharist he says, ‘They who have paid attention to the second ordinances of the apostles know that the Lord appointed a new offering in the new covenant.’ By these ‘second ordinances’ must be understood some later decrees or injunctions than those contained in the apostolic

epistles ; and these would naturally be framed and promulgated by such a council as the notice of Eusebius suggests.

“(3) To the same effect St. Clement of Rome writes, that the apostles, having appointed elders in every church, and foreseeing the disputes which would arise, ‘ afterwards added a codicil (supplementary direction) that if they should fall asleep, other approved men should succeed to their office.’ Here the pronouns ‘ they,’ ‘ their,’ must refer, not to the first appointed presbyters, but to the apostles themselves. Thus interpreted, the passage contains a distinct notice of the institution of bishops as successors of the apostles ; while in the word ‘ afterwards ’ is involved an allusion to the later council to which the ‘ second ordinances ’ of Irenæus also refer.

“ These notices seem to justify the conclusion that immediately after the fall of Jerusalem a council of the apostles and first teachers of the Gospel was held to deliberate on the crisis, and to frame measures for the well-being of the Church. The centre of the system then organized was episcopacy, which at once secured the compact and harmonious working of each individual congregation, and as the link of communication between separate broth-

erhoods, formed the whole into one undivided Catholic Church. Recommended by this high authority, the new constitution was immediately and generally adopted."

This theory, which is maintained with much ability and vigor, attracted considerable notice, as being a new defence of episcopacy advanced by a member of a Presbyterian church. On the other hand, its intrinsic value seems to have been unduly depreciated; for, if it fails to give a satisfactory solution, it has at least the merit of stating the conditions of the problem with great distinctness, and of pointing out the direction to be followed. On this account it seemed worthy of attention.

It must indeed be confessed that the historical notices will not bear the weight of the inference built upon them. (1) The account of Hegesippus (for to Hegesippus the statement in Eusebius may fairly be ascribed) confines the object of this gathering to the appointment of a successor to St. James. If its deliberations had exerted that vast and permanent influence on the future of the Church which Rothe's theory supposes, it is scarcely possible that this early historian should have been ignorant of the fact, or knowing it should have passed it over in silence. (2) The genuineness

of the Pfaffian fragments of Irenæus must always remain doubtful. Independently of the mystery which hangs over their publication, the very passage quoted throws great suspicion on their authorship; for the expression in question seems naturally to refer to the so-called Apostolic Constitutions, which have been swelled to their present size by the accretions of successive generations, but can hardly have existed even in a rudimentary form in the age of Irenæus, or if existing have been regarded by him as genuine. If he had been acquainted with such later ordinances issued by the authority of an apostolic council, is it conceivable that in his great work on heresies he should have omitted to quote a sanction so unquestionable, where his main object is to show that the doctrine of the Catholic Church in his day represented the true teaching of the apostles, and his main argument the fact that the Catholic bishops of his time derived their office by direct succession from the apostles?

(3) The passage in the epistle of St. Clement cannot be correctly interpreted by Rothe; for his explanation, though elaborately defended, disregards the purpose of the letter. The Corinthian Church is disturbed by a spirit of insubordination. Presbyters, who have faith-

fully discharged their duties, have nevertheless been ruthlessly expelled from office. St. Clement writes in the name of the Roman Church to correct these irregularities. He reminds the Corinthians that the presbyteral office was established by the apostles, who not only themselves appointed elders, but also gave directions that the vacancies caused from time to time by death should be filled up by other men of character, thus providing for a succession in the ministry. Consequently in these unworthy feuds they were setting themselves in opposition to officers of repute either actually nominated by apostles, or appointed by those so nominated in accordance with the apostolic injunctions. There is no mention of episcopacy, properly so called, throughout the epistle; for in the language of St. Clement, "bishop" and "presbyter" are still synonymous terms. Thus the pronouns "they," "their," refer naturally to the presbyters first appointed by the apostles themselves. Whether (supposing the reading to be correct) Rothe has rightly translated *ἐπινομήν* "a codicil," it is unnecessary to inquire, as the rendering does not materially affect the question.

Nor, again, does it appear that the rise of episcopacy was so sudden and so immediate.

that an authoritative order issuing from an apostolic council alone can explain the phenomenon. In the mysterious period which comprises the last thirty years of the first century, and on which history is almost wholly silent, episcopacy must, it is true, have been mainly developed. But before this period its beginnings may be traced, and after the close it is not yet fully matured. It seems vain to deny with Rothe that the position of St. James in the mother Church furnished the precedent and the pattern of the later episcopate. It appears equally mistaken to maintain, as this theory requires, that at the close of the first and the beginning of the second century the organization of all churches alike had arrived at the same stage of development and exhibited the episcopate in an equally perfect form.

On the other hand, the emergency which consolidated the episcopal form of government is correctly and forcibly stated. It was remarked long ago by Jerome, that "before factions were introduced into religion by the prompting of the devil," the churches were governed by a council of elders, "but as soon as each man began to consider those whom he had baptized to belong to himself and not to Christ, it was decided throughout the world

that one elected from among the elders should be placed over the rest, so that the care of the church should devolve on him, and the seeds of schism be removed." And again in another passage he writes to the same effect: "When afterwards one presbyter was elected that he might be placed over the rest, this was done as a remedy against schism, that each man might not drag to himself and thus break up the Church of Christ." To the dissensions of Jew and Gentile converts, and to the disputes of Gnostic false teachers, the development of episcopacy may be mainly ascribed.

Nor again is Rothe probably wrong as to the authority mainly instrumental in effecting the change. Asia Minor was the adopted home of more than one Apostle after the fall of Jerusalem. Asia Minor too was the nurse, if not the mother, of episcopacy in the Gentile churches. So important an institution, developed in a Christian community of which St. John was the living centre and guide, could hardly have grown up without his sanction; and, as will be seen presently, early tradition very distinctly connects his name with the appointment of bishops in these parts.

But to the question how this change was brought about, a somewhat different answer

must be given. We have seen that the needs of the Church and the ascendancy of his personal character placed St. James at the head of the Christian brotherhood in Jerusalem. Though remaining a member of the presbyteral council, he was singled out from the rest and placed in a position of superior responsibility. His exact power it would be impossible, and it is unnecessary, to define. When, therefore, after the fall of the city, St. John, with other surviving apostles, removed to Asia Minor, and found there manifold irregularities and threatening symptoms of disruption, he would not unnaturally encourage an approach in these Gentile Churches to the same organization which had been signally blessed and proved effectual in holding together the mother Church amid dangers not less serious. The existence of a council or college necessarily supposes a presidency of some kind, whether this presidency be assumed by each member in turn, or lodged in the hands of a single person. It was only necessary therefore for him to give permanence, definiteness, stability, to an office which already existed in germ. There is no reason, however, for supposing that any direct ordinance was issued to the churches. The evi-

dent utility, and even pressing need of such an office, sanctioned by the most venerated name in Christendom, would be sufficient to secure its wide though gradual reception. Such a reception, it is true, supposes a substantial harmony and freedom of intercourse among the churches which remained undisturbed by the troubles of the times ; but the silence of history is not at all unfavorable to this supposition. In this way, during the historical blank which extends over half a century after the fall of Jerusalem, episcopacy was matured and the Catholic Church consolidated.

At all events, when we come to trace the early history of the office in the principal churches of Christendom in succession, we shall find all the facts consistent with the account adopted here, while some of them are hardly reconcilable with any other. In this review it will be convenient to commence with the mother Church, and to take the others in order, as they are connected either by neighborhood or by political or religious sympathy.

1. The Church of Jerusalem, as I have already pointed out, presents the earliest instance of a bishop. A certain official prominence is assigned to James the Lord's brother, both in the Epistles of St. Paul and in the Acts of

the Apostles. And the inference drawn from the notices in the canonical Scriptures is borne out by the tradition of the next ages. As early as the middle of the second century all parties concur in representing him as a bishop in the strict sense of the term. In this respect Catholic Christians and Ebionite Christians hold the same language: the testimony of Hegesippus on the one hand is matched by the testimony of the Clementine writings on the other. On his death, which is recorded as taking place immediately before the war of Vespasian, Symeon was appointed in his place. Hegesippus, who is our authority for this statement, distinctly regards Symeon as holding the same office with James, and no less distinctly calls him a bishop. This same historian also mentions the circumstances that one Thebuthis (apparently on this occasion), being disappointed of the bishopric, raised a schism and attempted to corrupt the virgin purity of the Church with false doctrine. As Symeon died in the reign of Trajan, at an advanced age, it is not improbable that Hegesippus was born during his lifetime. Of the successors of Symeon a complete list is preserved by Eusebius. The fact, however, that it comprises thirteen names within a period of

less than thirty years must throw suspicion on its accuracy. A succession so rapid is hardly consistent with the known tenure of life of offices in ordinary cases ; and if the list be correct, the frequent changes must be attributed to the troubles and uncertainties of the times. If Eusebius here also had derived his information from Hegesippus, it must at least have had some solid foundation in fact ; but even then the alternation between Jerusalem and Pella, and the possible confusion of the bishops with other prominent members of the presbytery, might introduce much error. It appears, however, that in this instance he was indebted to less trustworthy sources of information. The statement that after the foundation of *Ælia Capitolina* (A.D. 136) Marcus presided over the mother Church, as its first Gentile bishop, need not be questioned ; and beyond this point it is unnecessary to carry the investigation.

Of other bishops in Palestine and the neighborhood before the latter half of the second century no trustworthy notice is preserved, so far as I know. During the Roman episcopate of Victor, however (about A.D. 190), we find three bishops, Theophilus of *Cæsarea*, Cassius of *Tyre*, and Clarus of *Ptolemais*, in conjunc-

tion with Narcissus of Jerusalem, writing an encyclical letter in favor of the western view in the Paschal controversy. If indeed any reliance could be placed on the Clementine writings, the episcopate of Palestine was matured at a very early date; for St. Peter is there represented as appointing bishops in every city which he visits, in Cæsarea, Tyre, Sidon, Berytus, Tripolis, and Laodicea. And though the fictions of this theological romance have no direct historical value, it is hardly probable that the writer would have indulged in such statements unless an early development of the episcopate in these parts had invested his narrative with an air of probability. The institution would naturally spread from the Church of Jerusalem to the more important communities in the neighborhood, even without the direct intervention of the apostles.

2. From the mother Church of the Hebrews we pass naturally to the metropolis of Gentile Christendom. Antioch is traditionally reported to have received its first bishop, Evodius, from St. Peter. The story may perhaps rest on some basis of truth, though no confidence can be placed in this class of statements, unless they are known to have been derived

from some early authority. But of Ignatius, who stands second in the traditional catalogue of Antiochene bishops, we can speak with more confidence. He is designated a bishop by very early authors, and he evidently speaks as such. He writes to one bishop, Polycarp; he mentions by name another, Onesimus. He looks forward to the appointment of a successor at Antioch after his death. He urges obedience to their bishops on his correspondents. And, lest it should be supposed that he uses the term in its earlier sense as a synonyme for presbyter, he in one passage mentions in conjunction the three orders of the ministry—the bishop, the presbyters, and the deacons. Altogether, it is plain that he looks upon the episcopal system as the authoritative form of government in those churches with which he is most directly concerned. It may be suggested indeed that he would hardly have enforced the claims of episcopacy unless it were an object of attack, and its comparatively recent origin might therefore be inferred; but still some years would be required before it could have assumed that mature and definite form which it has in his letters. It seems impossible to decide, and it is needless to investigate, the exact date of the epistles of St.

Ignatius ; but we cannot do wrong in placing them during the earliest years of the second century. The successor to whom Ignatius alludes is reported to have been Hero ; and from his time onward the list of Antiochene bishops is complete. If the authenticity of the list, as a whole, is questionable, two bishops of Antioch, at least during the second century, Theophilus and Serapion, are known as historical persons.

If the Clementine writings emanated, as seems probable, from Syria or Palestine, this will be the proper place to state their attitude with regard to episcopacy. Whether the opinions there advanced exhibit the recognized tenets of a sect or congregation, or the private views of the individual writer or writers, will probably never be ascertained ; but, whatever may be said on this point, these heretical books outstrip the most rigid orthodoxy in their reverence for the episcopal office. Monarchy is represented as necessary to the peace of the Church. The bishop occupies the seat of Christ, and must be honored as the image of God. And hence St. Peter, as he moves from place to place, ordains bishops everywhere, as though this were the crowning act of his missionary labors. The divergence of the Clem-

entire doctrine from the tenets of Catholic Christianity only renders this phenomenon more remarkable, when we remember the very early date of these writings ; for the Homilies cannot well be placed later than the end, and should perhaps be placed towards the beginning, of the second century.

3. We have hitherto been concerned only with the Greek Church of Syria. Of the early history of the Syrian Church, strictly so called, no trustworthy account is preserved. The documents which profess to give information respecting it are comparatively late ; and while their violent anachronisms discredit them as a whole, it is impossible to separate the fabulous from the historic. It should be remarked, however, that they exhibit a high sacerdotal view of the episcopate as prevailing in these churches from the earliest times of which any record is preserved.

4. Asia Minor follows next in order ; and here we find the widest and most unequivocal traces of episcopacy at an early date. Clement of Alexandria distinctly states that St. John went about from city to city, his purpose being “ in some places to establish bishops, in others to consolidate whole churches, in others again to appoint to the clerical office some one of

those who had been signified by the Spirit.” “The sequence of bishops,” writes Tertullian in like manner of Asia Minor, “traced back to its origin will be found to rest on the authority of John.” And a writer earlier than either speaks of St. John’s “fellow-disciples and bishops” as gathered about him. The conclusiveness even of such testimony might perhaps be doubted, if it were not supported by other more direct evidence. At the beginning of the second century the genuine letters of Ignatius mention by name two bishops in these parts, Onesimus of Ephesus and Polycarp of Smyrna. Of the former, nothing more is known; the latter evidently writes as a bishop, for he distinguishes himself from his presbyters, and is expressly so called by other writers besides Ignatius. His pupil Irenæus says of him that he had “not only been instructed by apostles, and conversed with many who had seen Christ, but had also been established by apostles in Asia as bishop in the church at Smyrna.” Polycrates also, a younger contemporary of Polycarp, and himself bishop of Ephesus, designates him by this title; and again in the letter written by his own church, and giving an account of his martyrdom, he is styled “bishop of the Catholic Church in

Smyrna." As Polycarp survived the middle of the second century, dying at a very advanced age (about A.D. 166), the possibility of error on this point seems to be excluded ; and indeed all historical evidence must be thrown aside as worthless if testimony so strong can be disregarded.

The short Greek of the Ignatian letters is probably corrupt or spurious ; but from internal evidence this recension can hardly have been made later than the middle of the second century, and its witness therefore is highly valuable. The staunch advocacy of the episcopate which distinguishes these writings is well known and will be considered hereafter. At present we are only concerned with the historical testimony which they bear to the wide extension and authoritative claims of the episcopal office. Besides Polycarp and Onesimus, mentioned by the true Ignatius, the writer names also Damas, Bishop of Magnesia, and Polybius, Bishop of Tralles ; and he urges on the Philadelphians also the duty of obedience to their bishop, though the name is not given. It seems probable that these were not fictitious personages, for he would be anxious to give an air of reality to his writings ; but whether or not we regard his testimony as indirectly af-

fecting the age of Ignatius, for his own time at least it must be regarded as valid.

But the evidence is not confined to the persons and the churches already mentioned. Papias, who was a friend of Polycarp and had conversed with personal disciples of the Lord, is commonly designated Bishop of Hierapolis ; and we learn from a younger contemporary, Serapion, that Claudius Apollinaris, known as a writer against the Montanists, also held this see in the reign of M. Aurelius. Again, Sagaris the martyr, who seems to have perished in the same persecution with Polycarp (A. D. 166), is designated Bishop of Laodicea by one writing towards the close of the same century, who also alludes to Melito, the contemporary of Sagaris, as holding the see of Sardis. The authority just quoted, Polycrates of Ephesus, who flourished in the last decade of the century, says, moreover, that he had had seven relations bishops before him, himself being the eighth, and that he followed their tradition. When he wrote he had been " sixty-five years in the Lord ;" so that even if this period date from the time of his birth, and not of his conversion or baptism, he must have been born scarcely a quarter of a century after the death of the last surviving apostle, whose latest years

were spent in the very church over which Polycrates himself presided. It appears, moreover, from his language, that none of these relations to whom he refers were surviving when he wrote.

Thus the evidence for the early and wide extension of episcopacy throughout pre-con-sular Asia, the scene of St. John's latest labors, may be considered irrefragable. And when we pass to other districts of Asia Minor examples are not wanting, though these are neither so early nor so frequent. Marcion, a native of Sinope, is related to have been the son of a Christian bishop : and Marcion himself had elaborated his theological system before the middle of the second century. Again, a bishop of Eumenia, Thraseas by name, is stated by Polycrates to have been martyred and buried at Smyrna ; and, as he is mentioned in connection with Polycarp, it may fairly be supposed that the two suffered in the same persecution. Dionysius of Corinth, moreover, writing to Amastris and the other churches of Pontus (about A.D. 170), mentions Palmas, the bishop of this city ; and when the Paschal controversy breaks out afresh under Victor of Rome, we find this same Palmas putting his signature first to a circular letter

as the senior of the bishops of Pontus. An anonymous writer also, who took part in the Montanist controversy, speaks of two bishops of repute, Zoticus of Comana and Julianus of Apamea, as having resisted the impostures of the false prophetesses. But indeed the frequent notices of encyclical letters written and synods held towards the close of the second century are a much more powerful testimony to the wide extension of episcopacy throughout the provinces of Asia Minor than the incidental mention of individual names. On one such occasion Polycrates speaks of the "crowds" of bishops whom he had summoned to confer with him on the Paschal question.

5. As we turn from Asia Minor to Macedonia and Greece, the evidence becomes fainter and scantier. This circumstance is no doubt due partly to the fact that these churches were much less active and important during the second century than the Christian communities of Asia Minor, but the phenomena cannot be wholly explained by this consideration. When Tertullian in one of his rhetorical flights challenges the heretical teachers to consult the apostolic churches, where "the very sees of the apostles still preside," adding, "If Achaia is nearest to you, then you

have Corinth ; if you are not far from Macedonia, you have Philippi, you have the Thessalonians ; if you can reach Asia, you have Ephesus"—his main argument was doubtless just, and even the language would commend itself to his own age, for episcopacy was the only form of government known or remembered in the Church when he wrote ; but a careful investigation scarcely allows and certainly does not encourage us to place Corinth and Philippi and Thessalonica in the same category with Ephesus as regards episcopacy. The term "apostolic see" was appropriate to the latter ; but, so far as we know, it cannot be strictly applied to the former. During the early years of the second century, when episcopacy was firmly established in the principal churches of Asia Minor, Polycarp sends a letter to the Philippians. He writes in the name of himself and his presbyters ; he gives advice to the Philippians respecting the obligations and the authority of presbyters and deacons ; he is minute in his instructions respecting one individual presbyter, Valens by name, who had been guilty of some crime ; but throughout the letter he never once refers to their bishop ; and indeed its whole tone is hardly consistent with the supposition that they had

any chief officer holding the same prominent position at Philippi which he himself held at Smyrna. We are thus driven to the conclusion that episcopacy did not exist at all among the Philippians at this time, or existed only in an elementary form, so that the bishop was a mere president of the presbyteral council. At Thessalonica indeed, according to a tradition mentioned by Origen, the same Caius whom St. Paul describes as his host at Corinth was afterwards appointed bishop ; but with so common a name the possibilities of error are great, even if the testimony were earlier in date and expressed in more distinct terms. When from Macedonia we pass to Achaia, the same phenomena present themselves. At the close of the first century Clement writes to Corinth, as at the beginning of the second century Polycarp writes to Philippi. As in the latter epistle, so in the former, there is no allusion to the episcopal office ; yet the main subject of Clement's letter is the expulsion and ill-treatment of certain presbyters, whose authority he maintains as holding an office instituted by and handed down from the apostles themselves. If Corinth, however, was without a bishop in the strict sense at the close of the first century, she cannot long

have remained so. When some fifty years later Hegesippus stayed here on his way to Rome, Primus was bishop of this church ; and it is clear, moreover, from this writer's language, that Primus had been preceded by several occupants of the see. Indeed the order of his narrative, so far as we can piece it together from the broken fragments preserved in Eusebius, might suggest the inference, not at all improbable in itself, that episcopacy had been established at Corinth as a corrective of the dissensions and feuds which had called forth Clement's letter. Again, Dionysius, one of the immediate successors of Primus, was the writer of several letters of which fragments are extant ; and at the close of the century we meet with a later bishop of Corinth, Bacchylus, who takes an active part in the Paschal controversy. When from Corinth we pass on to Athens, a very early instance of a bishop confronts us, on authority which seems at first sight good. Eusebius represents Dionysius of Corinth, who wrote apparently about the year 170, as stating that his namesake the Areopagite, " having been brought to the faith by the Apostle Paul according to the account in the Acts, was the first to be intrusted with the bishopric (or supervision) of the diocese (in

the language of those times, the parish) of the Athenians." Now, if we could be sure that Eusebius was here reporting the exact words of Dionysius, the testimony, though not conclusive, would be entitled to great deference. In this case the easiest solution would be, that this ancient writer had not unnaturally confounded the earlier and later usage of the word bishop. But it seems most probable that Eusebius (for he does not profess to be giving a direct quotation) has unintentionally paraphrased and interpreted the statement of Dionysius by the light of later ecclesiastical usages. However, Athens, like Corinth, did not long remain without a bishop. The same Dionysius, writing to the Athenians, reminds them how, after the martyrdom of Publius, their ruler (*τὸν προεστῶτα*), Quadratus becoming bishop sustained the courage and stimulated the faith of the Athenian brotherhood. If, as seems more probable than not, this was the famous Quadratus who presented his apology to Hadrian during that emperor's visit to Athens, the existence of episcopacy in this city is thrown back early in the century, even though Quadratus were not already bishop when Hadrian paid his visit.

6. The same writer, from whom we learn

these particulars about episcopacy at Athens, also furnishes information on the Church in Crete. He writes letters to two different communities in this island—the one to Gortyna, commending Philip, who held this see; the other to the Cnossians, offering words of advice to their bishop, Pinytus. The first was author of a treatise against Marcion; the latter wrote a reply to Dionysius, of which Eusebius has preserved a brief notice.

7. Of episcopacy in Thrace, and indeed of the Thracian Church generally, we read nothing till the close of the second century, when Ælius Publius Julius, Bishop of Debelum, a colony in this province, signs an encyclical letter. The existence of a see at a place so unimportant implies the wide spread of episcopacy in these regions.

8. As we turn to Rome, we are confronted by a far more perplexing problem than any encountered hitherto. The attempt to decipher the early history of episcopacy here seems almost hopeless, where the evidence is at once scanty and conflicting. It has been often assumed that in the metropolis of the world, the seat of imperial rule, the spirit which dominated in the State must by natural predisposition and sympathy have infused itself into

the Church also, so that a monarchical form of government would be developed more rapidly here than in other parts of Christendom. This supposition seems to overlook the fact that the influences which prevailed in the early church of the metropolis were more Greek than Roman, and that therefore the tendency would be rather towards individual liberty than towards compact and rigorous government. But indeed such presumptions, however attractive and specious, are valueless against the slightest evidence of facts. And the most trustworthy sources of information which we possess do not countenance the idea. The earliest authentic document bearing on the subject is the Epistle from the Romans to the Corinthians, probably written in the last decade of the first century. I have already considered the bearing of this letter on episcopacy in the Church of Corinth, and it is now time to ask what light it throws on this same institution at Rome. Now we cannot hesitate to accept the universal testimony of antiquity that it was written by Clement, the reputed Bishop of Rome ; and it is therefore the more surprising that, if he held this high office, the writer should not only not distinguish himself in any way from the rest of the Church (as Polycarp does for instance).

but that even his name should be suppressed. It is still more important to observe that, though he has occasion to speak of the ministry as an institution of the apostles, he mentions only two orders, and is silent about the episcopal office. Moreover, he still uses the word "bishop" in the older sense in which it occurs in the apostolic writings, as a synonyme for presbyter; and it may be argued that the recognition of the episcopate as a higher and distinct office would oblige the adoption of a special name, and, therefore, must have synchronized roughly with the separation of meaning between "bishop" and "presbyter." Again, not many years after the date of Clement's letter, St. Ignatius, on his way to martyrdom, writes to the Romans. Though this saint is the recognized champion of episcopacy, though the remaining six of the Ignatian letters all contain direct injunctions of obedience to bishops, in this epistle alone there is no allusion to the episcopal office as existing among his correspondents. The lapse of a few years carries us from the letters of Ignatius to the Shepherd of Hermas. And here the indications are equivocal. The angelic messenger directs Hermas to impart the revelation to the presbyters, and also to make two copies—the

one for Clement, who shall communicate with the foreign churches (such being his duty) ; the other for Grapte, who shall instruct the widows. Hermas himself is charged to “read it to this city with the elders who preside over the church.” Elsewhere mention is made of the “rulers” of the church. And again, in an enumeration of the faithful officers of the churches past and present, he speaks of the “apostles and bishops and teachers and deacons.” Here probably the word “bishop” is used in its later sense, and the presbyters are designated by the term “teachers.” Yet this interpretation cannot be regarded as certain, for the “bishops and teachers” in Hermas, like the “pastors and teachers” in St. Paul, may possibly refer to the one presbyteral office in its twofold aspect. Other passages in which Hermas uses the same terms are indecisive. Thus he speaks of “apostles and teachers who preached to the whole world and taught with reverence and purity the Word of the Lord ;” of “deacons who exercised their diaconate ill and plundered the life (*τὴν ζωὴν*) of widows and orphans ;” of “hospitable bishops who at all times received the servants of God into their homes cheerfully and without hypocrisy,” “who protected the bereaved and

the widows in their ministrations without ceasing." From these passages it seems impossible to arrive at a safe conclusion respecting the ministry at the time when Hermas wrote. In other places he condemns the false prophet "who seeming to have the Spirit exalts himself and would fain have the first seat;" or he warns "those who rule over the church and those who hold the chief-seat," bidding them give up their dissensions and live at peace among themselves; or he denounces those who have "emulation one with another for the first place or for some honor." If we could accept the suggestion that in this last class of passages the writer condemns the ambition which aimed at transforming the presbyterian into the episcopal form of government, we should have arrived at a solution of the difficulty; but the rebukes are couched in the most general terms, and apply at least as well to the ambitious pursuit of existing offices as to the arrogant assertion of a hitherto unrecognized power. This clue failing us, the notices in the Shepherd are in themselves too vague to lead to any result. Were it not known that the writer's own brother was bishop of Rome, we should be at a loss what to say about the constitution of the Roman Church in his day.

But while the testimony of these early writers appears at first sight and on the whole unfavorable to the existence of episcopacy in Rome when they wrote, the impression needs to be corrected by important considerations on the other side. Hegesippus, who visited Rome about the middle of the second century, during the papacy of Anicetus, has left it on record that he drew up a list of the Roman bishops to his own time. As the list is not preserved, we can only conjecture its contents ; but if we may judge from the sentence immediately following, in which he praises the orthodoxy of this and other churches under each succession, his object was probably to show that the teaching of the apostles had been carefully preserved and handed down, and he would therefore trace the episcopal succession back to apostolic times. Such, at all events, is the aim and method of Irenæus, who, writing somewhat later than Hegesippus, and combating Gnostic heresies, appeals especially to the bishops of Rome, as depositaries of the apostolic tradition. The list of Irenæus commences with Linus, whom he identifies with the person of this name mentioned by St. Paul, and whom he states to have been “entrusted with the office of the

bishopric" by the apostles. The second in succession is Anencletus, of whom he relates nothing; the third, Clemens, whom he describes as a hearer of the apostles and as writer of the letter to the Corinthians. The others in order are Evarestus, Alexander, Xystus, Telesphorus, Hyginus, Pius, Anicetus, Soter, and Eleutherus, during whose episcopacy Irenæus writes. Eusebius, in different works, gives two lists, both agreeing in the order with Irenæus, though not according with each other in the dates. Catalogues are also found in later writers, transposing the sequence of the earliest bishops, and adding the name Cletus, or substituting it for Anencletus. If these later catalogues deserve to be considered at all, the discrepancies may be explained by assuming two distinct churches in Rome—a Jewish and a Gentile community—in the first ages; or they may have arisen from a confusion of the earlier and later senses of *ἐπίσκοπος*. With the many possibilities of error, no more can safely be assumed of Linus and Anencletus than that they held some prominent position in the Roman Church. But the reason for supposing Clement to have been a bishop is as strong as the universal tradition of the next ages can make it. Yet, while call-

ing him a bishop, we must not suppose him to have attained the same distinct isolated position of authority which was occupied by his successors, Eleutherus and Victor, for instance, at the close of the second century, or even by his contemporaries, Ignatius of Antioch and Polycarp of Smyrna. He was rather the chief of the presbyters than the chief over the presbyters. Only when thus limited can the episcopacy of St. Clement be reconciled with the language of his own epistle or with the notice in his younger contemporary, Hermas. At the same time, the allusion in the Shepherd, though inconsistent with any exalted conception of his office, does assign to him as his special province the duty of communicating with foreign churches, which in the early ages was essentially the bishop's function, as may be seen by the instances of Polycarp, of Dionysius, of Irenæus, and of Polycrates. Of the two succeeding bishops, Evarestus and Alexander, no authentic notices are preserved. Xystus, who follows, is the reputed author of a collection of proverbs, which a distinguished living critic has not hesitated to accept as genuine. He is also the earliest of those Roman prelates whom Irenæus, writing to Victor in the name of the

Gallican churches, mentions as having observed Easter after the western reckoning, and yet maintaining peace with those who kept it otherwise. The next two, Telesphorus and Hyginus, are described in the same terms. The former is likewise distinguished as the sole martyr among the early bishops of the metropolis ; the latter is mentioned as being in office when the peace of the Roman Church was disturbed by the presence of the heretics Valentinus and Cerdon. With Pius, the next in order, the office, if not the man, emerges into daylight. An anonymous writer, treating on the canon of Scripture, says that the Shepherd was written by Hermas, "quite lately, while his brother Pius held the see of the Church of Rome." This passage, written by a contemporary, besides the testimony which it bears to the date and authorship of the Shepherd (with which we are not here concerned), is valuable in its bearing on this investigation ; for the use of the "chair" or "see" as a recognized phrase points to a more or less prolonged existence of episcopacy in Rome when this writer lived. To Pius succeeds Anicetus. And now Rome becomes for the moment the centre of interest and activity in the Christian world. During this

episcopate Hegesippus, visiting the metropolis for the purpose of ascertaining and recording the doctrines of the Roman Church, is welcomed by the bishop. About the same time, also, another more illustrious visitor, Polycarp, the venerable Bishop of Smyrna, arrives in Rome to confer with the head of the Roman Church on the Paschal dispute, and there falls in with and denounces the heretic Marcion. These facts are stated on contemporary authority. Of Soter, also, the next in succession, a contemporary record is preserved. Dionysius of Corinth, writing to the Romans, praises the zeal of their bishop, who, in his fatherly care for the suffering poor, and for the prisoners working in the mines, had maintained and extended the hereditary fame of his church for zeal in all charitable and good works. In Eleutherus, who succeeds Soter, we have the earliest recorded instance of an archdeacon. When Hegesippus paid his visit to the metropolis, he found Eleutherus standing in this relation to the bishop, Anicetus, and seems to have made his acquaintance while acting in this capacity. Eleutherus, however, was a contemporary, not only of Hegesippus, but also of the great writers Irenæus and Tertullian, who speak of the episco-

pal succession in the churches generally, and in Rome especially, as the best safeguard for the transmission of the true faith from apostolic times. With Victor, the successor of Eleutherus, a new era begins. Apparently the first Latin prelate who held the metropolitan see of Latin Christendom, he was, moreover, the first Roman bishop who is known to have had intimate relations with the Imperial Court, and the first also who advanced those claims to universal dominion which his successors in later ages have always consistently and often successfully maintained. . "I hear." writes Tertullian scornfully, "that an edict has gone forth, ay, and that a peremptory edict : the chief pontiff forsooth, I mean the bishop of bishops, has issued his commands." At the end of the first century the Roman Church was swayed by the mild and peaceful counsels of the presbyter-bishop, Clement ; the close of the second witnessed the autocratic pretensions of the haughty pope Victor, the prototype of a Hildebrand or an Innocent.

9. The Churches of Gaul were closely connected with and probably descended from the Churches of Asia Minor. If so, the episcopal form of government would probably be coeval with the foundation of Christian brotherhoods

in this country. It is true, we do not meet with any earlier bishop than the immediate predecessor of Irenæus at Lyons, the aged Pothinus, of whose martyrdom an account is given in the letter of the Gallican churches. But this is also the first distinct historical notice of any kind relating to Christianity in Gaul.

10. Africa again was evangelized from Rome at a comparatively late date. Of the African Church before the close of the second century, when a flood of light is suddenly thrown upon it by the writings of Tertullian, we know absolutely nothing. But we need not doubt that this father represents the traditions and sentiments of his church, when he lays stress on episcopacy as an apostolic institution, and on the episcopate as the depositary of pure Christian doctrine. If we may judge by the large number of prelates assembled in the African councils of a later generation, it would appear that the extension of the episcopate was far more rapid here than in most parts of Christendom.

11. The church of Alexandria, on the other hand, was probably founded in apostolic times. Nor is there any reason to doubt the tradition which connects it with the name

of St. Mark, though the authorities for the statement are comparatively recent. Nevertheless of its early history we have no authentic record. Eusebius, indeed, gives a list of bishops beginning with St. Mark, which here, as in the case of the Roman see, is accompanied by dates ; but from what source he derived his information is unknown. The first contemporary notice of church officers in Alexandria is found in a heathen writer. The Emperor Hadrian, writing to the consul Servianus, thus describes the state of religion in this city : “ I have become perfectly familiar with Egypt, which you praised to me ; it is fickle, uncertain, blown about by every gust of rumor. Those who worship Serapis are Christians, and those are devoted to Serapis who call themselves bishops of Christ. There is no ruler of a synagogue there, no Samaritan, no Christian presbyter, who is not an astrologer, a soothsayer, a quack. The patriarch himself, whenever he comes to Egypt, is compelled by some to worship Serapis, by others to worship Christ.” In this letter, which seems to have been written in the year 134, Hadrian shows more knowledge of Jewish ecclesiastical polity than of Christian ; but, apparently, without knowing the exact value of terms, he

seems to distinguish the bishop and the presbyter in the Christian community. From the age of Hadrian to the age of Clement no contemporary or nearly contemporary notices are found bearing on the government of the Alexandrian Church. The language of Clement is significant ; he speaks sometimes of two orders of the ministry — the presbyters and deacons ; sometimes of three — the bishops, presbyters, and deacons. Thus it would appear that even as late as the close of the second century the Bishop of Alexandria was regarded as distinct, and yet not distinct, from the presbytery. And the language of Clement is further illustrated by the fact, which will have to be considered at length presently, that at Alexandria the bishop was nominated and apparently ordained by the twelve presbyters out of their own number. The episcopal office in this church during the second century gives no presage of the world-wide influence to which, under the prouder name of patriarchate, it was destined in later ages to attain. The Alexandrian succession, in which history is hitherto most interested, is not the succession of the bishops, but of the heads of the catechetical school. The first Bishop of Alexandria, of whom any distinct incident is

recorded on trustworthy authority, was a contemporary of Origen.

The notices thus collected present a large body of evidence establishing the fact of the early and extensive adoption of episcopacy in the Christian Church. The investigation, however, would not be complete unless attention were called to such indirect testimony as is furnished by the tacit assumptions of writers living towards and at the close of the second century. Episcopacy is so inseparably interwoven with all the traditions and beliefs of men like Irenæus and Tertullian, that they betray no knowledge of a time when it was not. Even Irenæus, the earlier of these, who was certainly born and probably had grown up before the middle of the century, seems to be wholly ignorant that the word bishop had passed from a lower to a higher value since the apostolic times. Nor is it important only to observe the positive, though indirect, testimony which they afford. Their silence suggests a strong negative presumption that while every other point of doctrine or practice was eagerly canvassed, the form of Church government alone scarcely came under discussion.

But these notices, besides establishing the

general prevalence of episcopacy, also throw considerable light on its origin. They indicate that the solution suggested by the history of the word "bishop" and its transference from the lower to the higher office, is the true solution, and that the episcopate was created out of the presbytery. They show that this creation was not so much an isolated act as a progressive development, not advancing everywhere at an uniform rate, but exhibiting at one and the same time different stages of growth in different churches. They seem to hint also that, so far as this development was affected at all by national temper and characteristics, it was slower where the prevailing influences were more purely Greek, as at Corinth and Philippi and Rome; and more rapid where an Oriental spirit predominated, as at Jerusalem and Antioch and Ephesus. Above all, they establish this result clearly, that its maturer forms are seen first in those regions where the latest surviving apostles (more especially St. John) fixed their abode, and at a time when its prevalence cannot be dissociated from their influence or their sanction.

The original relation of the bishop to the presbyter, which this investigation reveals, was not forgotten even after the lapse of cen-

turies. Though set over the presbyters, he was still regarded as in some sense one of them. Irenæus indicates this position of the episcopate very clearly. In his language a presbyter is never designated a bishop, while, on the other hand, he very frequently speaks of a bishop as a presbyter. In other words, though he views the episcopate as a distinct office from the presbytery, he does not regard it as a distinct order in the same sense in which the diaconate is a distinct order. Thus, arguing against the heretics, he says, "But when again we appeal against them to that tradition which is derived from the apostles, which is preserved in the churches by successions of *presbyters*, they place themselves in opposition to it, saying that they, being wiser not only than the *presbyters*, but even than the apostles, have discovered the genuine truth." Yet just below, after again mentioning the apostolic tradition, he adds, "We are able to enumerate those who have been appointed by the apostles *bishops* in the churches, and their successors, down to our own time;" and still further, after saying that it would take up too much space if he were to trace the succession in all the churches, he declares that he will confound his opponents by singling out

the ancient and renowned Church of Rome, founded by the Apostles Peter and Paul, and will point out the tradition handed down to his own time “by the succession of *bishops*,” after which he gives a list from Linus to Eleutherus. So again in another passage he writes, “Therefore obedience ought to be rendered to the *presbyters* who are in the churches, who have the succession from the apostles, as we have shown, who with the succession of the *episcopate* have also received the sure grace of truth according to the pleasures of the Father ;” after which he mentions some “who are believed by many to be *presbyters*, but serve their own lusts and are elated with the pomp of the *chief seat*,” and bids his readers shun these, and seek such as “together with the rank of the *presbytery* show their speech sound and their conversation void of offence,” adding of these latter, “Such *presbyters* the Church nurtures and rears, concerning whom also the prophet saith, ‘I will give thy rulers in peace and thy *bishops* in righteousness.’” Thus, also, writing to Victor of Rome in the name of the Gallican churches, he says, “It was not so observed by the *presbyters* before Soter, who ruled the Church which thou now guidest—we mean Anicetus

and Pius, Hyginus and Telesphorus and Xystus." And the same estimate of the office appears in Clement of Alexandria ; for, while he speaks elsewhere of the three offices in the ministry, mentioning them by name, he in one passage puts forward a twofold division—the presbyters whose duty it is to *improve*, and the deacons whose duty it is to *serve*, the Church. The functions of the bishop and presbyter are thus regarded as substantially the same in kind, though different in degree, while the functions of the diaconate are separate from both. More than a century and a half later, this view is put forward with the greatest distinctness by the most learned and the most illustrious of the Latin fathers. "There is one ordination," writes the commentator Hilary, "of the bishop and the presbyter : for either is a priest, but the bishop is first. Every bishop is a presbyter, but every presbyter is not a bishop ; for he is bishop who is first among the presbyters." The language of St. Jerome to the same effect has been quoted above. To the passages there given may be added the following : "This has been said to show that with the ancients presbyters were the same as bishops ; but gradually all the responsibility was deferred to a single person,

that the thickets of heresies might be rooted out. Therefore as presbyters know that by *the custom of the Church* they are subject to him who shall have been set over them, so let bishops also be aware that they are superior to presbyters *more owing to custom than to any actual ordinance of the Lord*, etc.: Let us see therefore what sort of person ought to be ordained presbyter or bishop." In the same spirit, too, the great Augustine, writing to Jerome, says, "Although according to titles of honor, which *the practice of the Church has now made valid*, the episcopate is greater than the presbytery, yet in many things Augustine is less than Jerome." To these fathers this view seemed to be an obvious deduction from the identity of the terms "bishop" and "presbyter" in the apostolic writings; nor indeed, when they wrote, had usage entirely effaced the original connection between the two offices. Even in the fourth and fifth centuries, when the independence and power of the episcopate had reached its maximum, it was still customary for a bishop in writing to a presbyter to address him as "fellow-presbyter," thus bearing testimony to a substantial identity of order. Nor does it appear that this view was ever questioned until the era of the Ref-

ormation. In the western Church, at all events, it carried the sanction of the highest ecclesiastical authorities, and was maintained even by popes and councils.

Nor was it only in the *language* of the later Church that the memory of this fact was preserved. Even in her practice indications might here and there be traced which pointed to a time when the bishop was still only the chief member of the presbytery. The case of the Alexandrian Church, which has already been mentioned casually, deserves special notice. St. Jerome, after denouncing the audacity of certain persons who "would give to deacons the precedence over presbyters, that is over bishops," and alleging scriptural proofs of the identity of the two, gives the following fact in illustration: "At Alexandria, from Mark the Evangelist down to the times of the bishops Heraclas (A.D. 233-249) and Dionysius (A.D. 249-265), the presbyters always nominated as bishop one chosen out of their own body and placed in a higher grade: just as if an army were to appoint a general, or deacons were to choose from their own body one whom they knew to be diligent, and call him archdeacon." Though the direct statement of this father refers only to the *appoint-*

ment of the bishop, still it may be inferred that the function of the presbyters extended also to the *consecration*. And this inference is borne out by other evidence. "In Egypt," writes an older contemporary of St. Jerome, the commentator Hilary, "the presbyters seal (*i.e.*, ordain or consecrate) if the bishop be not present." This, however, might refer only to the ordination of presbyters, and not to the consecration of a bishop. But even the latter is supported by direct evidence, which though comparatively late deserves consideration, inasmuch as it comes from one who was himself a patriarch of Alexandria. Eutychius, who held the patriarchal see from A.D. 933 to A.D. 940, writes as follows: "The Evangelist Mark appointed along with the patriarch Hananias twelve presbyters who should remain with the patriarch, to the end that, when the patriarchate was vacant, they might choose one of the twelve presbyters, on whose head the remaining eleven laying their hands should bless him and create him patriarch." The vacant place in the presbytery was then to be filled up, that the number twelve might be constant. "This custom," adds this writer, "did not cease till the time of Alexander (A.D. 313-326), patriarch of

Alexandria. He, however, forbade that henceforth the presbyters should create the patriarch, and decreed that on the death of the patriarch the bishops should meet to ordain the (new) patriarch, etc. It is clear from this passage that Eutychius considered the functions of nomination and ordination to rest with the same persons.

If this view, however, be correct, the practice of the Alexandrian Church was exceptional; for at this time the formal act of the bishop was considered generally necessary to give validity to ordination. Nor is the exception difficult to account for. At the close of the second century, when every considerable church in Europe and Asia appears to have had its bishop, the only representative of the episcopal order in Egypt was the Bishop of Alexandria. It was Demetrius first (A.D. 190-233), as Eutychius informs us, who appointed three other bishops, to which number his successor Heraclas (A.D. 233-249) added twenty more. This extension of episcopacy to the provincial towns of Egypt paved the way for a change in the mode of appointing and ordaining the patriarch of Alexandria. But before this time it was a matter of convenience and almost of necessity that the

Alexandrian presbyters should themselves ordain their chief.

Nor is it only in Alexandria that we meet with this peculiarity. Where the same urgent reason existed, the same exceptional practice seems to have been tolerated. A decree of the Council of Ancyra (A.D. 314) ordains that "it be not allowed to country-bishops (*χωρεπισκόποις*) to ordain presbyters or deacons, nor even to city-presbyters, except permission be given in each parish by the bishop in writing." Thus while restraining the existing license, the framers of the decree still allow very considerable latitude. And it is especially important to observe that they lay more stress on episcopal sanction than on episcopal ordination. Provided that the former is secured, they are content to dispense with the latter.

As a general rule, however, even those writers who maintain a substantial identity in the offices of the bishop and presbyter reserve the power of ordaining to the former. This distinction in fact may be regarded as a settled maxim of Church polity in the fourth and later centuries. And when Acrius maintained the equality of the bishop and presbyter, and denied the necessity of episcopal ordination, his opinion was condemned as hereti-

cal, and is stigmatized as "frantic" by Epiphanius.

It has been seen that the institution of an episcopate must be placed as far back as the closing years of the first century, and that it cannot, without violence to historical testimony, be dissevered from the name of St. John. But it has been seen also that the earliest bishops did not hold the same independent position of supremacy which was and is occupied by their later representatives. It will therefore be instructive to trace the successive stages by which the power of the office was developed during the second and third centuries. Though something must be attributed to the frailty of human pride and love of power, it will nevertheless appear that the pressing needs of the Church were mainly instrumental in bringing about the result, and that this development of the episcopal office was a providential safeguard amid the confusion of speculative opinion, the distracting effects of persecution, and the growing anarchy of social life, which threatened not only the extension but the very existence of the Church of Christ. Ambition of office in a society where prominence of rank involved promi-

nence of risk was at least no vulgar and selfish passion.

This development will be conveniently connected with three great names, each separated from the other by an interval of more than half a century, and each marking a distinct stage in its progress. Ignatius, Irenæus, and Cyprian represent three successive advances towards the supremacy which was ultimately attained.

1. Ignatius of Antioch is commonly recognized as the staunchest advocate of episcopacy in the early ages. Though the strength and prevalence of this view is doubtless due in great measure to the forged and interpolated epistles bearing his name, it is nevertheless sufficiently justified by his authentic letters. Nor indeed would a falsifier have adopted his mask, unless the genuine writings or traditional opinions of this early martyr had given countenance to the forgery. To St. Ignatius the chief value of episcopacy lies in this, that it constitutes a visible *centre of unity* in the congregation. He seems in the development of the office to keep in view the same purpose which we may suppose to have influenced the last surviving apostles in its institution. The withdrawal of the authoritative preachers of

the Gospel, the personal disciples of the Lord, had severed one bond of union. The destruction of the original abode of Christendom, the scene of the life and passion of the Saviour and of the earliest triumphs of the Church, had removed another. Thus deprived at once of the personal and the local ties which had hitherto bound individual to individual and church to church, the Christian brotherhood was threatened with schism, disunion, dissolution. "Vindicate thine office with all diligence," writes Ignatius to the Bishop of Smyrna, "in things temporal as well as spiritual. Have a care of unity, than which nothing is better." "The crisis requires thee, as the pilot requires the winds or the storm-tossed mariner a haven, so as to attain unto God." "Let not those who seem to be plausible and teach falsehoods dismay thee, but stand thou firm as an anvil under the hammer; 'tis the part of a great athlete to be bruised and to conquer." "Let nothing be done without thy consent, and do thou nothing without the consent of God." He adds directions also that those who decide on a life of virginity shall disclose their intention to the bishop only, and those who marry shall obtain his consent to their union, that "their marriage may be

according to the Lord, and not according to lust." And turning from the bishop to the people he adds, "Give heed to your bishop, that God also may give heed to you. I give my life for those who are obedient to the bishop, to presbyters, to deacons. With them may I have my portion in the presence of God." Writing to the Ephesians also, he says that in receiving their bishop Onesimus he is receiving their whole body, and he charges them to love him, and one and all to be in his likeness, adding, "Since love does not permit me to be silent, therefore I have been forward in exhorting you to conform to the will of God."

From these passages it will be seen that St. Ignatius values the episcopate chiefly as a security for good discipline and harmonious working in the Church. And the writer, who before or about the middle of the second century forges and interpolates the Ignatian letters, follows in the track of the saint whose name he assumes; while at the same time he lays greater stress on the divine authority of the institution. When this unknown person wrote, the heresies faintly discerned by the genuine Ignatius had grown rampant, and the purity of Christian teaching was seriously en-

dangered. Yet he denounces these heresies rather as a breach of unity than as a falsification of doctrine. Though perhaps more nearly a contemporary of Irenæus than of Ignatius, he has not yet exchanged the standing-point of the earlier father for that of the later. But while he maintains the same aspect of episcopacy with the true Ignatius, he uses extravagant language which has no parallel in the genuine letters of the saint. Throughout the whole range of Christian literature no more uncompromising advocate of episcopacy can be found. His advocacy indeed is extended to the two lower orders of the ministry, more especially to the presbyters. But it is when asserting the claims of the episcopal office to obedience and respect that his language is strained to the utmost. "The bishops established in the farthest parts of the world are in the counsel of Jesus Christ." "Every one whom the Master of the house sendeth to govern His own household we ought to receive, as Him that sent him; clearly therefore we ought to regard the bishop as the Lord himself." Those "live a life after Christ" who "obey the bishop as Jesus Christ." "It is good to know God and the bishop; he that honoreth the bishop is honored of God; he

that doeth any thing without the knowledge of the bishop serveth the devil." He that obeys his bishop, obeys "not him, but the Father of Jesus Christ, the Bishop of all." On the other hand, he that practises hypocrisy towards his bishop, "not only deceiveth the visible one, but cheateth the Unseen." "As many as are of God and of Jesus Christ, are with the Bishop." Those are approved who are "inseparate from God, from Jesus Christ, and from the bishop, and from the ordinances of the apostles." "Do ye all," says this writer again, "follow the bishop, as Jesus Christ followed the Father." The Ephesians are commended accordingly, because they are so united with their bishop "as the Church with Jesus Christ, and as Jesus Christ with the Father." "If," it is added, "the prayer of one or two hath so much power, how much more the prayer of the bishop and of the whole Church." "Wherever the bishop may appear, there let the multitude be, just as where Jesus Christ may be, there is the Catholic Church." Therefore "let no man do any thing pertaining to the Church without the bishop." "It is not allowable either to baptize or to hold a love-feast without the bishop; but whatsoever he may approve, this also is well pleasing to God,

that every thing which is done may be safe and valid." "Unity of God," according to this writer, consists in harmonious co-operation with the bishop.

And yet, with all this extravagant exaltation of the episcopal office, the presbyters are not put out of sight. They form a council, a "worthy spiritual coronal" round the bishop. It is the duty of every individual, but especially of them "to refresh the bishop unto the honor of the Father and of Jesus Christ and of the apostles." They stand in the same relation to him "as the chords to the lyre." If the bishop occupies the place of God or of Jesus Christ, the presbyters are as the apostles, as the council of God. If obedience is due to the bishop as the grace of God, it is due to the presbytery as the law of Jesus Christ.

It need hardly be remarked how subversive of the true spirit of Christianity, in the negation of individual freedom and the consequent suppression of direct responsibility to God in Christ, is the crushing despotism with which this writer's language, if taken literally, would invest the episcopal office. It is more important to bear in mind the extenuating fact, that the needs and distractions of the age seemed to call for a greater concentration of authority

in the episcopate ; and we might well be surprised if at a great crisis the defence of an all-important institution were expressed in words carefully weighed and guarded. But whatever excuse the exigencies of the Church may suggest, it is hard to believe that this extravagance would have received the sanction of St. Ignatius himself. At all events, there is a jarring discord between the unfeigned humility which will not allow the saint to *command* the Christians of Rome like St. Peter or St. Paul, “ for they are apostles, he a condemned man, they are free, he a slave until now,” and the lofty assumptions of this later writer, who sets the bishop in the place of God and on the throne of Christ.

Strangely enough, about the time when the Ignatian interpolator thus asserted the claims of the episcopate as a safeguard of orthodoxy, another writer was using similar means to advance a very different form of Christianity. The same organization, which is thus employed to consolidate and advance the Catholic Church, might serve equally well to establish a compact Ebionite community. I have already mentioned the author of the Clementine Homilies as a stanch advocate of episcopacy. His view of the sanctions and privileges of the

office does not differ materially from that of the Ignatian writer. "The multitude of the faithful," he says, "must obey a single person, that so it may be able to continue in harmony." Monarchy is a necessary condition of peace; this may be seen from the aspect of the world around: at present there are many kings, and the result is discord and war; in the world to come God has appointed one King only, that "by reason of monarchy an indestructible peace may be established; therefore all ought to follow some one person as guide, preferring him in honor as the image of God; and this guide must show the way that leadeth to the Holy City." Accordingly he delights to speak of the bishop as occupying the place or the seat of Christ. Every insult, he says, and every honor offered to a bishop is carried to Christ, and from Christ is taken up to the presence of the Father; and thus it is requited manifold. Similarly another writer of the Clementine cycle, if he be not the same, compares Christ to the captain, the bishop to the mate, and the presbyters to the sailors, while the lower orders and the laity have each their proper place in the ship of the Church.

It is no surprise that such extravagant claims should not have been allowed to pass unchal-

lenged. About the same time when these lofty hierarchical pretensions were advanced on the one hand in the Ignatian letters on behalf of Catholicism, and on the other by the Clementine writers in the interests of Ebionism, a strong spiritualist reaction set in. If in its mental aspect the heresy of Montanus must be regarded as a protest against the speculative subtleties of Gnosticism, on its practical side it was equally a rebound from the aggressive tyranny of hierarchical assumption. Montanus taught that the true succession of the Spirit, the authorized channel of divine grace, must be sought not in the hierarchical, but in the prophetic order. For a rigid outward system he substituted the free inward impulse. Wildly fanatical as were its manifestations, this reaction nevertheless issued from a true instinct which rebelled against the oppressive yoke of external tradition and did battle for the freedom of the individual spirit. Montanus was excommunicated and Montanism died out; but though dead, it yet spake; for a portion of its better spirit was infused into the Catholic Church, which it leavened and refreshed and invigorated.

2. Irenæus follows Ignatius after an interval of about two generations. With the al-

tered circumstances of the Church, the aspect of the episcopal office has also undergone a change. The religious atmosphere is now charged with heretical speculations of all kinds. Amidst the competition of rival teachers, all eagerly bidding for support, the perplexed believer asks for some decisive test by which he may try the claims of the disputants. To this question Irenæus supplies an answer. "If you wish," he argues, "to ascertain the doctrine of the apostles, apply to the Church of the apostles. In the succession of bishops tracing their descent from the primitive age and appointed by the apostles themselves, you have a guarantee for the transmission of the pure faith, which no isolated, upstart, self-constituted teacher can furnish. There is the Church of Rome, for instance, whose episcopal pedigree is perfect in all its links, and whose earliest bishops, Linus and Clement, associated with the apostles themselves; there is the Church of Smyrna again, whose bishop, Polycarp, the disciple of St. John, died only the other day." Thus the episcopate is regarded now not so much as the *centre of ecclesiastical unity*, but rather as the *depository of apostolic tradition*.

This view is not peculiar to Irenæus. It

seems to have been advanced earlier by Hege-
sippus, for in a detached fragment he lays
stress on the succession of the bishops at Rome
and at Corinth, adding that in each church
and in each succession the pure faith was pre-
served ; so that he seems here to be controvert-
ing that "gnosis falsely so called" which
elsewhere he denounces. It is distinctly main-
tained by Tertullian, the younger contempo-
rary of Irenæus, who refers, if not with the
same frequency, at least with equal emphasis,
to the tradition of the apostolic churches as
preserved by the succession of the episcopate.

3. As two generations intervened between
Ignatius and Irenæus, so the same period,
roughly speaking, separates Irenæus from Cyp-
rian. If with Ignatius the bishop is the centre
of Christian unity, if with Irenæus he is the
depository of the apostolic tradition, with Cyp-
rian he is the *absolute vicegerent of Christ* in
things spiritual. In mere language, indeed,
it would be difficult to surpass the Ignatian
writer, who probably lived a century earlier.
With the single exception of the sacerdotal
view of the ministry which had grown up
meanwhile, Cyprian puts forward no assump-
tion which this writer had not advanced either
literally or substantially long before. This

one exception, however, is all important, for it raised the sanctions of the episcopate to a higher level, and put new force into old titles of respect. Theoretically, therefore, it may be said that Cyprian took his stand on the combination of the ecclesiastical authority, as asserted by the Ignatian writer, with the sacerdotal claim which had been developed in the half century just past. But the real influence which he exercised in the elevation of the episcopate consisted not in the novelty of his theoretical views, but in his practical energy and success. The absolute supremacy of the bishop had remained hitherto a lofty title, or at least a vague, ill-defined assumption : it became through his exertions a substantial and patent and world-wide fact. The first prelate whose force of character vibrated throughout the whole of Christendom, he was driven not less by the circumstances of his position than by his own temperament and conviction to throw all his energy into this scale. And the permanent result was much vaster than he could have anticipated beforehand or realized after the fact. Forced into the episcopate against his will, he raised it to a position of absolute independence, from which it has never since been deposed. The two great controversies in which Cyprian en-

gaged, though immediately arising out of questions of discipline, combined from opposite sides to consolidate and enhance the power of the bishops.

The first question of dispute concerned the treatment of such as had lapsed during the recent persecution under Decius. Cyprian found himself on this occasion doing battle for the episcopate against a twofold opposition, against the confessors who claimed the right of absolving and restoring these fallen brethren, and against his own presbyters, who, in the absence of their bishop, supported the claims of the confessors. From his retirement he launched his shafts against this combined array, where an aristocracy of moral influence was leagued with an aristocracy of official position. With signal determination and courage in pursuing his aim, and with not less sagacity and address in discerning the means for carrying it out, Cyprian had on this occasion the further advantage that he was defending the cause of order and right. He succeeded, moreover, in enlisting in his cause the rulers of the most powerful church in Christendom. The Roman clergy declared for the bishop and against the presbyters of Carthage. Of Cyprian's sincerity no reasonable question can be

entertained. In maintaining the authority of his office, he believed himself to be fighting his Master's battle, and he sought success as the only safeguard of the integrity of the Church of Christ. In this lofty and disinterested spirit, and with these advantages of position, he entered upon the contest.

It is unnecessary for my purpose to follow out the conflict in detail ; to show how ultimately the positions of the two combatants were shifted, so that from maintaining discipline against the champions of too great laxity, Cyprian found himself protecting the fallen against the advocates of too great severity ; to trace the progress of the schism and the attempt to establish a rival episcopate ; or to unravel the entanglements of the Novatian controversy and lay open the intricate relations between Rome and Carthage. It is sufficient to say that Cyprian's victory was complete. He triumphed over the confessors, triumphed over his own presbyters, triumphed over the schismatical bishop and his party. It was the most signal success hitherto achieved for the episcopate, because the battle had been fought and the victory won on this definite issue. The absolute supremacy of the episcopal office was thus established against the two antagonists

from which it had most to fear, against a recognized aristocracy of ecclesiastical office and an irregular but not less powerful aristocracy of moral weight.

The position of the bishop with respect to the individual church over which he ruled was thus defined by the first contest in which Cyprian engaged. The second conflict resulted in determining his relation to the Church universal. The schism which had grown up during the first conflict created the difficulty which gave occasion to the second. A question arose whether baptism by heretics and schismatics should be held valid or not. Stephen, the Roman bishop, pleading the immemorial custom of his church, recognized its validity. Cyprian insisted on rebaptism in such cases. Hitherto the Bishop of Carthage had acted in cordial harmony with Rome ; but now there was a collision. Stephen, inheriting the haughty temper and aggressive policy of his earlier predecessor Victor, excommunicated those who differed from the Roman usage in this matter. These arrogant assumptions were directly met by Cyprian. He summoned first one and then another synod of African bishops, who declared in his favor. He had on his side also the churches of Asia

Minor, which had been included in Stephen's edict of excommunication. Thus the bolt hurled by Stephen fell innocuous, and the churches of Africa and Asia retained their practice. The principle asserted in the struggle was not unimportant. As in the former conflict Cyprian had maintained the independent supremacy of the bishop over the officers and members of his own congregation, so now he contended successfully for his immunity from any interference from without. At a later period indeed, Rome carried the victory, but the immediate result of this controversy was to establish the independence and enhance the power of the episcopate. Moreover, this struggle had the further and not less important consequence of defining and exhibiting the relations of the episcopate to the Church in another way. As the individual bishop had been pronounced indispensable to the existence of the individual community, so the episcopal order was now put forward as the absolute indefeasible representative of the universal Church. Synods of bishops indeed had been held frequently before ; but under Cyprian's guidance they assumed a prominence which threw all existing precedents into the shade. A "one undivided episcopate" was his watch-

word. The unity of the Church, he maintained, consists in the unanimity of the bishops. In this controversy, as in the former, he acted throughout on the principle, distinctly asserted, that the existence of the episcopal office was not a matter of practical advantage or ecclesiastical rule, or even of apostolic sanction, but an absolute incontrovertible decree of God. The triumph of Cyprian therefore was the triumph of this principle.

The greatness of Cyprian's influence on the episcopate is indeed due to this fact, that with him the statement of the principle precedes and necessitates the practical measures. Of the sharpness and distinctness of his sacerdotal views it will be time to speak presently ; but of his conception of the episcopal office generally thus much may be said here that he regards the bishop as exclusively the representative of God to the congregation, and hardly, if at all, as the representative of the congregation before God. The bishop is the indispensable channel of divine grace, the indispensable bond of Christian brotherhood. The episcopate is not so much the roof as the foundation-stone of the ecclesiastical edifice ; not so much the legitimate development as the primary condition of a church. The bishop is appointed di-

rectly by God, is responsible directly to God, is inspired directly from God. This last point deserves especial notice. Though in words he frequently defers to the established usage of consulting the presbyters and even the laity in the appointment of officers and in other matters affecting the well-being of the community, yet he only makes the concession to nullify it immediately. He pleads a direct official inspiration, which enables him to dispense with ecclesiastical custom and to act on his own responsibility. Though the presbyters may still have retained the shadow of a controlling power over the acts of the bishop, though the courtesy of language by which they were recognized as fellow-presbyters was not laid aside, yet for all practical ends the independent supremacy of the episcopate was completely established by the principles and the measures of Cyprian.

In the investigation just concluded I have endeavored to trace the changes in the relative position of the first and second orders of the ministry, by which the power was gradually concentrated in the hands of the former. Such a development involves no new principle, and must be regarded chiefly in its practical bearings. It is plainly competent for the Church,

at any given time, to entrust a particular office with larger powers, as the emergency may require. And, though the grounds on which the independent authority of the episcopate was at times defended may have been false or exaggerated, no reasonable objection can be taken to later forms of ecclesiastical polity because the measure of power accorded to the bishop does not remain exactly the same as in the Church of the subapostolic ages. Nay, to many thoughtful and dispassionate minds, even the gigantic power wielded by the popes during the middle ages will appear justifiable in itself (though they will repudiate the false pretensions on which it was founded, and the false opinions which were associated with it), since only by such a providential concentration of authority could the Church, humanly speaking, have braved the storms of those ages of anarchy and violence. Now, however, it is my purpose to investigate the origin and growth of a new principle, which is nowhere enunciated in the New Testament, but which, notwithstanding, has worked its way into general recognition, and seriously modified the character of later Christianity. The progress of the *sacerdotal* view of the ministry is one of

the most striking and important phenomena in the history of the Church.

It has been pointed out already that the sacerdotal functions and privileges, which alone are mentioned in the apostolic writings, pertain to all believers alike, and do not refer solely or specially to the ministerial office. If to this statement it be objected that the inference is built upon the *silence* of the apostles and evangelists, and that such reasoning is always precarious, the reply is, that an exclusive sacerdotalism (as the word is commonly understood) contradicts the general tenor of the Gospel. But indeed the strength or weakness of an argument drawn from silence depends wholly on the circumstances under which the silence is maintained. And in this case it cannot be considered devoid of weight. In the Pastoral Epistles, for instance, which are largely occupied with questions relating to the Christian ministry, it seems scarcely possible that this aspect should have been overlooked, if it had any place in St. Paul's teaching. The apostle discusses at length the requirements, the responsibilities, the sanctions, of the ministerial office ; he regards the presbyter as an example, as a teacher, as a philanthropist, as a ruler. How then, it may well be asked, are

the sacerdotal functions, the sacerdotal privileges of the office wholly set aside? If these claims were recognized by him at all, they must necessarily have taken a foremost place. The same argument again applies with not less force to those passages in the Epistles to the Corinthians where St. Paul asserts his apostolic authority against his detractors. Nevertheless, so entirely had the primitive conception of the Christian Church been supplanted by this sacerdotal view of the ministry, before the northern races were converted to the Gospel, and the dialects derived from the Latin took the place of the ancient tongue, that the languages of modern Europe very generally supply only one word to represent alike the priest of the Jewish or heathen ceremonial and the presbyter of the Christian ministry.

For, though no distinct traces of sacerdotalism are visible in the ages immediately after the apostles, yet having once taken root in the Church it shot up rapidly into maturity. Towards the close of the second century we discern the first germs appearing above the surface; yet, shortly after the middle of the third, the plant has all but attained its full growth. The origin of this idea, the progress of its development, and the conditions favorable to

its spread will be considered in the present section of this essay.

A separation of orders, it is true, appeared at a much earlier date, and was in some sense involved in the appointment of a special ministry. This, and not more than this, was originally contained in the distinction of clergy and laity. If the sacerdotal view of the ministry engrafted itself on this distinction, it nevertheless was not necessarily implied or even indirectly suggested thereby. The term "clerus," as a designation of the ministerial office, did not, owing to any existing associations, convey the idea of sacerdotal functions. The word is not used of the Aaronic priesthood in any special sense which would explain its transference to the Christian ministry. It is indeed said of the Levites that they have no "clerus" in the land, the Lord himself being their "clerus." But the Jewish priesthood is never described conversely as the special "clerus" of Jehovah; while, on the other hand, the metaphor thus inverted is more than once applied to the whole Israelite people. Up to this point, therefore, the analogy of Old Testament usage would have suggested "clerus" as a name rather for the entire body of the faithful than for the ministry specially

or exclusively ; nor do other references to the *clerus* or *lot* in connection with the Levitical priesthood countenance its special application. The tithes, it is true, were assigned to the sons of Levi as their "*clerus* ;" but in this there is nothing distinctive, and in fact the word is employed much more prominently in describing the lands allotted to the whole people. Again, the courses of priests and Levites selected to conduct the temple-service were appointed by *lot* ; but the mode adopted in distributing a particular set of duties is far too special to have supplied a distinctive name for the whole order. If indeed it were an established fact that the Aaronic priesthood at the time of the Christian era commonly bore the name of "*clergy*," we might be driven to explain the designation in this or in some similar way ; but apparently no evidence of any such usage exists, and it is therefore needless to cast about for an explanation of a fact which itself is only conjectural. The origin of the term *clergy*, as applied to the Christian ministry, must be sought elsewhere.

And the record of the earliest appointment made by the Christian Church after the ascension of the Lord seems to supply the clue. Exhorting the assembled brethren to elect a

successor in place of Judas, St. Peter tells them that the traitor “had been numbered among them and had received the *lot* (*κλήρον*) of the ministry ;” while in the account of the subsequent proceedings it is recorded that the apostles “distributed *lots*” to the brethren, and that “the *lot* fell on Matthias, and he was added to the eleven apostles.” The following therefore seems to be the sequence of meanings by which the word *κλήρος* arrived at this peculiar sense : (1) The lot by which the office was assigned ; (2) the office thus assigned by lot ; (3) the body of persons holding the office. The first two senses are illustrated by the passages quoted from the Acts ; and from the second to the third the transition is easy and natural. It must not be supposed, however, that the mode of appointing officers by lot prevailed generally in the early Church. Besides the case of Matthias no other instance is recorded in the New Testament ; nor is this procedure likely to have been commonly adopted. But just as in the passage quoted the word is used to describe the office of Judas, though Judas was certainly not selected by lot, so generally from signifying one special mode of appointment to office it got to signify office in the Church generally. If this account

of the application of "clerus" to the Christian ministry be correct, we should expect to find it illustrated by a corresponding progress in the actual usage of the word. And this is in fact the case. The sense "clerical appointment or office" chronologically precedes the sense "clergy." The former meaning occurs several times in Irenæus. He speaks of Hyginus as "holding the ninth clerus of the episcopal succession from the apostles;" and of Eleutherus, in like manner, he says: "He now occupies the clerus of the episcopate in the tenth place from the apostles." On the other hand, the earliest instance of "clerus," meaning clergy, seems to occur in Tertullian, who belongs to the next generation.

It will thus be seen that the use of "clerus" to denote the ministry cannot be traced to the Jewish priesthood, and is therefore wholly unconnected with any sacerdotal views. The term does indeed recognize the clergy as an order distinct from the laity, but this is a mere question of ecclesiastical rule or polity, and involves no doctrinal bearings. The origin of sacerdotal phraseology and ideas must be sought elsewhere.

Attention has been already directed to the absence of any appeal to sacerdotal claims in

the Pastoral Epistles. The silence of the apostolic fathers deserves also to be noticed. Though the genuine letters of all three may be truly said to hinge on questions relating to the ministry, no distinct traces of this influence are visible. St. Clement, as the representative of the Roman Church, writes to the Christian brotherhood at Corinth, offering friendly counsel in their disputes, and rebuking their factious and unworthy conduct towards certain presbyters whom, though blameless, they had ejected from office. He appeals to motives of Christian love, to principles of Christian order. He adduces a large number of examples from biblical history condemnatory of jealousy and insubordination. He urges that men who had been appointed directly by the apostles, or by persons themselves so appointed, ought to have received better treatment. Dwelling at great length on the subject, he nevertheless advances no sacerdotal claims or immunities on behalf of the ejected ministers. He does, it is true, adduce the Aaronic priesthood and the temple service as showing that God has appointed set persons and set places and will have all things done in order. He had before illustrated this lesson by the subordination of ranks in an army, by the relation of the different members

of the human body ; he had insisted on the duties of the strong towards the weak, of the rich towards the poor, of the wise towards the ignorant, and so forth ; he had enforced the appeal by reminding his readers of the utter feebleness and insignificance of man in the sight of God, as represented in the Scriptures of the Old Testament ; and then follows the passage which contains the allusion in question : “ He hath not commanded (the offerings and ministrations) to be performed at random or in disorder, but at fixed times and seasons ; and where and through whom he willeth them to be performed, he hath ordained by his supreme will. They therefore who make their offerings at the appointed seasons are acceptable and blessed, since, following the ordinances of the Master, they do not go wrong. For to the high-priest peculiar services are intrusted, and the priests have their peculiar office assigned to them, and on Levites peculiar ministrations are imposed : the layman is bound by lay ordinances. Let each of you, brethren, in his own rank, give thanks to God, retaining a good conscience, not transgressing the appointed rule of his service (*λειτουργίας*),” etc. Here it is clear that in St. Clement’s conception the sanction possessed in common by the Aaronic

priesthood and the Christian ministry is not the sacerdotal consecration, but the divinely appointed order. He passes over in silence the numerous passages in the Old Testament which enjoin obedience to the priests ; while the only sentence (§ 42) which he puts forward as anticipating and enforcing the authority of the Christian ministry is a misquoted and misinterpreted verse from Isaiah : “ I will establish their overseers (bishops) in righteousness and their ministers (deacons) in faith.” Again, a little later, he mentions in illustration the murmuring of the Israelites which was rebuked by the budding of Aaron’s rod. But here too he makes it clear how far he considers the analogy to extend. He calls the sedition in the one case “ jealousy concerning the priesthood,” in the other “ strife concerning the honor of the episcopate.” He keeps the names and the offices distinct. The significance of this fact will be felt at once by comparing his language with the expressions used by any later writer, such as Cyprian, who was penetrated with the spirit of sacerdotalism.

Of St. Ignatius, as the champion of episcopacy, much has been said already. It is sufficient to add here that he never regards the ministry as a sacerdotal office. But the silence

of the writer of the interpolated and forged epistles is a more important and remarkable fact. While these letters teem with passages enjoining the strictest obedience to bishops, while their language is frequently so strong as to be almost profane, this Ignatian writer never once appeals to sacerdotal claims, though such an appeal would have made his case more than doubly strong. If it be ever safe to take the sentiments of an individual writer as expressing the belief of his age, we may infer from the silence which pervades these letters that the sacerdotal view of the ministry had not yet found its way into the Christian Church.

When we pass on to the third apostolic father, the same phenomenon is repeated. Polycarp, like Clement and Ignatius, occupies much space in discussing the duties and the claims of Christian ministers. He takes occasion especially to give his correspondents advice as to a certain presbyter who had disgraced his office by a grave offence. Yet he again knows nothing, or at least says nothing, of any sacerdotal privileges which claimed respect, or of any sacerdotal sanctity which had been violated.

Justin Martyr writes about a generation later. He speaks at length and with emphasis on the eucharistic offerings. Here at least we

might expect to find sacerdotal views of the Christian ministry propounded. Yet this is far from being the case. He does indeed lay stress on sacerdotal functions, but these belong to the whole body of the Church, and are not in any way the exclusive right of the clergy. "So we," he writes, when arguing against Trypho the Jew, "who through the name of Jesus have believed as one man in God the maker of the universe, having divested ourselves of our filthy garments, that is our sins, through the name of his first-born Son, and having been refined (*πυρωθέντες*) by the word of his calling, are the true high-priestly race of God, as God himself also beareth witness, saying that in every place among the Gentiles are men offering sacrifices well pleasing unto him and pure (Mal. 1 : 11). Yet God doth not receive sacrifices from any one, except through his priests. Therefore God anticipating all sacrifices through this name, which Jesus Christ ordained to be offered, I mean those offered by the Christians in every region of the earth with (*ἐπι*) the thanksgiving (the eucharist) of the bread and of the cup, beareth witness that they are well pleasing to him ; but the sacrifices offered by you and through those your priests he rejecteth, saying, 'And your sacrifices

I will not accept from your hands,' ” etc. (Mal. 1 : 10.) The whole Christian people therefore (such is Justin's conception) have not only taken the place of the Aaronic priesthood, but have become a nation of *high-priests*, being made one with the great High-Priest of the new covenant, and presenting their eucharistic offerings in his name.

Another generation leads us from Justin Martyr to Irenæus. When Irenæus writes, the second century is very far advanced. Yet still the silence which has accompanied us hitherto remains unbroken. And here again it is important to observe that Irenæus, if he held the sacerdotal view, had every motive for urging it, since the importance and authority of the episcopate occupy a large space in his teaching. Nevertheless he not only withholds this title as a special designation of the Christian ministry, but advances an entirely different view of the priestly office. He recognizes only the priesthood of moral holiness, the priesthood of apostolic self-denial. Thus commenting on the reference made by our Lord to the incident in David's life where the king and his followers eat the shew-bread, “ which it is not lawful to eat save for the priests alone,” Irenæus remarks : “ He excuseth his disciples by the

words of the law, and signifieth that it is lawful for priests to act freely. For David had been called to be a priest in the sight of God, although Saul carried on a persecution against him ; for all just men belong to the sacerdotal order. Now all apostles of the Lord are priests, for they inherit neither lands nor houses here, but ever attend on the altar and on God.”

“ Who are they,” he goes on, “ that have left father and mother and have renounced all their kindred for the sake of the word of God and his covenant, but the disciples of the Lord ? Of these Moses saith again, ‘ But they shall have no inheritance ; for the Lord himself shall be their inheritance ;’ and again, ‘ The priests, the Levites, in the whole tribe of Levi shall have no part nor inheritance with Israel : the first-fruits (fructificationes) of the Lord are their inheritance ; they shall eat them.’ For this reason also Paul saith, ‘ I require not the gift, but I require the fruit.’ The disciples of the Lord, he would say, were allowed when hungry to take food of the seeds (they had sown), for ‘ The laborer is worthy of his food.’ ”

Again, striking upon the same topic in a later passage, and commenting on the words of Jeremiah (31 : 14), “ I will intoxicate the soul of the priests the sons of Levi, and my people

shall be filled with my good things," he adds : " We have shown in a former book that all disciples of the Lord are priests and Levites, who also profaned the Sabbath in the temple and are blameless." Thus Irenæus too recognizes the whole body of the faithful under the new dispensation as the counterparts of the sons of Levi under the old. The position of the apostles and evangelists has not yet been abandoned.

A few years later, but still before the close of the century, Polycrates of Ephesus writes to Victor of Rome. Incidentally he speaks of St. John as " having been made a priest" and " wearing the mitre ;" and this might seem to be a distinct expression of sacerdotal views, for the " mitre" to which he alludes is doubtless the tiara of the Jewish high-priest. But it may very reasonably be questioned if this is the correct meaning of the passage. Whether St. John did actually wear this decoration of the high-priestly office, or whether Polycrates has mistaken a symbolical expression in some earlier writer for an actual fact, or whether, lastly, his language itself should be treated as a violent metaphor, I have had occasion to discuss elsewhere. But in any case the notice is explained by the language of St. John himself,

who regards the whole body of believers as high-priests of the new covenant ; and it is certain that the contemporaries of Polycrates still continued to hold similar language. As a figurative expression or as a literal fact the notice points to St. John as the veteran teacher, the chief representative, of a pontifical race. On the other hand, it is possible that this was not the sense which Polycrates himself attached to the figure or the fact ; and if so, we have here perhaps the earliest passage in any extant Christian writing where the sacerdotal view of the ministry is distinctly put forward.

Clement of Alexandria was a contemporary of Polycrates. Though his extant writings are considerable in extent, and though they are largely occupied with questions of Christian ethics and social life, the ministry does not hold a prominent place in them. In the few passages where he mentions it, he does not betray any tendency to sacerdotal or even to hierarchical views. The bias of his mind indeed lay in an opposite direction. He would be much more inclined to maintain an aristocracy of intellectual contemplation than of sacerdotal office. And in Alexandria generally, as we have seen, the development of the hierarchy was slower than in other churches. How

far he is from maintaining a sacerdotal view of the ministry, and how substantially he coincides with Irenæus in this respect, will appear from the following passage: "It is possible for men even now, by exercising themselves in the commandments of the Lord and by living a perfect gnostic life in obedience to the Gospel, to be inscribed in the roll of the apostles. Such men are genuine presbyters of the Church and true deacons of the will of God, if they practise and teach the things of the Lord, being not indeed ordained by men nor considered righteous because they are presbyters, but enrolled in the presbytery because they are righteous; and though here on earth they may not be honored with a chief seat, yet shall they sit on the four and-twenty thrones judging the people." It is quite consistent with this truly spiritual view that he should elsewhere recognize the presbyter, the deacon, and the layman as distinct orders. But, on the other hand, he never uses the words "priest," "priestly," "priesthood," of the Christian ministry. In one passage indeed he contrasts laity and priesthood, but without any such reference. Speaking of the veil of the temple, and assigning to it a symbolical meaning, he describes it as a "barrier against laic

unbelief," behind which "the priestly ministration is hidden." Here the laymen and the priests are respectively those who reject and those who appropriate the spiritual mysteries of the Gospel. Accordingly in the context St. Clement, following up the hint thrown out in the Epistle to the Hebrews, gives a spiritual meaning to all the furniture of the holy place.

His younger contemporary Tertullian is the first to assert direct sacerdotal claims on behalf of the Christian ministry. Of the heretics he complains that they impose sacerdotal functions on laymen. "The right of giving baptism," he says elsewhere, "belongs to the chief priest (*summus sacerdos*), that is, the bishop." "No woman," he asserts, "ought to teach, baptize, celebrate the eucharist, or arrogate to herself the performance of any duty pertaining to males, much less of the sacerdotal office." And generally he uses the words *sacerdos*, *sacerdotium*, *sacerdotalis*, of the Christian ministry. It seems plain, moreover, from his mode of speaking, that such language was not peculiar to himself, but passed current in the churches among which he moved. Yet he himself supplies the true counterpoise to this special sacerdotalism in his strong assertion of the universal priesthood of all true believers.

“ We should be foolish,” so he writes when arguing against second marriages, “ to suppose that a latitude is allowed to laymen which is denied to priests. Are not we laymen also priests? It is written, ‘ He hath also made us a kingdom and priests to God and his Father.’ It is the authority of the Church which makes a difference between the order (the clergy) and the people—this authority and the consecration of their rank by the assignment of special benches to the clergy. Thus where there is no bench of clergy you present the eucharistic offerings and baptize and are your own sole priest. For where three are gathered together there is a church, even though they be laymen. Therefore, if you exercise the rights of a priest in cases of necessity, it is your duty also to observe the discipline enjoined on a priest, where of necessity you exercise the rights of a priest.” And in another treatise he writes in bitter irony, “ When we begin to exalt and inflame ourselves against the clergy, then we are all one; then we are all priests, because ‘ he made us priests to God and his Father;’ but when we are required to submit ourselves equally to the priestly discipline, we throw off our fillets and are no longer equal.” These passages, it is true, occur in treatises probably

written after Tertullian had become wholly or in part a Montanist ; but this consideration is of little consequence, for they bear witness to the fact that the scriptural doctrine of an universal priesthood was common ground to himself and his opponents, and had not yet been obscured by the sacerdotal view of the Christian ministry.

An incidental expression in Hippolytus serves to show that a few years later than Tertullian sacerdotal terms were commonly used to designate the different orders of the clergy. " We," says the zealous bishop of Portus, " being successors of the apostles and partaking of the same grace both of *high-priesthood* and of teaching, and accounted guardians of the Church, do not close our eyes drowsily or tacitly suppress the true word," etc.

The march of sacerdotal ideas was probably slower at Alexandria than at Carthage or Rome. Though belonging to the next generation, Origen's views are hardly so advanced as those of Tertullian. In the temple of the Church, he says, there are two sanctuaries : the heavenly, accessible only to Jesus Christ, our great High-Priest ; the earthly, open to all priests of the new covenant, that is to all faithful believers. For Christians are a sacer-

dotal race, and therefore have access to the outer sanctuary. There they must present their offerings, their holocausts of love and self-denial. From this outer sanctuary our High-Priest takes the fire as he enters the Holy of Holies to offer incense to the Father (see Lev. 16 : 12). Very many professed Christians, he writes elsewhere (I am here abridging his words), occupied chiefly with the concerns of this world and dedicating few of their actions to God, are represented by the tribes, who merely present their tithes and first-fruits. On the other hand, "those who are devoted to the divine word and are dedicated sincerely to the sole worship of God may not unreasonably be called priests and Levites, according to the difference in this respect of their impulses tending thereto." Lastly, "Those who excel the men of their own generation perchance will be high-priests." They are only high-priests, however, after the order of Aaron, our Lord himself being High-Priest after the order of Melchisedek. Again, in a third place, he says : "The apostles, and they that are made like unto the apostles, being priests after the order of the great High-Priest, having received the knowledge of the worship of God, and being instructed by the

Spirit, know for what sins they ought to offer sacrifices," etc. In all these passages Origen has taken spiritual enlightenment and not sacerdotal office to be the Christian counterpart to the Aaronic priesthood. Elsewhere, however, he makes use of sacerdotal terms to describe the ministry of the Church ; and in one place distinguishes the priests and the Levites as representing the presbyters and deacons respectively.

Hitherto the sacerdotal view of the Christian ministry has not been held apart from a distinct recognition of the sacerdotal functions of the whole Christian body. The minister is thus regarded as a priest, because he is the mouthpiece, the representative, of a priestly race. Such appears to be the conception of Tertullian, who speaks of the clergy as separate from the laity only because the Church in the exercise of her prerogative has for convenience intrusted to them the performance of certain sacerdotal functions belonging properly to the whole congregation, and of Origen, who, giving a moral and spiritual interpretation to the sacerdotal office, considers the priesthood of the clergy to differ from the priesthood of the laity only in degree, in so far as the former devote their time and their thoughts more

entirely to God than the latter. So long as this important aspect is kept in view, so long as the priesthood of the ministry is regarded as springing from the priesthood of the whole body, the teaching of the apostles has not been directly violated. But still it was not a safe nomenclature which assigned the terms sacerdos, ἱερεὺς, and the like, to the ministry, as a *special* designation. The appearance of this phenomenon marks the period of transition from the universal sacerdotalism of the New Testament to the particular sacerdotalism of a later age.

If Tertullian and Origen are still hovering on the border, Cyprian has boldly transferred himself into the new domain. It is not only that he uses the terms sacerdos, sacerdotium, sacerdotialis of the ministry with a frequency hitherto without parallel; but he treats all the passages in the Old Testament which refer to the privileges, the sanctions, the duties, and the responsibilities of the Aaronic priesthood as applying to the officers of the Christian Church. His opponents are profane and sacrilegious; they have passed sentence of death on themselves by disobeying the command of the Lord in Deuteronomy to "hear the priest;" they have forgotten the injunction of

Solomon to honor and reverence God's priests ; they have despised the example of St. Paul, who regretted that he " did not know it was the high-priest ;" they have been guilty of the sin of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. These passages are urged again and again. They are urged, moreover, as applying not by parity of reasoning, not by analogy of circumstance, but as absolute and immediate and unquestionable. As Cyprian crowned the edifice of episcopal power, so also was he the first to put forward without relief or disguise these sacerdotal assumptions ; and so uncompromising was the tone in which he asserted them, that nothing was left to his successors but to enforce his principles and reiterate his language.

After thus tracing the gradual departure from the apostolic teaching in the encroachment of the sacerdotal on the pastoral and ministerial view of the clergy, it will be instructive to investigate the causes to which this divergence from primitive truth may be ascribed. To the question whether the change was due to Jewish or Gentile influences, opposite answers have been given. To some it has appeared as a reproduction of the Aaronic priesthood, due to Pharisaic tendencies, such

as we find among St. Paul's converts in Galatia and at Corinth, still lingering in the Church; to others as imported into Christianity by the ever-increasing mass of heathen converts who were incapable of shaking off their sacerdotal prejudices and appreciating the free spirit of the Gospel. The latter view seems correct in the main, but requires some modification.

At all events, so far as the evidence of extant writings goes, there is no reason for supposing that sacerdotalism was especially rife among the Jewish converts. The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs may be taken to represent one phase of Judaic Christianity; the Clementine writings exhibit another. In both alike there is an entire absence of sacerdotal views of the ministry. The former work indeed dwells at length on our Lord's office as the descendant and heir of Levi, and alludes more than once to his institution of a new priesthood; but this priesthood is spiritual and comprehensive. Christ himself is the High-Priest, and the sacerdotal office is described as being "after the type of the Gentiles, extending to all the Gentiles." On the Christian ministry the writer is silent. In the Clementine Homilies the case is somewhat different, but the inference is still more obvious. Though the episcopate is

regarded as the backbone of the Church, though the claims of the ministry are urged with great distinctness, no appeal is ever made to priestly sanctity as the ground of this exalted estimate. Indeed the hold of the Levitical priesthood on the mind of the pious Jew must have been materially weakened at the Christian era by the development of the synagogue organization on the one hand, and by the ever-growing influence of the learned and literary classes, the scribes and rabbis, on the other. The points on which the Judaizers of the apostolic age insist are the rite of circumcision, the distinction of meats, the observance of sabbaths, and the like. The necessity of a priesthood was not, or at least is not known to have been, part of their programme. Among the Essene Jews especially, who went so far as to repudiate the temple sacrifices, no great importance could have been attached to the Aaronic priesthood: and after the apostolic ages, at all events, the most active Judaizers of the dispersion seem to have belonged to the Essene type. But indeed the overwhelming argument against ascribing the growth of sacerdotal views to Jewish influence lies in the fact that there is a singular absence of distinct sacerdotalism during the first century and a half, when alone on any

showing Judaism was powerful enough to impress itself on the belief of the Church at large.

It is therefore to Gentile feeling that this development must be ascribed. For the heathen, familiar with auguries, lustrations, sacrifices, and depending on the intervention of some priest for all the manifold religious rites of the state, the club, and the family, the sacerdotal functions must have occupied a far larger space in the affairs of every-day life than for the Jew of the dispersion, who of necessity dispensed and had no scruple at dispensing with priestly ministrations from one year's end to the other. With this presumption drawn from probability the evidence of fact accords. In Latin Christendom, as represented by the Church of Carthage, the germs of the sacerdotal idea appear first, and soonest ripen to maturity. If we could satisfy ourselves of the early date of the Ancient Syriac Documents lately published, we should have discovered another centre from which this idea was propagated. And so far their testimony may perhaps be accepted. Syria was at least a soil where such a plant would thrive and luxuriate. In no country of the civilized world was sacerdotal authority among the heathen greater.

The most important centres of Syrian Christianity—Antioch and Emesa—were also the cradles of strongly-marked sacerdotal religions which at different times made their influence felt throughout the Roman empire.

But though the spirit which imported the idea into the Church of Christ, and sustained it there, was chiefly due to Gentile education, yet its form was almost as certainly derived from the Old Testament. And this is the modification which needs to be made in the statement, in itself substantially true, that sacerdotalism must be traced to the influence of heathen rather than of Jewish converts.

In the apostolic writings we find the terms “offering,” “sacrifice,” applied to certain conditions and actions of the Christian life. These sacrifices or offerings are described as spiritual; they consist of praise, of faith, of almsgiving, of the devotion of the body, of the conversion of unbelievers, and the like. Thus whatever is dedicated to God’s service may be included under this metaphor. In one passage also the image is so far extended that the apostolic writer speaks of an *altar* pertaining to the spiritual service of the Christian Church. If on this noble scriptural language a false superstructure has been reared, we have here only

one instance out of many where the truth has been impaired by transferring statements from the region of metaphor to the region of fact.

These "sacrifices" were very frequently the acts not of the individual Christian but of the whole congregation. Such, for instance, were the offerings of public prayer and thanksgiving, or the collection of alms on the first day of the week, or the contribution of food for the agape, and the like. In such cases the congregation was represented by its minister, who thus acted as its mouthpiece, and was said to "present the offerings" to God. So the expression is used in the Epistle of St. Clement of Rome. But in itself it involves no sacerdotal view. This ancient father regards the sacrifice or offering as the act of the whole Church performed through its presbyters. The minister is a priest in the same sense only in which each individual member of the congregation is a priest. When St. Clement denounces those who usurp the functions of the presbyters, he reprobates their conduct not as an act of sacrilege but as a violation of order. He views the presbytery as an apostolic ordinance, not as a sacerdotal caste.

Thus when this father speaks of the presby-

ters as "presenting the offerings," he uses an expression which, if not directly scriptural, is at least accordant with the tenor of Scripture. But from such language the transition to sacerdotal views was easy where the sacerdotal spirit was rife. From being the act of the whole congregation, the sacrifice came to be regarded as the act of the minister who officiated on its behalf.

And this transition was moreover facilitated by the growing tendency to apply the terms "sacrifice" and "offering" exclusively or chiefly to the eucharistic service. It may be doubted whether even as used by St. Clement the expression may not have a special reference to this chief act of Christian dedication. It is quite certain that writers belonging to the generations next following, Justin Martyr and Irenæus for instance, employ the terms very frequently with this reference. We may here reserve the question in what sense the celebration of the Lord's Supper may or may not be truly called a sacrifice. The point to be noticed at present is this : that the offering of the eucharist, being regarded as the one special act of sacrifice, and appearing externally to the eye as the act of the officiating minister, might well lead to the minister being called a priest, and

then being thought a priest in some exclusive sense, where the religious bias was in this direction, and as soon as the true position of the minister as the representative of the congregation was lost sight of.

But besides the metaphor or the analogy of the sacrifice, there was another point of resemblance also between the Jewish priesthood and the Christian ministry, which favored the sacerdotal view of the latter. As soon as the episcopate and presbytery ceased to be regarded as sub-orders, and were looked upon as distinct orders, the correspondence of the threefold ministry with the three ranks of the Levitical priesthood could not fail to suggest itself. The solitary bishop represented the solitary high-priest ; the principal acts of Christian sacrifice were performed by the presbyters, as the principal acts of Jewish sacrifice by the priests ; and the attendant ministrations were assigned in the one case to the deacon, as in the other to the Levite. Thus the analogy seemed complete. To this correspondence, however, there was one grave impediment. The only High-Priest under the Gospel recognized by the apostolic writings is our Lord himself. Accordingly, in the Christian remains of the ages next succeeding, this title is reserved as by

right to him ; and though belonging to various schools, all writers alike abstain from applying it to the bishop. Yet the scruple was at length set aside. When it had become usual to speak of the presbyters as “ sacerdotes,” the designation of “ pontifex,” or “ summus sacerdos,” for the bishop was far too convenient and too appropriate to be neglected.

Thus the analogy of the sacrifices and the correspondence of the threefold order supplied the material on which the sacerdotal feeling worked. And in this way, by the union of Gentile sentiment with the ordinances of the old dispensation, the doctrine of an exclusive priesthood found its way into the Church of Christ.

How far is the language of the later Church justifiable? Can the Christian ministry be called a priesthood in any sense? and if so, in what sense? The historical investigation which has suggested this question as its proper corollary has also supplied the means of answering it.

Though different interpretations may be put upon the fact that the sacred writers throughout refrain from applying sacerdotal terms to the Christian ministry, I think it must be taken to signify this much at least, that this minis-

try, if a priesthood at all, is a priesthood of a type essentially different from the Jewish. Otherwise, we shall be perplexed to explain why the earliest Christian teachers should have abstained from using those terms which alone would adequately express to their hearers the one most important aspect of the ministerial office. It is often said in reply, that we have here a question not of words but of things. This is undeniable; but words express things, and the silence of the apostles still requires an explanation.

However, the interpretation of this fact is not far to seek. The Epistle to the Hebrews speaks at great length on priests and sacrifices in their Jewish and their Christian bearing. It is plain from this epistle, as it may be gathered also from other notices, Jewish and heathen, that the one prominent idea of the priestly office at this time was the function of *offering sacrifice*, and thereby making atonement. Now this apostolic writer teaches that all sacrifices had been consummated in the one Sacrifice, all priesthoods absorbed in the one Priest. The offering had been made once for all; and, as there were no more victims, there could be no more priests. All former priesthoods had borne witness to the necessity of a

human mediator, and this sentiment had its satisfaction in the person and office of the Son of Man. All past sacrifices had proclaimed the need of an atoning death, and had their antitype, their realization, their annulment, in the cross of Christ. This explicit statement supplements and interprets the silence elsewhere noticed in the apostolic writings.

Strictly accordant, too, with the general tenor of his argument is the language used throughout by the writer of this epistle. He speaks of Christian sacrifices, of a Christian altar ; but the sacrifices are praise and thanksgiving and well-doing, the altar is the congregation assembled for common worship. If the Christian ministry were a sacerdotal office, if the holy eucharist were a sacerdotal act, in the same sense in which the Jewish priesthood and the Jewish sacrifice were sacerdotal, then his argument is faulty and his language misleading. Though dwelling at great length on the Christian counterparts to the Jewish priest, the Jewish altar, the Jewish sacrifice, he omits to mention the one office, the one place, the one act, which on this showing would be their truest and liveliest counterparts in the everyday worship of the Church of Christ. He has rejected these, and he has chosen instead moral

and spiritual analogies for all these sacred types. Thus in what he has said and in what he has left unsaid alike, his language points to one and the same result.

If, therefore, the sacerdotal office be understood to imply the offering of sacrifices, then the Epistle to the Hebrews leaves no place for a Christian priesthood. If, on the other hand, the word be taken in a wider and looser acceptation, it cannot well be withheld from the ministry of the Church of Christ. Only in this case the meaning of the term should be clearly apprehended ; and it might have been better if the later Christian vocabulary had conformed to the silence of the apostolic writers, so that the possibility of confusion would have been avoided.

According to this broader meaning, the priest may be defined as one who represents God to man and man to God. It is, moreover, indispensable that he should be called by God, for no man "taketh this honor to himself." The Christian ministry satisfies both these conditions.

Of the fulfilment of the latter the only evidence within our cognizance is the fact that the minister is called according to a divinely appointed order. If the preceding investiga-

tion be substantially correct, the threefold ministry can be traced to apostolic direction ; and short of an express statement we can possess no better assurance of a divine appointment, or at least a divine sanction. If the facts do not allow us to unchurch other Christian communities differently organized, they may at least justify our jealous adherence to a polity derived from this source.

And while the mode of appointment satisfies the one condition, the nature of the office itself satisfies the other ; for it exhibits the doubly representative character which is there laid down.

The Christian minister is God's ambassador to men ; he is charged with the ministry of reconciliation ; he unfolds the will of heaven ; he declares in God's name the terms on which pardon is offered ; and he pronounces in God's name the absolution of the penitent. This last-mentioned function has been thought to invest the ministry with a distinctly sacerdotal character. Yet it is very closely connected with the magisterial and pastoral duties of the office, and is only priestly in the same sense in which they are priestly. As empowered to declare the conditions of God's grace, he is empowered also to proclaim the consequences

of their acceptance. But throughout his office is representative and not vicarial. He does not interpose between God and man in such a way that direct communion with God is superseded on the one hand, or that his own mediation becomes indispensable on the other.

Again, the Christian minister is the representative of man to God—of the congregation primarily, of the individual indirectly as a member of the congregation. The alms, the prayers, the thanksgivings of the community are offered through him. Some representation is as necessary in the Church as it is in a popular government; and the nature of the representation is not affected by the fact that the form of the ministry has been handed down from apostolic times and may well be presumed to have a divine sanction. For here again it must be borne in mind that the minister's function is *representative* without being *vicarial*. He is a priest, as the mouth-piece, the delegate, of a priestly race. His acts are not his own, but the acts of the congregation. Hence, too, it will follow that, viewed on this side as on the other, his function cannot be absolute and indispensable. It may be a general rule, it may be under ordinary circumstances a practically universal law.

that the highest acts of congregational worship shall be performed through the principal officers of the congregation. But an emergency may arise when the spirit and not the letter must decide. The Christian ideal will then interpose and interpret our duty. The higher ordinance of the universal priesthood will overrule all special limitations. The layman will assume functions which are otherwise restricted to the ordained minister.

Yet it would be vain to deny that a very different conception prevailed for many centuries in the Church of Christ. The apostolic ideal was set forth, and within a few generations forgotten. The vision was only for a time, and then vanished. A strictly sacerdotal view of the ministry superseded the broader and more spiritual conception of their priestly functions. From being the representatives, the ambassadors, of God, they came to be regarded his vicars. Nor is this the only instance where a false conception has seemed to maintain a long-lived domination over the Church. For some centuries the idea of the holy Roman empire enthralled the minds of men. For a still longer period the idea of the holy Roman See held undisturbed sway over Western Christendom. To those who take a

comprehensive view of the progress of Christianity, even these more lasting obscurations of the truth will present no serious difficulty. They will not suffer themselves to be blinded thereby to the true nobility of ecclesiastical history ; they will not fail to see that, even in the seasons of her deepest degradation, the Church was still the regenerator of society, the upholder of right principle against selfish interest, the visible witness of the invisible God ; they will thankfully confess that, notwithstanding the pride and selfishness and dishonor of individual rulers, notwithstanding the imperfections and errors of special institutions and developments, yet in her continuous history the divine promise has been signally realized, “Lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”







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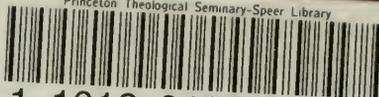
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