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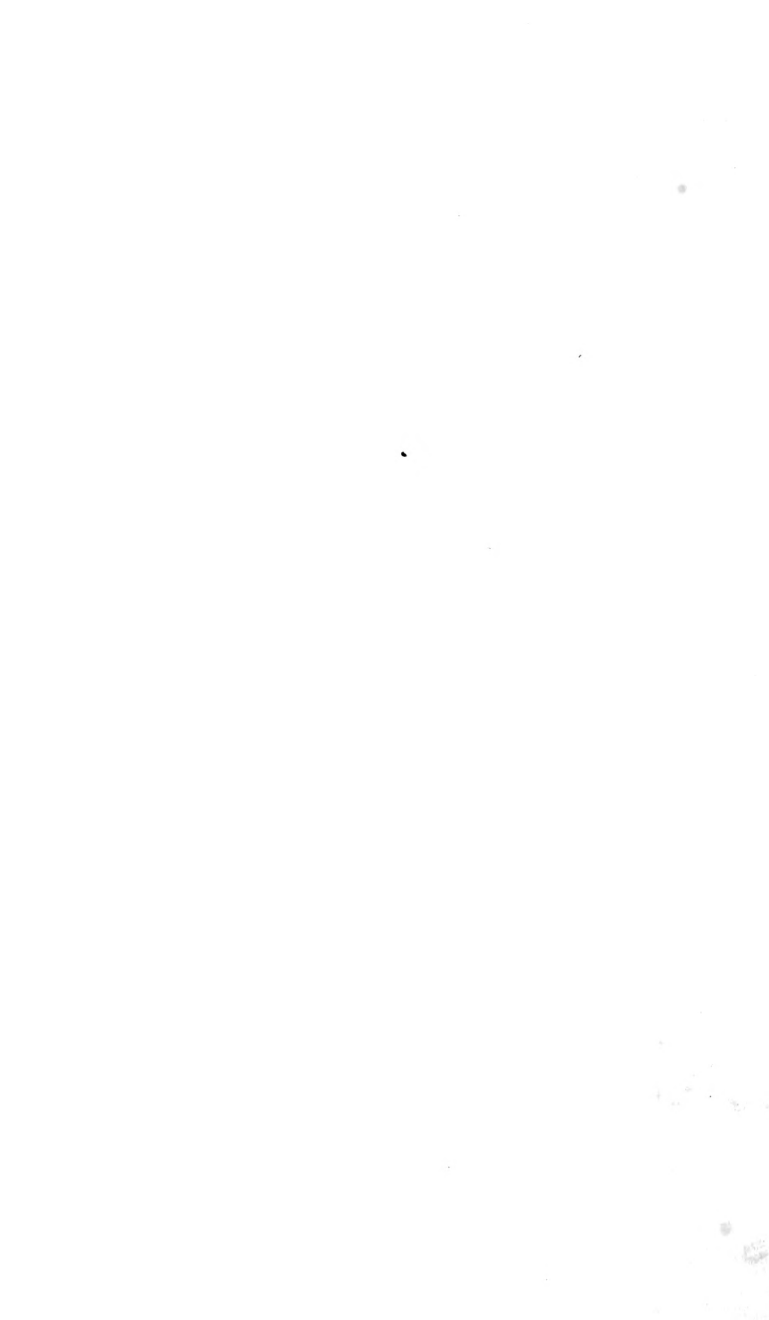
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THE  
PRIMITIVE  
AND  
APOSTOLICAL ORDER  
OF THE  
CHURCH OF CHRIST  
VINDICATED.

✓  
BY SAMUEL MILLER, D. D.

PROFESSOR IN THE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY AT PRINCETON.

PHILADELPHIA :  
PRESBYTERIAN BOARD OF PUBLICATION.  
JAMES RUSSELL, PUBLISHING AGENT.  
1840.

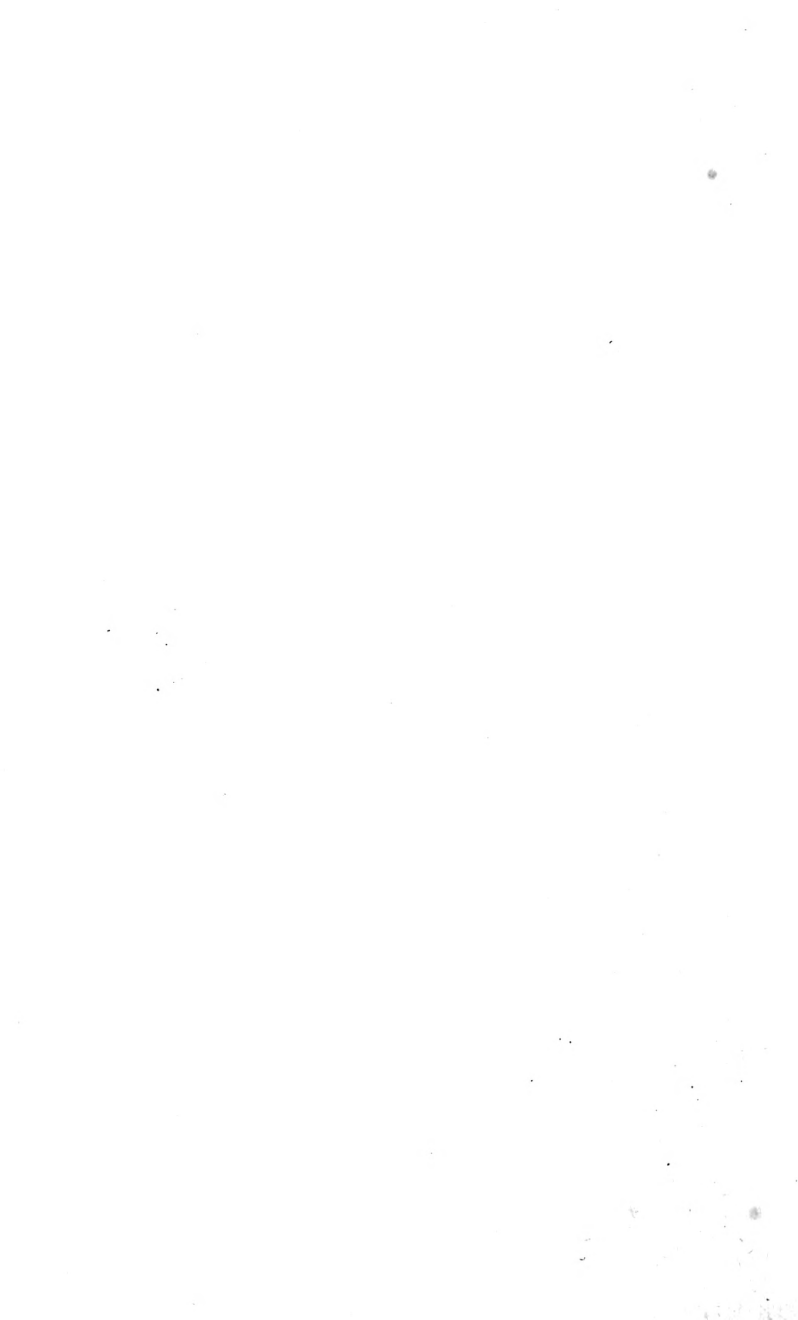
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WILLIAM S. MARTIN, PRINTER.

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## P R E F A C E.

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RELIGIOUS controversy is always painful, and by many serious persons, considered as always mischievous. Charity, they think, forbids us to examine or oppose the opinions of others; and gospel truth, they tell us, is too holy ever to be defended with polemical weapons. Such persons, of course, entertain a prejudice against all religious controversy, and allege that the cause of true religion was never promoted by engaging in it.

No position can be more unreasonable than this; none more contrary to the tenor of Scripture, or to the example of Christ and his inspired apostles. It cannot be doubted, indeed, that controversy, even when the defence of precious truth is its object, *may* be, and often *has been*, commenced with an unhallowed spirit, and conducted in an unhappy and mischievous manner. So may didactic instruction. So may all attempts to enlighten the ignorant or reclaim the vicious. So may feeding the hungry and clothing the naked. But shall we, therefore, abstain from all these acknowledged duties, because they may be, and

have been, abused, and because the discharge of them is always, in fact, mingled with more or less imperfection?

The truth is, controversy is unavoidable, unless we would give up all truth, and allow the advocates of error to have their own way in every thing. Accordingly the whole of the preaching of our blessed Saviour was strikingly polemical in its character. In almost every discourse he specified and denounced the errors of the false teachers around him, and inculcated, with great solemnity, the opposite truth. Was this uncharitable? No Christian will dare to hint such a charge. Nor was this controversial character confined to the preaching of the divine Master himself. His inspired apostles followed his example. Their writings and public discourses abound in the detection and condemnation of erroneous opinions, and in calling upon those whom they addressed to examine and hold fast the truth. Nay, they go a step further, and while their inspiration might seem to warrant them in being peculiarly confident and authoritative in repudiating one set of doctrines, and establishing another; they enjoin upon all the disciples of Christ, in all ages, to follow their example. Hence they proclaim—"Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. Be not carried about with every wind of doctrine, and cunning craftiness whereby men lie in wait to deceive.

*Contend earnestly* for the faith once delivered to the saints. Buy the truth, and sell it not. Hold fast the form of sound words which ye have heard in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." In fact, the Church was founded for the express purpose of preserving, defending, and propagating the truth and order revealed by Christ. And as this truth and order have ever been opposed by the world, she can only maintain them by conflict at every step. Accordingly, the whole history of the Church has been one continued exemplification of the principle, that the truth ever has been, and, as long as this militant state continues, ever must be maintained by *controversy*. The Church, in this conflict, may be compared to persons striving to ascend an agitated and rapid river, when the wind and the tide are both strong against them. They can advance only by hard rowing; and the moment they intermit their efforts they fall down the stream. The Church has to fight for every inch of ground; and whenever she ceases to contend for the truth, she ceases to advance. She may contend with an improper spirit. If she does this, it is her mistake and her sin. But to contend no more, is to disregard the command of her Master in heaven, and betray his cause to the enemy.

But if it be the duty of the Church, and of all her members, to resist the progress of error, whenever and by whomsoever promulgated, it is still more obviously a duty, when important truth is openly at-

tacked, to defend it with firmness, and to endeavour to refute the vaunted error, as well as to establish the opposite truth. But even this, according to the doctrine of some, is not to be permitted.

The writer of these pages is persuaded that there is much less of a *sectarian spirit*, properly so called, in the Presbyterian Church, than in any other body of professing Christians in the United States, perhaps we might add in the world. The truth is, we have hardly enough of the *esprit du corps*—the spirit of denomination—to defend ourselves when attacked. And this, not because we have a less clear conviction than others of the truth of our system, but because our system itself is more pacific and charitable, and less exclusive than any other which holds to the importance of truth at all. For *one* instance in which a Presbyterian minister says a word in the pulpit to invade the opinions or feelings of other denominations, I will engage to produce *fifty* examples of a like kind in the churches around us. And yet, strange to tell! there is no church in the land so frequently stigmatized as *sectarian*, as the Presbyterian Church. And, most strange of all! few, it is believed, have been more forward in repeating and circulating this charge than some of the members of precisely those sects who have been themselves most narrowly exclusive in their spirit and conduct, and, of course, most justly liable to the very imputation which they so injuriously cast on us. Baptists, Episcopalians, Metho-

dists, may all carry their peculiar opinions and claims into the pulpit every sabbath, without offence to any one. It seems even to be expected that they should do so. But if a Presbyterian publicly express a preference for his own beloved church, or propose a plan for printing and circulating books adapted to explain and recommend her denominational opinions, an outcry is raised as if some great offence against Christian charity had been committed. Why is this? The explanation is obvious and easy. In all ages popular sentiment has been more tolerant of every thing than of truth. And, hence, worldly politicians, while they profess to be jealous over all the interests of civil liberty, have generally evinced that their prejudices were ten-fold stronger against Presbyterians, whose whole spirit and history have, for three centuries, heralded them, almost to a proverb, as the friends and uncompromising advocates of liberty, than against Papists, whose system is the very personification of mental thralldom, and spiritual tyranny. It is difficult to assign any other satisfactory reason for this wonderful fact, than that public sentiment is ever leagued against the truth; and that "the simplicity that is in Christ" is far less acceptable to the worldly taste than the inventions and "commandments of men." One of the many arguments in favour of the Calvinistic doctrines, and the pure ecclesiastical discipline professed by the Presbyterian Church is, that the popular feeling and voice are strong against them; especi-

ally that all the tribes of worldliness, levity, scepticism, licentiousness, impiety, and frigid indifference—are found united in one loud clamour of opposition. Herod and Pilate, however alienated, are always ready to make friends for the purpose of crucifying Christ. Such is the reception of the truth and order of the Church which the word of God teaches us to expect. The “carnal mind” naturally dislikes them. And even those worldly minded persons who are bred up in their bosom, and with a prejudice in their favour, are ever ready to turn aside to a more flattering and alluring system, when the temptation is presented.

In regard to the controversy to which this volume relates, it has always been commenced by the friends of Prelacy. No system was ever more pacific and inoffensive than that of the Presbyterian Church. No denomination of Christians was ever more slow to question the claims of others, or to employ the pulpit or the press as means of attack on their neighbours. They have ever been the invaded party. But there are limits beyond which forbearance and silence under assaults cease to be a duty. A deep conviction of this truth has prompted to the present publication. A brief history of the circumstances which occasioned it, will serve, it is hoped, to satisfy the reader as to its real character.

More than thirty-five years ago, a distinguished clergyman of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States, published and maintained, in a great

variety of forms, the following opinions—"Where the gospel is proclaimed, communion with the Church by the participation of its ordinances, at the hands of the duly authorized priesthood, *is the indispensable condition of salvation*. Separation from the prescribed government and regular priesthood of the Church, when it proceeds from *involuntary and unavoidable ignorance or error*, we have reason to trust will not intercept from the humble, the penitent, and obedient, the blessings of God's favour. But great is the guilt, and imminent the danger of those who, possessing the means of arriving at the knowledge of the truth, negligently or wilfully continue in a state of separation from the authorized ministry of the Church, and participate of ordinances administered by an irregular and invalid authority. They are guilty of rebellion against their almighty Lawgiver and Judge; they expose themselves to the awful displeasure of that almighty Jehovah who will not permit his institutions to be condemned, or his authority violated with impunity."\*

Here, it will be perceived, by the most cursory reader, that Presbyterians, and all professing Christians, not connected with the Episcopal Church, are represented as rebels, schismatics, altogether *out of the Church of Christ*, and, unless they can avail themselves of the plea of involuntary ignorance and error, in the utmost danger of eternal perdition!

\* Bishop Hobart's Companion for the Altar, p. 202. 204.

Such denunciations had, indeed, often been heard from Papists, and the devotees of their corrupt priesthood; and had been sometimes found in the controversial writings of high-church Episcopalians, on both sides of the Atlantic. But, since the civil establishment of any religious denomination in our country had been for ever terminated and prohibited by our national independence, and our free constitutions, no such language, as far as is recollected, had been employed by any American Christians until then; especially such language had, up to that time, been confined to controversial pamphlets, and had never, until then, been incorporated with books of devotion, and put into the mouth of every communicant in his nearest approaches to the throne of love and mercy.

The writer of this volume was, at the date of the publication alluded to, one of the pastors of the United Presbyterian Churches in the city of New York. Some of the people of his charge were amazed; others indignant; and a third class perplexed at the claim so confidently urged. In these circumstances, when he and his church were virtually denounced and excommunicated; when the name of a Christian Church was denied us; when Presbyterians were warned to abandon the ministry of their pastors, under the penalty of being regarded as "rebels" and "schismatics" both by God and man—he thought himself called upon to say something in defence of those principles which he believed, and had long



taught, as founded in the word of God. It was no bitterness against his Episcopal neighbours; no love of controversy; no restless ambition; no desire to intrude into another denomination for the purpose of making proselytes, that dictated an attempt to defend his beloved Church. The attempt, as every one who was acquainted with the circumstances could bear witness, was purely defensive, and was demanded by every consideration of duty to the souls of men, and of fidelity to his Master in heaven.

Such was the origin of the "Letters on the Constitution and Order of the Christian Ministry," originally published in 1807, and addressed by the author of this manual to the members of the "United Churches," of which he was then the collegiate pastor. Never was there a work more purely defensive. The author would never have thought of writing or publishing a line on the Episcopal controversy, had not he and his people been assailed in a manner adapted to rouse every feeling in support of the principles which he had taught, and which, as long as he continued to hold them, it was his duty, as a Christian and as a minister, to defend. It never would have occurred to him to complain that our Episcopal neighbours preferred Episcopacy, and thought proper on that principle to organize their church. But when they undertook to denounce *us* as guilty in the sight of God, and in danger of eternal perdition, for not adopting and acting upon the same principle; when

their manuals containing this denunciation were formally sent to our houses; and when we were publicly called upon, in a great variety of forms, to say something, if we had aught to offer, in our own defence, it was, surely, time to give a reason for our principles and our practice.

Yet, wonderful to tell! the calm and respectful *defence* just alluded to, was denounced, by those who undertook to answer it, as an “unprovoked attack” on the Episcopal Church! Nor was this charge confined to his immediate answerers. It was repeated and urged, in numerous instances, by others; and repeatedly, up to this day, made matter of reproachful complaint. He had made no “attack” on that denomination, unless it were an “attack” to show that the claims of Episcopalians to be the *only* true Church, and their denunciations of Presbyterians, had no warrant either in Scripture or in history. He had not assailed his Episcopal neighbours as aliens from “the covenanted mercies of God.” He had not denied that they were a true Church, or that they had a valid ministry, and valid ordinances. Nay, he had formally disclaimed every allegation of this kind. He had simply shown that the ministry and ordinances of the Presbyterian Church rested on grounds quite as solid and tenable as those of the Episcopal Church. But all this was not enough. In the estimation of the high-church prelatists in this controversy, it seems that to refuse acquiescence in their

claims and denunciations is to “attack” them; and to prove these claims and denunciations unscriptural, an inexcusable and presumptuous offence.

The same allegation of “unprovoked attack” has become the standing complaint on every occasion, and in every part of the country in which attempts have been, by whomsoever, made to circulate any defence of Presbyterian church government. It appears to be claimed as the prescriptive right of prelatists to denounce and exclude from the “covenanted mercies of God” at pleasure; but to attempt to show that this virtual excommunication has no warrant in the word of God is, it seems, uncharitable and not to be endured. Such extraordinary overacting must soon come, if it have not already come, to be well understood, and suitably appreciated by an impartial public. Let us illustrate the spirit of such conduct by a familiar example drawn from common life. Suppose one of my neighbours were to publish a pamphlet denouncing me and my family as aliens, and denying that we had the smallest claim to the rights and privileges of American citizens. Suppose I were to make a publication in reply, containing no abuse, and not calling in question *his* rights; but proving in the clearest manner my citizenship, and showing that my claims to that character were, to the full, as strong and unquestionable as his own. And suppose, by way of rejoinder, he were to appeal to the public in such language as this: “See how this

man is picking a quarrel with me, and attacking an inoffensive neighbour?" What would impartial bystanders think of such conduct? Would indignation or contempt be their predominant feeling? Now the supposed case is precisely analogous to the actual one before us. Never was there an instance in which the charge of "unprovoked attack" was more unjust, or more perfectly preposterous.

In consequence of recent and repeated attempts to circulate with new zeal, in different parts of our country, those manuals which denounce and virtually excommunicate Presbyterians, the writer of these pages has been prevailed upon to present in a new and abridged form his views of the subject. In doing this he has not a thought or a wish to attack Episcopacy; but merely to show that Episcopacy has been wrong—utterly wrong and unjust in attacking Presbyterianism.

It is due to candour also to say, that some late and extraordinary movements in the Episcopal denomination in the United States, have induced the writer of these pages, as a dutiful and devoted son of the Church, and as a "watchman on her walls," to appear once more as an advocate of primitive truth and order. Most intelligent readers will understand that there is a reference here to the "Tracts for the Times," lately published by certain writers in the University of Oxford, in England, and more recently re-printed, and extensively circulated, in the United

States. The character of these tracts is beginning to be so well known, and so justly appreciated, that little need be said to apprize the public of their real aim and tendency. The truth is, they present such views of the character and powers of the Episcopal "priesthood," and of the inherent efficacy of the Christian sacraments, when administered by Episcopal hands, as mark a rapid return to the principles of Popery, and as ought to be abhorred by every sincere Protestant. Among other things, little less exceptionable, they teach that their "priesthood" have the power of communicating spiritual life, by means of the sacraments, to those to whom they minister. They represent the act of ordination, by the bishop's hands, as conveying infallibly the gifts of the Holy Ghost. They teach the doctrine of the presence of the real body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist. They favour prayers for the dead. They speak of the Virgin Mary in language which might well befit Popish lips. They contend that we are justified before God, not by faith in the perfect righteousness of Christ, but by the participation of the sacraments. They distinctly convey the superstitious and awful doctrine that for sins committed after baptism, there is no promised forgiveness, even on repentance ever so sincere and deep. And, finally, that the most certain means of promoting the spiritual benefit of men is to exhibit to them, not the atoning sacrifice of the Redeemer as the ground of hope, but the external ordinances of the Church.

The editors of the "Christian Observer," a popular periodical, known to be edited by zealous members of the established Church of England, speak of the tracts not only with disapprobation, but with abhorrence; and deliver as their deliberate opinion, that, if such principles as these writers aim to propagate become prevalent in that church, it ought no longer to be supported by a Christian people. The same estimate of the unscriptural character of these Tracts is made by a number of the most pious and eminent dignitaries of the English establishment; and five or six, at least, of the bishops of the Episcopal Church in our own country, are understood to regard them as not only containing error, but awfully dangerous error, the prevalence of which would be deeply disastrous to the best interests of their denomination, and put in jeopardy the souls of such as should yield to them their credence.

Bishop Wilson, of Calcutta, speaks of these Tracts, and of the system and aim of their authors, in the following strong language:

"It is to me, I confess, a matter of surprise and shame, that, in the nineteenth century, we should really have the fundamental position of the *whole system of Popery* virtually re-asserted in the bosom of that very Church which was reformed so determinately three centuries since, from *this self same evil*, by the doctrine, and labours, and martyrdom of Cranmer and his noble fellow-sufferers. What! are we

to have all the fond tenets which formerly sprung from the “traditions of men” re-introduced, in however modified a form, among us? Are we to have a refined transubstantiation—the sacraments, and not faith, the chief means of salvation—a confused and uncertain mixture of the merits of Christ and inherent grace in the matter of justification—remission of sins and the new creation in Christ Jesus confined, or almost confined, to baptism—perpetual doubt of pardon to the penitent after that sacrament—the duty and advantage of self-imposed austerities—the innocence of prayers for the dead—and similar tenets and usages which generate a spirit of bondage, again asserted among us? And is the paramount authority of the inspired Scriptures, and the doctrine of the grace of God in our justification by the alone merits of Jesus Christ, which reposes on that authority, to be again weakened and obscured by such human *superadditions*, and a new edifice of ‘will worship’ and ‘voluntary humility,’ and the ‘rudiments of the world,’ as the apostle speaks, to be created once more in the place of the simple gospel of a crucified Saviour?” \*

The author of this manual is conscious of having reached an age when, according to the course of nature, he cannot be far from his last account, and when nothing ought to engage his attention, or employ his pen, but that which concerns the best interests of the

\* Charge to his Clergy, 1838.

Church of God. The nearer he approaches to the end of his course, the greater is his aversion to controversy. Much rather would he spend his little remaining time in explaining and recommending those great fundamental truths which pertain to the wonders of redeeming love, and the precious hopes of sinful men for eternity. Were points of mere ecclesiastical polity involved in the questions to which he refers, his interest in them, though not small, would be by no means so intense. But when he perceives matters of infinite moment to be wrapped up in these questions; when he finds publications flooding the land which turn away the attention of their readers from the Saviour, as the only ground of confidence, and direct them to the fables, the genealogies, and the miserable revived superstitions of Romanism, as the only safe foundation of hope, he feels bound to employ whatever little of strength old age may have left him in opposing such destructive errors, and directing the attention of as many as he can reach and influence to "the only foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself the corner stone laid in Zion." This is the great cause in the defence of which, as God shall give him ability, he wishes to live and to die. In this cause he never expects to give over more or less *controversy*, irksome as it is, as long as he shall remain a member of the Church militant here below.

S. M.

PRINCETON, September, 1840.



# PRIMITIVE ORDER, &c.

## CHAPTER I.

### THE QUESTION IN THIS CONTROVERSY STATED.

IN the discussion of all controverted subjects, it is of the utmost importance to ascertain, at the commencement, the precise state of the question. This has often been mistaken in relation to the subject before us; and hence have arisen vague, inaccurate language, and sometimes even entire misapprehension of radical principles. An attempt, therefore, will be made to state as clearly as possible, the main points concerning which we, as Presbyterians, differ from our Episcopal brethren.

We by no means deny, then, that there was, in the primitive Church, a class of officers who bore the name of *bishops*. On the contrary, we maintain that there *were* bishops in the apostolic Church, and that there ought to be bishops *now*. Both the *name* and the *office* are to be found in the New Testament, and ought to be retained to the end of time. Many Episcopalians of slender information, seem to take for granted that we discard *bishops* in every sense of the word; and, therefore, when they find this title in Scripture, or in early uninspired writers, they exult as if the word established their claim. But nothing

can be more unfounded than this triumph. We believe and acknowledge as fully as themselves, that ministers of the gospel bearing this title, are frequently spoken of in the New Testament; and that there must be *bishops* in every regularly constituted church in every age. Accordingly it is well known, that in the *Form of Government* of the Presbyterian Church, the pastors of churches are uniformly styled bishops; and this title is recommended to be retained, as both scriptural and appropriate.

But we differ from that denomination of Christians in our views of the *character* and *powers* of church officers. They suppose that there are three orders in the Christian ministry, viz. *bishops*, *presbyters*, and *deacons*: the first possessing the highest ecclesiastical power; the second invested with authority to preach and administer both sacraments; and the third empowered only to preach and baptize. We suppose, on the other hand, that there is, properly speaking, but one order of gospel ministers; that there are, indeed, two other classes of church officers, viz. *ruling elders* and *deacons*; but that neither of these are authorized to *labour in the word and doctrine*, or to administer either of the Christian sacraments. We suppose that there is a plain distinction made in Scripture between *elders* who only *rule*, and *elders* who, to the power of ruling, join also that of *teaching* and administering *sealing* ordinances. And we believe, that the friends of modern Episcopacy, in considering *deacons* as an order of *clergy*, and in empowering them to preach and baptize, are chargeable with a departure from the apostolic pattern.

But we differ from our Episcopal brethren, princi-

pally, with respect to the *character* and *powers* of the scriptural *bishop*. On the one hand, they contend that *bishops* are an order of ministers superior to *presbyters*, having a different ordination, different powers, and a different sphere of duty. That while *presbyters* have a right, by virtue of their office, to preach the word, and administer sacraments, to *bishops* exclusively belong the powers of ordination, confirmation, and government. On the other hand, we maintain that there is but one order of ministers of the gospel in the Christian church; that every regular pastor of a congregation is a scriptural bishop; or, in other words, that every presbyter, who has been set apart, by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery, and who has the pastoral charge of a particular church, is, to all intents and purposes, in the sense of Scripture, and of the primitive Church, a bishop; having a right, in company with others, his equals, to ordain, and to perform every service pertaining to the episcopal office. We can discover no warrant, either from the word of God, or from the early history of the Church, for what is called diocesan episcopacy, or the pre-eminence and authority of one man, under the title of bishop, or any other title, over a number of presbyters and churches: on the contrary, we are persuaded and affirm, that Christ and his apostles, expressly discountenanced such claims of pre-eminence; and that all those forms of ecclesiastical government which are built upon these claims, are corruptions of apostolic simplicity, and deviations from the primitive order of the Church. In a word, we believe that the office of the gospel ministry is *one*, and that the New Testament does not admit of grades and orders in that office; that he

who has received it, without being made the pastor of a particular church, is called a minister of the gospel, an ambassador of Christ, or an evangelist, according to circumstances; that when he becomes related, by installation, to a particular church, as its pastor or "overseer," he is then a scriptural bishop. We do not suppose that in thus becoming a pastor or bishop, he is invested with a new office; but that in his official character he is brought into connection with a particular flock. Thus, in the language of the Episcopal Church, when a man is ordained a presbyter, he is said to be invested with priest's orders—when the same man is instituted the rector of a parish, he is not clothed with a new office, but is still only a presbyter, entrusted with a pastoral charge. So in the Presbyterian Church, a presbyter without a pastoral charge, however excellent and venerated, is not a bishop. He is not the "overseer of a flock." But when he is called by a church to be its pastor, and is installed as such, he receives no new office; but is a presbyter placed in a pastoral charge, a scriptural bishop.

This being the case, the reader will readily perceive the necessity of clearly marking and keeping in view a distinction between the *primitive* and the *modern* sense of the word bishop. Accordingly, in the perusal of the following sheets, he is earnestly requested to recollect, at every step, that by a scriptural or primitive bishop, is always meant a presbyter, minister, pastor, or whatever else he may be called, who has the pastoral care of a particular congregation; and that by scriptural or primitive episcopacy, is meant that government of the Church, by such bishops, which existed in pure apostolic times

and for near two hundred years afterwards. And, on the other hand, that by modern bishops, and modern episcopacy, is meant that government of the Church by prelates, which took its rise from ecclesiastical ambition, long after the days of the apostles, and which, with other innovations on primitive order, has since claimed to rest on the authority of Christ.

It ought further to be understood, that among those who espouse the Episcopal side in this controversy, there are three classes.

The first consists of those who believe that neither Christ nor his apostles laid down any particular form of ecclesiastical government, to which the Church is bound to adhere in all ages. That every church is free, consistently with the divine will, to frame her constitution agreeably to her own views, to the state of society, and to the exigencies of particular times. These prefer the Episcopal government, and some of them believe that it was the primitive form; but they consider it as resting on the ground of human expediency alone, and not of divine appointment. This is well known to have been the opinion of Archbishops Cranmer, and Grindal; of Bishop Leighton, of Bishop Jewel, of Dr. Whitaker, of Bishop Reynolds, of Archbishop Tillotson, of Bishop Burnet, of Bishop Croft, of Dr. Stillingfleet, and of a long list of the most learned and pious divines of the church of England, from the Reformation down to the present day. Dr. Jortin, a learned divine of that church, who also held this opinion, embodied it in one sentence—"Government, both in Church and State, is *of God*; the forms of it are *of men*."

Another class of Episcopalians go further. They suppose that the government of the Church by

bishops, as a superior order to presbyters, was sanctioned by apostolic example, and that it is the duty of all churches to imitate this example. But while they consider Episcopacy as necessary to the perfection of the Church, they grant that it is by no means necessary to her existence; and accordingly, without hesitation, acknowledge as true churches of Christ, many in which the Episcopal doctrine is rejected, and Presbyterian principles made the basis of ecclesiastical government. The advocates of this opinion, also, have been numerous and respectable, both among the clerical and lay members of the Episcopal churches in England and the United States. In this list appear the venerable names of Bishop Hall, Bishop Downham, Bishop Bancroft, Bishop Andrews, Archbishop Usher, Bishop Forbes, the learned Chillingworth, Archbishop Wake, Bishop Hoadly, and many more, whose declarations on the subject will be more particularly detailed in another place.

A *third* class go much beyond either of the former. While they grant that God has left men at liberty to modify every other kind of government according to circumstances, they contend that one form of government for the church is unalterably fixed by divine appointment; that this form is Episcopal; that it is absolutely essential to the existence of the church; that, of course, wherever it is wanting, there is no church, no regular ministry, no valid ordinances; and that all who are united with religious societies, not conforming to this order, are "aliens from Christ," "out of the appointed road to heaven," and have no hope but in the "uncovenanted mercies of God."

It is confidently believed that the two former classes taken together, embrace a large majority of all the

Episcopalians in Great Britain and the United States; while, so far as can be learned from the most respectable writings, and other authentic sources of information, it is only the remaining proportion, and, as some think, a small minority, who hold the extravagant opinions assigned to the third and last of these classes.

It will be seen, from the foregoing statement, that Presbyterians are, in reality, *Episcopalians*, as well as their neighbours who popularly bear that name. Believing, as they do, that the Greek word which we translate bishop, simply means the "overseer" of a flock, they, of course, hold to a *parochial episcopacy*, in opposition to *diocesan episcopacy*; or, in other words, that every minister of the gospel, who has a pastoral charge, is a scriptural bishop. Yet, on the principles of courtesy and habit, they yield the title of *Episcopal* to those to whom it is commonly applied, without meaning to acknowledge that *they* alone hold to bishops; on the same principle that they yield the title of *Baptist* to their Antipedobaptist brethren, without intending thereby to concede, in the remotest manner, that they alone *baptize*.

A more exactly discriminating term, however, by which to distinguish between Presbyterians and *Diocesan Episcopalians*, would be to call the latter *Prelatists*, and their system *Prelacy*. This would be drawing the line by a single word, without the possibility of confusion or mistake.

The learned Beza, in an able and interesting treatise on this subject, divides episcopacy, for the sake of discrimination, into three sorts: (1,) *divine episcopacy*, meaning that *parochial* form of it in which Presbyterians believe, and which he considered as laid down in the New Testament; (2,) *human episcopacy*,

or that pre-eminence of some ministers over others, which he regarded as resting merely on the ground of human authority, and which he considered as exemplified in the Church of England; and, (3,) *diabolical episcopacy*, or that corrupt and tyrannical sort of prelacy which is found in the Church of Rome.\*

With those Episcopalians who merely *prefer* the prelatical form of ecclesiastical government, without the claim of *divine right*; without supposing the want of it to invalidate the ministerial authority, or the ordinances of those churches which have it not, I have, at present, no controversy. Presbyterians think them wrong; but have no disposition to complain of them, or to contend with them in regard to their preference. They consider such a preference, and a corresponding practice, as in no respect offensive, and as having no tendency to interfere with the communion of saints. With several religious denominations, nominally and really episcopal in their ecclesiastical organization, in this qualified sense, it is easy to live on terms of good neighbourhood, and even, to a certain extent, of affectionate intercourse.

But the claim which it is the design of this manual to oppose, is the following:—That diocesan episcopacy is founded on divine right; that it is not only laid down in Scripture, but is *indispensable* to an authorized ministry, and to valid ordinances; that where there is no ministry episcopally ordained, in an uninterrupted and divinely protected succession from the apostles, there is no church; no sacraments; no covenanted hope of mercy; that all non-episcopal ministers are intruders into the sacred office, their ministrations a nullity, and those who attend upon

\* De Triplici Episcopatu.



them aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and rebels against God. This doctrine many of our Episcopal neighbours maintain. This doctrine they proclaim unceasingly from the pulpit and the press. Some, indeed, of this general class, tell us that they do not go so far as to draw this excommunicating inference, and to unchurch all other denominations; but content themselves with maintaining that Episcopacy *only* has any authority from the great Head of the Church. But many go the whole length that has been mentioned; and the professed charity of others is by no means in keeping with their principles. Such claims the writer of this manual thinks it a duty which he owes to God and man to oppose. He considers them as unreasonable in themselves; perfectly destitute of support from Scripture, and adapted to exert a most baneful influence upon all the interests of Christian character and hope. Were the watchmen on the walls of Zion to be silent when such pretensions are advanced, they would be traitors to their Master and his cause. With such claims, it is the duty of every faithful minister of the gospel, and every enlightened friend of the Church of Christ, to maintain inflexible, zealous, persevering controversy.

Against these exorbitant claims there is, prior to all inquiry into their evidence, a strong general presumption, for the following reasons:

*First*—It is placing a point of external order on a par with the *essence* of religion. I readily grant, that every observance which the great Head of the Church enjoins by express precept, is indispensably binding. But it is certainly contrary to the genius of the gospel dispensation, which is pre-eminently distinguished from the Mosaic economy by its simplicity and spi-

rituality, to place forms of outward order among those things which are essential to the very existence of the Church. We know from Scripture, that the visible form of the Church has been repeatedly altered, without affecting her essence.

*Secondly*—Against this doctrine there is another ground of presumption; because it represents the rite of *ordination* as of superior importance to the whole system of divine truth and ordinances, which it is the duty of Christian ministers to dispense. According to this doctrine, presbyters are fully authorized to preach that gospel which is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to admit members into the Church by baptism; to administer the Lord's supper; and, in short, to engage in all those ministrations which are necessary to edify the body of Christ: but to the regular introduction of a minister into office, by the imposition of hands, they are not competent. Is not this, in other words, maintaining, that the gospel is inferior to its ministers; that the sacraments are less solemn and elevated ordinances than a rite, which all Protestants allow not to be a sacrament; that the dispensation of God's truth is a less dignified function, than selecting and setting apart a servant of the truth; that the *means* are more important than the *end*? If so, then every man of sound mind will pronounce, that, against such a doctrine, there is, antecedent to all inquiry, a reasonable and strong presumption.

*Thirdly*—If it be admitted, that there are no true ministers but those who are episcopally ordained; and that none are in communion with Christ, excepting those who receive the ordinances of his Church from the hands of ministers thus ordained; then Christian

character, and all the marks by which we are to judge of it, will be placed on new ground; ground of which the Scriptures say nothing; and which it is impossible for one Christian in a thousand to investigate. When the word of God describes a real Christian, it is in such language as this—He is born of the Spirit; he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. He believes in Christ, and repents of all sin. He crucifies the flesh, with the affections and lusts: he delights in the law of the Lord after the inward man:—he strives against sin: he is meek, humble, full of mercy and good fruits: he loves his brethren whom he hath seen, as well as God whom he hath not seen: he is zealous of good works: and makes it his constant study to imbibe the Spirit, and to imitate the example of the Redeemer. These are the evidences of Christian character which fill the New Testament, and which meet us wherever the subject is discussed. According to this representation, the only *essential* pre-requisite to holding communion with Christ, is being united to him by a living faith: that faith which purifies the heart, and is productive of good works. But if the extravagant doctrine which we oppose be admitted; then no man, however abundantly he may possess all these characteristics, can be in communion with Christ, unless he is also in communion with the Episcopal Church. That is, his claim to the Christian character cannot be established by exhibiting a holy temper and life; but depends on his being in the line of a certain ecclesiastical descent. In other words, the inquiry whether he is in covenant with Christ, is not to be answered by evidences of personal sanctification; but resolves itself into a question of clerical *genealogy*, which few Christians in the

world are capable of examining, and which no mortal can certainly establish. There is no possibility of avoiding this conclusion on the principle assumed. And I appeal to every serious reader, whether a principle which involves such consequences, has not strong presumption against it.

*Fourthly*—If the doctrine in question be admitted, then we virtually pronounce nine-tenths of the whole Protestant world to be in a state of excommunication from Christ. I know it has been often said, by zealous writers on this subject, that the great body of the Protestant churches are Episcopal; and that those who adopt the Presbyterian government make but a very small portion of the whole number. But I need not tell those who are acquainted with the history of the Church since the Reformation, and with the present state of the Christian world, that this representation is wholly incorrect. The very reverse is true, as every well informed reader is aware. Are we then prepared to adopt a principle which cuts off so large a portion of the Protestant world from the visible Church, and represents it as in a state in some respects worse than that of the heathen? It is to be presumed that every considerate man will require the most pointed evidence of divine warrant, before he admits a principle so tremendous in its consequences.

The great question, then, to be decided is, does the New Testament teach, or intimate, that there are, in the Church of Christ, by divine appointment, *three classes* or *grades* of gospel ministers, all of them authorized to “labour in the word and doctrine;”—*deacons*, whose function it is to preach and baptize; *presbyters*, who are appointed to preach the gospel, and administer both sacraments; and *bishops*, a supe-

rior class to both, who are alone empowered to ordain presbyters and deacons, and to govern the church; and without whose agency no one can be validly invested with the sacred office? This is the question to the solution of which our attention is now to be directed. Let us examine the evidence from Scripture and from antiquity, which the advocates of the Episcopal claim attempt to produce in support of the affirmative.

## CHAPTER II.

## TESTIMONY OF SCRIPTURE.

IN all disputes relating either to the faith or the practice of Christians, the first and the grand question is—*what saith the Scripture?* This is the ultimate and the only infallible standard. Whatever is not found in the Bible, cannot be considered as *essential* either to the doctrine or the order of the Church. This maxim is especially applicable to the subject now under discussion. As the Christian ministry is an office deriving its existence and its authority solely from Jesus Christ, the King and Head of his church, it is obvious that his Word is the only rule by which any claims to this office can properly be tried, and the powers and duties of those who bear it ascertained. By this unerring standard, then, we are not only willing, but must insist, that the question before us shall be decided. The declarations of two eminent Episcopal writers on this subject are just and weighty. “The Scripture,” says Dr. Sherlock, “is all of a piece; every part of it agrees with the rest. The fathers many times contradict themselves and each other.”\* In the same strain speaks the celebrated Chillingworth. “The BIBLE, I say, the Bible is the religion of Protestants! I, for my part, after a long, and (as I verily hope and believe) impartial search of the true way to eternal happiness, do profess plainly,

\* Preservative Against Popery. Part I. chap. ii. sec. 3.

that I cannot find any rest for the sole of my feet, but upon this rock only, viz. the SCRIPTURE. I see plainly, and with my own eyes, Popes against Popes; Councils against Councils; some fathers against others; the same fathers against themselves; a consent of fathers of one age against a consent of fathers of another age; and the Church of one age against the Church of another age.”\* And it is satisfactory to know that a late popular and widely circulated Tract, written in defence of Prelacy, begins by acknowledging—“That the claim of Episcopacy to be a divine institution, and therefore obligatory on the Church, rests fundamentally on the one question—Has it the authority of Scripture? If it has not, it is not necessarily binding.” And again, “No argument is worth taking into account that has not a palpable bearing on the clear and naked question, the scriptural evidence of Episcopacy.”† To this principle we, as Presbyterians, are perfectly willing to accede, and hope that all parties will faithfully adhere. Let us, then, with all impartiality and candour, examine what the Scriptures say on the point in dispute.

And here it is proper to premise, that whoever expects to find any formal or explicit decisions on this subject delivered by Christ or his apostles, will be disappointed. It is true, the discourses of the Saviour, and the writings of those who were inspired with the knowledge of his will, contain many observations and instructions concerning the Christian ministry; but they are chiefly employed in prescribing the appropriate character, and urging the solemn duties of those who serve God in the Gospel of his Son,

\* The Religion of Protestants, &c., chap. vi. sect. 56.

† Bishop Onderdonk's Episcopacy tested by Scripture.

rather than in defining their titles, in settling questions of rank and precedence among them, or in guarding the immunities and honours of their office. The necessity of knowledge, piety, zeal, diligence, self-denial, meekness, patience, fortitude, and eminent holiness, in ministers of the gospel, is urged with a frequency, a minuteness, and a force which evince that, in the estimation of infinite wisdom, they are regarded as of primary importance. While questions concerning priority, and grades and privileges, are never once formally discussed; only occasionally alluded to; and then in a manner rather adapted to repress than to encourage any serious regard to them.

Accordingly, it will no doubt surprise any one who approaches the examination of this subject, if he has not been familiar with the controversy, to observe the *character* of that scriptural testimony on which the advocates of Episcopacy rely. They do not pretend to quote a single Scripture directly and formally to their purpose. But their reliance is on what can only be considered, at best, as distant and indistinct hints; on remote, dubious inferences, and on facts which, to say the least, agree quite as well with Presbyterian as with Episcopal principles. Yet these they quote with as much parade and confidence as if it were direct and unquestionable testimony.

Now, if prelacy had been a divine institution, and especially if it had been regarded by the inspired writers as the fundamental and essential matter which modern high-churchmen represent it, could they have been silent respecting it? Can it be imagined that they would have left the subject in obscurity or doubt? When they had occasion to speak so frequently concerning the Christian character and



hope; concerning the Church, its nature, foundation, Head, laws, ministers and interests; it is truly marvellous that they should be explicit on every other point than precisely *that* which *jure divino* prelatists consider as the most vital and important of all. We find in the New Testament seventeen epistles written by inspired men to different churches or bodies of professing Christians; but, strange to tell! in no one of them do we find any allusion to a diocesan bishop; or any claim of his prerogative; or any exhortation to honour and submit to him as such. This, on Episcopal principles, is a most extraordinary omission! Yet is it not manifest that this omission exists, the friends of the claim in question themselves being judges? Have they not been constrained a thousand times to confess, that this claim is no where distinctly presented or maintained in the New Testament. When the inspired writers undertake to tell us what those things are which professing Christians ought sacredly to regard, in order to make good their appropriate character, on what points do they dwell? Do they insist on a particular line of ecclesiastical succession, or represent every thing, or indeed any thing, as depending on a certain form of official investiture? Do they tell the humble inquirer after the way of holiness and salvation, that he must be careful, first of all, to receive the sacraments from "duly authorized hands;" and that, whatever he does, he must be found in communion with some bishop, who holds his office by "regular succession?" Is there a syllable, in all the New Testament, which has the most distant resemblance to such counsel? Assuredly there is not. No; the points every where insisted on, as manifesting that the character and the hopes of men are

such as “become the gospel,” are genuine faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, repentance unto life, love to God and man, and habitually endeavouring to imbibe the spirit, to imitate the example, and to obey the commands of the Redeemer.

Now, I ask, is it conceivable that this could have been the tenor of the directions given by the Saviour and his inspired apostles, to inquiries after the way of Christian obedience and hope, if they had coincided in opinion with modern high-churchmen? I will venture to say, it cannot be, for a moment, supposed. Can we imagine that infinite wisdom, and infinite benevolence would undertake to instruct the members of that great community, denominated the Church, in their essential duties, and yet say nothing about that great point, without which, as some think, all her privileges would be a nullity, and all her hopes vain? Can we suppose that the Bible was given for the express purpose of being “a light to our feet, and a lamp to our path,” in reference to the great interests of Christians, as individuals, and as a body; and yet that it should not contain one word of explicit instruction in regard to that which is alleged to lie at the foundation of the visible church, and to be essential to its very existence, and, of course, to the validity of all its acts? That be far from a Being who adapts means to ends with infinite skill, and who does nothing in vain! The simple and undeniable fact, then, that the friends of Episcopacy find so much difficulty in searching out the smallest passage of Scripture which has the remotest appearance of favouring their cause, and their utter inability to find even *one* which speaks unequivocally and plainly in its support, ought to be considered as decisive in this

controversy. Had these principles been entertained at the time in which the New Testament was written, and regarded by the inspired writers in the same light in which they are regarded by some ecclesiastical men at the present day; they could not have been silent respecting them, without forfeiting all claim to Christian benevolence, nay, to common honesty. They would have dwelt upon them in every connection; have repeated them at every turn; and have made this subject clear, whatever else was left in the dark. But as they, by universal confession, have *not done this*; as *no one* of their number has done it; it is as plain as any moral demonstration can be, that the principles and claims in question were then unknown, and, consequently, have no divine warrant.

Let it be remembered too, that, in this case, the burden of proof lies on the Episcopal side. They make a definite and high claim; a claim which no other Protestant body has ever made. Not only does the burden of proof lie on them; but we have a right to demand that that proof be not obscure, dubious, or remotely inferential, but clear, decisive, and level to every capacity. They themselves are obliged tacitly to acknowledge that it is not such.

But, while the Scriptures cannot be made to sustain the cause of prelacy, we do find in them modes of *expression*, and a number of *facts*, from which we may, without difficulty, ascertain the outlines of the apostolical plan of church order. By a careful attention to this language, and to these facts, it will be easy to show,

— I. That one of the “three orders of clergy,” for

which the advocates of Episcopacy contend, is wholly without authority in the word of God.

II. That Christ gave but one commission for the office of the gospel ministry, and that this office, of course, is not three-fold, but one.

III. That the titles of *bishop* and *presbyter*, or *elder*, are constantly used in the New Testament as convertible titles for the same office.

IV. That, besides this community of *names*, the same *character* and *powers* which are ascribed in the New Testament to *bishops*, are also ascribed to *presbyters*; thus plainly establishing the identity of *order*, as well as of *name*. And finally,

V. That the Christian Church was organized by the apostles after the model of the *Jewish Synagogue*, which was unquestionably Presbyterian in its form.

If these five positions can be established, there will remain no doubt on any candid mind how the question in dispute ought to be decided.

I. The alleged office of deacons, as one of the "orders of clergy," or as a class of "ministers of the word and doctrine," has no foundation whatever in the word of God.

To establish this, nothing more is necessary than to glance at the inspired record, in Acts vi. 1—7, where the original appointment, and the duties of deacons are explicitly and plainly stated. "In those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, it is not meet that we should *leave the word of God and serve*

*tables.* Wherefore, brethren, look ye out seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. *But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.* And the saying pleased the whole multitude; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte of Antioch; whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them.”

This is the *first* and the *only* account in the whole New Testament of the original appointment of deacons, and the *only* statement which we find of their appropriate duties. And I may confidently appeal to every candid reader, whether it affords the least countenance to the idea that the deaconship was *then* an office which had any thing to do with *preaching* or *baptizing*; or, in other words, whether it was an office at all devoted to the *spiritual duties* of the sanctuary? The very reverse is plainly stated. In fact, if the whole passage had been constructed upon the distinct plan of precluding the possibility of such an interpretation, it is difficult to conceive how such a design could have been more clearly manifest. It is evident that this was the institution of a new office, and that it was expressly designed to relieve the apostles themselves of a laborious service which they had hitherto performed, but which they now found to interfere with their spiritual duties. They say—“It is not meet that we should leave the word of God (that is, evidently, *leave preaching*) and *serve tables*: wherefore look ye out seven men of honest report, whom we may appoint over *this business* (that is the

business of serving tables) and *we* will give ourselves to prayer and to *the ministry of the word.*" Can any man who is not so blindly wedded to a system as to believe, not only without evidence, but against evidence, consider this passage as importing that deacons were appointed to be preachers of the word? Nay, is it not expressly stated that the apostles considered the duties of this office as of such a nature that *their* undertaking to fulfil them, would compel them to leave preaching, and devote themselves to the care of money tables?\*

It militates nothing against this plain statement of the inspired historian, that he represents Stephen, one of these deacons, as, soon after his appointment, defending himself with great power before the Jewish council; and Philip, another of them, employed, in a year or two after his ordination to the deaconship, preaching and baptizing in Samaria. With respect to Stephen, it is not said that he either preached or baptized. He simply replied to those who "disputed with him," and defended himself before the council by which he was arraigned. In all this there was evidently nothing which any man might not do, in any age of the church, without infringing ecclesiasti-

\* It has been supposed by many that the phrase, "serving tables," in the history of the institution of the deacon's office, had a reference either to the Lord's table, or to overseeing and supplying the tables of the poor, or perhaps both. But I am inclined to believe that this is an entire mistake. The word *τραπεζα* signifies indeed a table; but in this connection it seems obviously to mean a money table, or a counter on which money was laid. Hence *τραπεζίτης*, a money-changer, or a money merchant. See Matt. xxi. 12; xxv. 27; Mark xi. 15; Luke xix. 23. The plain meaning, then, of Acts vi. 2, seems to be this—"It is not suitable that we should leave the word of God and devote ourselves to pecuniary affairs."

cal order. And as to Philip, when we read a few chapters onward in the same book (Acts xxi. 8.) we find him spoken of as "Philip the Evangelist, which was one of the seven." Here, then, we find precisely the same title given to this man that was afterwards given to Timothy, 2 Timothy iv. 5. From which we may confidently infer that, having "used the office of a deacon well," 1 Tim. iii. 13, in the church of Jerusalem, and being found a man "full of the Holy Ghost and of wisdom," when he and his brethren were driven from that city, and were all "scattered abroad in consequence of the persecution which arose about Stephen," he was invested with a new office, and sent forth to minister in various parts of the country as an "evangelist." At any rate, nothing is plainer than that "the ministry of the word" made no part of the deacon's office, as laid down by the apostles; and as Philip is soon afterwards introduced to us as bearing the office of an "evangelist," the appropriate function of which, we know, was preaching the gospel, we are warranted in concluding that he was set apart to the latter office *before* he went forth to engage in public preaching. In short, until it can be proved that Philip preached and baptized as a deacon, and not as an evangelist, which we are very sure never can be proved, the allegation that the apostolic deacons were preachers, is perfectly destitute of scriptural support; or rather directly opposed to the scriptural account of the institution of their office.

Accordingly, when, in the subsequent parts of the New Testament, there is a reference to the proper qualifications of the deacon's office, no intimation is given that, in the candidates for that office, the gifts requisite for public instruction were needed. We are

told concerning the bishop or pastor, who is spoken of before, that it is necessary he should be "apt to teach;" but no such qualification is represented as necessary in a deacon. It was required of him that he should be sober, grave, temperate, faithful in all things, holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience, ruling his children and his household well, &c., but not a word is said of those accomplishments which are indispensable to him who ministers in "the word and doctrine."

It is plain, then, that "the order of deacons," as one of the "three orders of clergy," for which our Episcopal brethren contend, cannot stand the test of Scripture. It must undoubtedly be given up, if we would be governed by the word of God. Deacons there unquestionably were in the apostolic church; but they were evidently curators of the poor, and attendants on the money tables of the church, precisely such as were found in the Jewish synagogue, before the coming of Christ; and such as are found in all completely organized Presbyterian churches at the present day. And this continued to be the nature of the office for more than two hundred years after the apostolic age.\* But when a spirit of carnal ambition gained ground in the church, and led ecclesiastical men to aspire and encroach, deacons invaded the province of preachers, and committed to "sub-deacons" the burden of their primitive duties.

Thus it is evident that one of the "three orders of clergy," so called by the advocates of Episcopacy, finds no authority in Scripture. This testimony accords with that of the early fathers, which will be considered in the next chapter.

\* This will be shown when we come to speak of the fathers in a future chapter.



II. It is evident that Christ gave but *one commission* for the office of the gospel ministry, and that this office is, of course, but *one*.

The commission which our Lord gave to his apostles, and in them to his ministers in every age, is expressed in the following words—"And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."\* This is the grand commission under which the apostles acted after their Master's ascension to heaven. They had before this been called and set apart to his service; but that was under the old economy, and their ministry was expressly confined to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But now the time had come for setting up the New Testament dispensation. In this New Testament church, therefore, they now received a commission unlimited both as to time and place. It was to extend to all nations, and to the end of the world.

This commission, it is confessed on all hands, was originally given to one order of ministers only, viz. the eleven apostles. The seventy disciples had been employed on a temporary service, and that, strictly speaking, under the Jewish dispensation. For as the Christian Church did not receive its distinct constitution till after the resurrection of Christ; as the apostles were made fixed officers of the Church, by virtue of this new commission, and not of any former appointment; and as no such new commission was

\* Matth. xxviii. 18—20.

given to the seventy disciples, it is manifest that they are not to be considered as ministers of the New Testament dispensation at all. The Saviour, then, in this last solemn interview, addressed the eleven only. To them he committed the whole ministerial authority in his kingdom. The commission, therefore, when it was first delivered, certainly constituted no more than one order of gospel ministers.

That this commission embraces the highest and fullest ecclesiastical power, that has been, is, or can be possessed by any of the ministers of Christ, all Protestants allow. And that it conveys a right to preach the word, to administer sacraments, and to ordain other men to the work of the ministry, Episcopalians, as well as others, grant. Now this commission either expired with the apostles, to whom it was originally delivered, or it did not. If it did expire with them, then no ministers of the gospel, since their day, have had any commission, for there is no other left on record. But if it did not expire with them, then it is directed equally to their successors in all ages. But who are these successors? Demonstrably all those who are authorized to perform those functions which this commission recognizes, that is, to preach, and to administer the sealing ordinances of the Church. Every minister of the gospel, therefore, who has these powers, is a successor of the apostles; is authorized by this commission, and stands on a footing of official equality with those to whom it was originally delivered, so far as their office was ordinary and perpetual.

It is remarkable, that, in this commission, dispensing the Word of life, and administering sacraments, are held forth as the most prominent, important, and

solemn duties of Christian ministers. The power of *ordaining* others is not expressly mentioned at all; and we only infer that it is included, because the commission recognizes the continuance of the office and duties of ministers to the end of the world. Must we not infer then, that all who have a right to *preach* and administer the Christian sacraments, have a right, of course, to *ordain*? Does it comport with the spirit of this commission, to represent the former functions, which are mentioned with so much distinctness and solemnity, as pertaining to the lowest order in the Church; and the latter, which is only included by inference, as reserved for a higher order? Those who are confessed to have the most important and distinguished powers conveyed by a commission, must be considered as possessing the whole. *What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.* The soundness of this conclusion is expressly recognized by Bishop Burnet, who declares—"As for the notion of the distinct offices of *bishop* and *presbyter*, I confess it is not so clear to me; and, therefore, since I look upon the sacramental actions, as the highest of sacred performances, I cannot but acknowledge that those who are empowered for them, must be of the highest office in the church."\*

It has been said by some, that if the apostles, on their departure from the church, left no higher class of officers in commission than presbyters, they were really chargeable with altering the form of ecclesiastical polity left by the Saviour. Not at all. The apostles themselves were presbyters or elders; but they were elders endowed, for special purposes, and for a season, with inspiration, with miraculous

\* Vindication of the Church and State of Scotland, p. 310.

powers, and with extraordinary authority, until by themselves, the New Testament should be completed. When these were no longer necessary, they were laid aside, and the *simple office* was transmitted to their successors; the office which simply authorized and qualified them to preach the gospel; to administer the ordinances of the Church; and thus to carry the glad tidings of salvation in their appropriate form, to every creature. They transmitted every thing which had been imparted to them, excepting the temporary and now unnecessary adjuncts to the permanent office. But the advocates of Episcopacy seem to forget that this plea of theirs, if admitted, will operate quite as unfavourably to themselves as to Presbyterians. The plea is, that the apostles must have left in commission, as their successors, a set of officers like themselves. Then they must have commissioned men endowed with *inspiration* and *miraculous powers*. But did they do this? Does any sect of Christians now on earth, allege that they did so? But if they did not transmit, by commission, a *fac simile* of themselves, to *what extent* might their successors differ from themselves without unfaithfulness to the trust reposed in them? The very statement of the plea, even on their own principles, exposes its absurdity.

III. That bishops are not, by divine right, different from, or superior to, presbyters, is further evident, because the terms *bishop* and *presbyter* are uniformly used in the New Testament, as convertible titles for the same office.

The Greek word (*ἐπισκοπος*) which we translate *bishop*, literally signifies an *overseer*. This word appears to have been adopted by the apostles from

the Greek translation of the Old Testament (generally called the *Septuagint*) which was in common use among the Christians of that day. In this celebrated version, the word is employed frequently, and to designate officers of various grades and characters, civil, military, and ecclesiastical. The inspired writers of the New Testament, observing that this word, as a title of office, was much in use, and familiarly understood among those who had the Scriptures in the popular language in their hands, thought proper to adopt and apply it to the officers of Christ's spiritual kingdom.

The word ( $\pi\rho\epsilon\sigma\beta\upsilon\tau\epsilon\rho\varsigma$ ) which the translators of the New Testament render *elder*, and which precisely answers to the word *presbyter*, literally signifies an *aged person*. But as among the Jews, and the eastern nations generally, persons advanced in age were commonly selected to fill stations of dignity and authority, the word *presbyter*, or *elder*, became, in process of time, an established title of office. The Jews had rulers called by this name, not only over their nation, but also over every city, and every synagogue. To a Jew, therefore, no term could be addressed more perfectly intelligible and familiar. The apostles finding this to be the case with the most of those among whom they ministered, gave the name of *elder* to the pastors and rulers of the churches which they organized; and the rather because these pastors were generally, in fact, taken from among the more grave and aged converts to the Christian faith.

From this statement it will appear, that *presbyter*, if we attend to its original meaning, is a word of more honourable import than *bishop*. *Presbyter* is expressive of *authority*, *bishop* of *duty*. The former

implies the *dignity* and *power* of a *ruler*; the latter conveys the idea of *work*, or of executing a prescribed *task*. But whatever may be the comparative degrees of honour expressed by these terms, it is certain that they are uniformly employed, in the New Testament, as convertible titles for the same office. An attentive consideration of the following passages will establish this position beyond all doubt.

The first which I shall quote is found in Acts xx. 17, 28. “And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders (or presbyters, *πρεσβυτερος*) of the Church. And when they were come to him he said unto them, take heed unto yourselves and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers (or bishops, *επισκοπος*) to feed the Church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood.” In this passage it is evident that the same persons who, in the 17th verse are styled elders or presbyters, are in the 28th called bishops. This, indeed, is so incontestible, that the most zealous Episcopalian, so far as I know, has never called it in question. It is further observable, that in the city of Ephesus there were a number of bishops who governed the Church in that city, as co-ordinate rulers, or in common council. This is wholly irreconcilable with the principles of modern Episcopacy; but perfectly coincides with the Presbyterian doctrine, that scriptural bishops are the pastors of single congregations.\*

\* It has been much controverted whether, in each of the larger cities, in which Christianity was first planted, such as Jerusalem, Ephesus, Antioch, Corinth, &c. there was more than one congregation of Christians. In other words, whether by the Church at Ephesus we are to understand a single congregation, or several separate societies, as the Presbyterian church in New York or Philadelphia comprehends several congregations? From the multitudes that are

The next passage to our purpose is the address of the apostle Paul to the Philippians, in the introduction of his epistle to that church. "Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons." Here, as well as in the case of Ephesus, just mentioned, we find the inspired writer speaking of a number of bishops in a single city. It is true, Dr. Hammond, an eminent Episcopal writer, to avoid the force of this fact, so unfriendly to modern Episcopacy, would persuade us that Philippi was a metropolitan city, and that the bishops here spoken of, did not all belong to that city, but also included those of the neighbouring cities, under that metropolis. But this supposition is not in the least degree countenanced by the apostle's language, the plain, unsophisticated meaning of which evidently refers us to the bishops and deacons which were at Philippi, and there only.

said to have believed in those cities, it is probable there were several thousands of Christians in each of them; and as the places in which they assembled for public worship were small, probably all of them apartments in private dwellings, we cannot suppose that they were all able to assemble at the same time and place. The expedient, therefore, of dividing themselves into small worshipping assemblies, would seem natural, and even unavoidable. We know that in the days of the apostles there were a number of bishops in each of the cities of Ephesus and Philippi. But in those days of persecution and peril, when Christians had not the privilege of erecting houses for public worship; when not more than a few dozens could ever come together in the same apartment; and when it is probable that even these could not always assemble in the same place stately; we can by no means consider these bishops as pastors of so many distinct and separate congregations. The probability is that these numerous little house-churches were under their joint superintendency; and that the language and principles which we now apply to a number of congregations in the same city, were by no means applicable to them.

Besides, Dr. Whitby, a later, and equally eminent Episcopal divine, assures us, that Philippi was not, at that time a metropolitan city, but under Thessalonica, which was the metropolis of all Macedonia. Dr. Stillingfleet has also clearly shown, that there are no traces to be found within the first six centuries, of the church at Philippi being a metropolitan church. Dr. Maurice, another zealous and able writer in favour of diocesan Episcopacy, goes further. He acknowledges that Dr. Hammond stands alone, in the solution of the difficulty above mentioned; that he cannot undertake to defend it; and that "he could never find sufficient reason to believe these bishops any other than presbyters, as the generality of the fathers, and of the Church of England have done."—*Defence of Dioc. Episc.* p. 29.

The third passage to be adduced is in Titus i. 5—7. It is as follows: "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders (presbyters) in every city, as I had appointed thee. If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children, not accused of riot, or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre," &c. Here the apostle, in directing Titus to ordain elders, enjoins upon him to choose those officers from among the most temperate, blameless, and faithful believers; and the reason he assigns for this injunction is, that a bishop must be blameless; evidently meaning, that presbyter and bishop are the same office. On any other construction, the different parts of the address are unconnected, and the whole destitute of force. But these are charges which no man who is



conversant with the writings of Paul, would ever think of bringing against them.

This passage also establishes another point. It not only shows that the elders here to be ordained, were considered and denominated bishops, thereby proving the identity of the office designated by these names, but it likewise proves, beyond controversy, that in apostolic times, it was customary to have a plurality of these bishops in a single city. We have before seen that there were a number of bishops in the city of Ephesus, and a number more in the city of Philippi: but in the passage before us we find Titus directed to ordain a plurality of them in every city. This perfectly agrees with the Presbyterian doctrine, that scriptural bishops were the pastors of single congregations, or presbyters, invested, either separately or conjointly, as the case might be, with pastoral charges; but it is impossible to reconcile it with the modern notions of diocesan Episcopacy.

There is one more passage, equally conclusive in this argument. It is that which is found in 1 Peter v. 1, 2. "The elders (or presbyters) which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed. Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof (*ἐπισκοπούντες*, that is, exercising the office, or performing the duties of bishops over them) not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind." The construction of this passage is obvious. It expressly represents presbyters as bishops of the flock, and solemnly exhorts them to exercise the powers, and perform the duties of this office.

In short, the title of bishop, as applied to ministers

of the gospel, occurs only *four* times in the New Testament: in *three* of these cases there is complete proof that it is given to those who are styled presbyters; and in the *fourth* case, there is strong presumption that it is applied in the same manner. On the other hand, the apostle Peter, as we have just seen, in addressing an authoritative exhortation to other ministers, calls himself a presbyter. The same is done by the apostle John, in the beginning of his second and third epistles—"The elder (presbyter) unto the well beloved Gaius—the elder unto the elect lady," &c. Could more complete evidence be desired, that both these titles belonged equally, in the days of the apostles, to the same office?

But it is not necessary further to pursue the proof that these names are indiscriminately applied in Scripture to the same office. This is freely and unanimously acknowledged by the most respectable Episcopal writers. In proof of this acknowledgment, it were easy to multiply quotations. A single authority shall suffice. Dr. Whitby confesses, that "both the Greek and Latin fathers do, with one consent, declare, that bishops were called presbyters, and presbyters bishops, in apostolic times, the names being then common." *Notes on Philip. i. 1.*

It being thus conceded by all intelligent Episcopalians that the names bishop and presbyter are interchangeably applied to the same persons in the New Testament, it becomes an important question, what class of officers were those to whom these titles were thus indifferently applied. Were they prelates? or did they belong to that class which Episcopalians denominate the second order of clergy, in other words, presbyters, strictly speaking, as distinguished from

bishops? In regard to this question, the advocates of Episcopacy are not agreed. On the one hand, Dr. Henry Hammond, among the most learned of their number, was very confident that all who bore the title of bishops, or presbyters, in the New Testament were prelates, and that none of the second order of clergy were ordained during the period of the apostolic history, and, of course, not mentioned in that history;\* and with him Bishop Pearson, and several other eminent English Episcopalians seem to agree.† On the other hand, Dr. Hammond's contemporary, the learned Dodwell, was quite as confident that all the persons spoken of in the New Testament as bishops, were simple presbyters only; no bishops, properly so called, having been ordained until after the year 106;‡ and with Dodwell, Bishop Hoadly, Dr. Whitby, and many others of equal name, are known, as to this point, fully to concur. It is perfectly evident that the compilers of the Episcopal form for ordination, as found in their Liturgy, both in England and in this country, considered those denominated bishops in the New Testament, as bishops in their sense of the word, *i. e.* prelates; and it is no less evident that most, if not all the advocates of prelacy on this side of the Atlantic, until within a few years, confidently maintained the same opinion. But it appears *now* to be the current doctrine among Episcopalians in the United States, that none of the persons called bishops in the New Testament were prelates, but all of them members of

\* See Hammond on Acts xi. 30, and on Philippians i. 1.

† Vindiciæ Ignatii—Lib. 2. cap. 13.

‡ See this utter disagreement among the most learned Episcopalians placed in a clear and strong light, with appropriate references, by Ayton, in the seventh section of the Appendix to his Original Constitution of the Christian Church.

the second order of clergy, or mere presbyters. In other words, they confess that the title of bishop is always used in the New Testament in a Presbyterian sense, and invariably means common pastors of single churches. Now, until the friends of Episcopacy can agree on what they consider as the doctrine taught in Scripture on this subject, how is it possible to meet or answer them? Some of the most learned, able, and zealous of their number assure us that they can find no bishops, as distinguished from presbyters, in the New Testament; while others, no less learned, able, and zealous, with no less confidence assure us, that no presbyters, as distinguished from bishops, are to be found there.\* This very strife in their camp is a fatal testimony against their cause. In one sense these parties are undoubtedly both right; for the different "orders of clergy" of which they speak are, indeed, not to be found in Scripture at all; of course, no wonder that those who search for them are perplexed and baffled. But when the reigning party contradict with so little ceremony both the letter and spirit of their own public offices, drawn up by the martyred fathers of their church, and rendered venerable by the lapse of nearly three centuries, it would really seem as if to them, as partizans, victory or defeat must prove equally fatal. If they fail of establishing their argument, their cause, of course, is lost. If, on the contrary, they succeed in establishing it, they dishonour the venerated authors of their formularies; and every time they use the "office for the consecra-

\* Bishop Onderdonk, in his "Episcopacy tested by Scripture," maintains, as stated above, that the men called bishops in the apostolic history, were all presbyters, or pastors of single churches, and that the apostles were the prelates of that period.

tion of bishops," they are chargeable with something which looks like solemn mockery of those who unite with them, as well as of the great object of worship.\*

But we have something more to produce in support of our system, than the indiscriminate application of the names in question to one order of ministers. We can show—

IV III. That the same character, duties, and powers, which are ascribed in the sacred writings to bishops, are also ascribed to presbyters, thereby plainly establishing their identity of order as well as of name.

Had bishops been constituted by the great Head of the Church, an order of ministers different from presbyters, and superior to them, we might confidently expect to find a different commission given; different qualifications required; and a different sphere of duty assigned. But nothing of all this appears. On the contrary, the inspired writers, when they speak of ministers of the gospel, by which ever of these names they are distinguished, give the same description of their character; represent the same gifts and graces as necessary for them; enjoin upon them the same duties; and, in a word, exhibit them as called to the same work, and as bearing the same office. To prove this, let us attend to some of the principal powers vested in Christian ministers, and see whether the Scriptures do not ascribe them equally to presbyters and bishops.

\* The intelligent reader will perceive that there is a reference here to the fact, that in the office for consecrating bishops, the third chapter of the first epistle to Timothy, and Acts xx. are directed to be read, which the compilers of the Liturgy thought appropriate Scriptures, as referring to prelates, which their wiser and more learned sons find have nothing to do with the occasion; but which they still continue to read!

1. That *presbyters* had, in apostolic times, as they now have, authority to *preach the word*, and *administer sacraments*, is universally allowed. Now, if we consult either the original commission, or subsequent instructions given to ministers, in various parts of the New Testament, we shall find these constantly represented as the highest acts of ministerial authority; as the grand powers in which all others are included. Instead of finding in the sacred volume the smallest hint, that ordaining ministers, and governing the Church, were functions of an higher order than dispensing the word of eternal life, and the seals of the everlasting covenant; the reverse is plainly and repeatedly taught. The latter, we have already seen, are the most prominent objects in the original commission; they formed the principal business of the apostles wherever they went; and all the authority with which they were vested is represented as being subservient to the promulgation of that gospel which is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. Preaching and administering sacraments, therefore, are the highest acts of ministerial authority; they are above ordination and government, as the *end* is more excellent than the *means*; as the *substance* is more important than the *form*.

If, then, presbyters be authorized, as all acknowledge, to perform these functions, we infer that they are the highest order of gospel ministers. Those who are empowered to execute the most dignified and the most useful duties pertaining to the ministerial office, can have no superiors in that office. The Episcopal system, then, by depressing the *teacher*, for the sake of elevating the *ruler*, inverts the sacred order, and departs both from the letter and the spirit of Scrip-

ture. The language of Scripture is, "Let the presbyters who rule well be counted worthy of double honour, *especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.*" But the language of modern Episcopacy is, that labouring in the word and doctrine is a lower service in the Church, and government a more exalted: that bearing rule is more honourable and more important than to edify—a language which to be refuted needs only to be stated.

2. The power of *government*, or of *ruling* the Church, is also committed to *presbyters*. This is denied by some Episcopalians; but the Scriptures expressly affirm it. The true meaning of the word *presbyter*, in its official application, is *a church ruler*, or *governor*. Hence the "oversight" or government of the Church is in Scripture expressly assigned to presbyters as their proper duty. The elders to whom the apostle Peter directed his first epistle, certainly had this power. To them it is said, "The elders which are among you I exhort. Feed (ποιμανατε) the flock of God, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but as ensamples to the flock." Scarcely any words could express more distinctly than these the power of ruling in the Church. It is acknowledged on all hands that the word ποιμαίνω signifies to *rule*, as well as to *feed*. See Rev. ii. 27; xii. 5; xix. 15. It is to act the part of a *shepherd*. But, as if to place the matter beyond all doubt, these elders are exhorted to use this power with moderation, and not to tyrannize, or "lord it over God's heritage." Why subjoin this caution, if they were not invested with a governing authority at all?

The case of the elders of Ephesus is still more deci-

sive. When the apostle Paul was about to take his final leave of them, he addressed them thus—"Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves, and to the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed (ποιμαίνειν) the Church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood," &c. Here the government of this church, as well as ministering in the word, is evidently vested in the *elders*. No mention is made of any individual, who had the whole ruling power vested in him, or even a larger share of it than others. Had there been a *bishop* in this church, in the Episcopal sense of the word, that is, a single person of superior order to these elders, and to whom, of course, they were in subjection, it is strange that, in this whole account, we do not once find the most distant allusion to him. When the apostle was telling the elders that they should never see his face more, and that dissensions and difficulties were about to arise in their church, could there have been a more fit occasion to address their superior, had there been such a man present? To whom could instruction have been so properly directed, in this crisis, as to the Chief Shepherd? On the other hand, supposing such a superior to have existed, and to have been prevented by sickness, or any other means, from attending at this conference, why did not the apostle remind the elders of their duty to him? Why did he not exhort them, in the strife and divisions which he foretold as approaching, to cleave to their bishop, and submit to him, as the best means of unity and peace? And finally, supposing their bishop to have been dead, and the office vacant, why did not the apostle, when about to take leave of a flock so much endeared to him, select a bishop for them, ordain



him with his own hands, and commit the Church to his care? But not a word of all this appears. No hint is given of the existence of such a superior. On the contrary, the apostle declares to these *elders*, that the Holy Ghost had made them *bishops* over the church at Ephesus; he exhorts *them* to *rule* that church; and when about to depart, never to see them more, he leaves them in possession of this high trust. On Episcopal principles, I should be absolutely at a loss to account for this. It is, in itself, perfectly conclusive against their claim.

But the passage just quoted from 1 Tim. v. 17, is still stronger on this point. *Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.* Here the power of government in the Church is ascribed to *presbyters* in terms which cannot be rendered more plain and decisive. Here, also, we find officers of the Church who are not recognized in the Episcopal system, but who are always found in the Presbyterian Church, viz. ruling elders, or those who are appointed to assist in governing the Church, but who do not preach or administer sacraments. But this is not all: bearing rule in the Church is unequivocally represented in this passage as a less honourable employment than preaching, or labouring in the word and doctrine. The mere ruling elder, who performs his duty well, is declared to be worthy of "double honour;" but the elder who, to this function, adds the more dignified and important one of preaching the gospel of salvation, is declared to be entitled to honour of a still higher kind.

It is possible that an objection may here be made, founded on our doctrine of the ruling elder. It may

be asked, is not the ruling elder an officer of inferior grade to the teaching elder? If so, can we consider the title of bishop, as employed in Scripture, as a title convertible with that of elder in regard to this inferior class of elders? To this I reply, the title of bishop seems evidently to be used in Scripture as a generic term, as well as that of elder. All the elders of Ephesus, whom Paul met at Miletus, are called bishops. All the elders at Philippi are styled bishops: and the same title is applied to all the elders whom Titus was directed to ordain in Crete. They were all "overseers," or inspectors of the "flocks" which the Holy Ghost had given them in charge. When one of these elders had the pastoral charge of a congregation peculiarly committed to him, he seems to have been called, by way of eminence, the bishop of that congregation. Precisely so was it in the synagogue. There was a plurality of rulers in each synagogue. These were often, perhaps generally, spoken of in the aggregate as "the rulers of the synagogue;" (Acts xiii. 15;) but sometimes one of their number was, by way of emphasis, called "*the* ruler of the synagogue," and sometimes "the chief ruler," (Luke xiii. 14. Acts xviii. 17.) Just as some denominations distinguish between their common elders, and their "presiding elders." The truth is, in the apostolic age, there was so little disposition to stickle about rank or titles, that the names of office were used without scrupulosity, and with much license. Hence the terms "minister," "servant," "steward," "shepherd," &c. seem to be applied to all classes of church officers, and to be used alternately with other titles, with a promiscuous freedom which evinces that modern claims and punctilios were *then* little thought of.

3. The Scriptures also represent *presbyters* as empowered to *ordain*, and as actually exercising this power. Of this we can produce at least three instances of the most decisive kind.

The first is recorded in Acts xiii. as follows. "Now there were in the church that was at Antioch, certain prophets and teachers, as Barnabas, and Simeon, that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the Tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away." This is the most ample account of an ordination to be found in Scripture; and it is an account which, were there no other, would be sufficient to decide the present controversy in our favour. Who were the ordainers on this occasion? They were not apostles. Lest this should be supposed, their names are given. They were not bishops, in the modern sense of the word; for there were a *number* of them ministering together in the same church. They were the prophets and teachers of the church at Antioch. With respect to these teachers, no higher character has ever been claimed for them than that of presbyters, labouring in the word and doctrine. And as to the prophets, though the precise nature of their endowments and office be not certainly known; yet there is complete evidence that they did not sustain that particular ecclesiastical rank, with which Episcopalians contend that, in the days of the apostles, the power of ordaining was connected. Still these ministers ordained; and they did this under the immediate direction of

the Holy Ghost, who cannot be supposed to have sanctioned any departure from an essential principle of church government.

To invalidate this reasoning, some Episcopal writers have suggested that the ordination here recorded was performed not by the teachers, but by the prophets only. But nothing like this appears in the sacred text. On the contrary, its plain and simple import forbids such a construction. The command to ordain Paul and Barnabas was directed both to the prophets and teachers; and we are told that *they* proceeded immediately to the performance of the solemn act to which they were called. To suppose, therefore, that the teachers either did not engage in this ordination; or that, if they did participate in the transaction, it was rather as witnesses expressing consent, than as ordainers conveying authority, or ratifying a commission, is a supposition as illegitimate in reasoning, as it is repugnant to the sacred narrative.

Another plea urged against this example is, that it is not to be considered as an ordination at all; that both Paul and Barnabas had been recognised as ministers of the gospel several years before this event; and that it is rather to be regarded as a solemn benediction, previous to their entering on a particular mission among the Gentiles. It is readily granted that Paul and Barnabas had been engaged in preaching the gospel long before this time. But there is no evidence that either of them had ever before been set apart by human ordainers. It seemed good, therefore, to the Holy Ghost, that before they entered on their grand mission to the Gentiles, they should receive that kind of ordination, which was intended to

be perpetual in the Church. No example of such an ordination had yet been given. If the practice were ever to be established, it was necessary that a beginning should be made. And as these missionaries were about to travel among a people, who were not familiar with the rite of ordination by the imposition of hands, so well understood by the Jews, it was judged proper by Infinite Wisdom to set this example for imitation in all subsequent periods. And as if to give the strongest practical declaration of ministerial parity, Paul, with all the elevation of his gifts, and all the lustre of his apostolic character, submitted to be set apart, together with his brother Barnabas, agreeably to the regular principles of church order, by the prophets and teachers of the church at Antioch.

It may further be observed, that if this be not an ordination, it will be difficult to say what constitutes one. Here were fasting, prayer, the imposition of hands, and every circumstance attending a formal investiture with the ministerial office, as particularly stated as in any instance on record. And accordingly Dr. Hammond, one of the most able and zealous advocates for Episcopacy, does not scruple to pronounce it a regular ordination; though for the sake of maintaining his system, he falls into the absurdity of supposing that Simeon, Lucius, and Manaen, were diocesan bishops; a supposition wholly irreconcilable with the diocesan scheme, since they were all ministering in the church at Antioch. Bishop Taylor, another eminent Episcopal writer, considers this transaction as a regular ordination; for speaking of Paul, he says—"He had the special honour to be chosen in an extraordinary way; yet he had something of the ordinary too; for in an extraordinary manner he was sent

to be ordained in an ordinary ministry. His designation was as immediate as that of the eleven apostles, though his ordination was not." This also was the judgment of the learned Dr. Lightfoot. "No better reason," says he, "can be given of this present action, than that the Lord did hereby set down a platform of ordaining ministers to the Church of the gentiles in future times." And, finally, Chrysostom, one of the early fathers, delivers the same opinion. He asserts that "Paul was ordained at Antioch," and quotes this passage in the Acts of the Apostles in support of his assertion.

But, after all, it does not destroy the argument, even if we concede that the case before us was not a regular ordination. It was certainly a solemn separation to the work to which the Holy Ghost had called them. This is the language of the inspired writer, and cannot be controverted. Now it is a principle which pervades the Scriptures, that an inferior is never called formally to pronounce benediction on an official superior. It is evident, therefore, that those who were competent to set apart ecclesiastical officers to a particular ministry, were competent to set them apart to the ministry in general. So far, then, as the office sustained by Paul and Barnabas was ordinary and permanent in its nature, the presbyters in Antioch were their equals. Paul, indeed, considered as endowed with inspiration, and with miraculous powers, was their superior; but as a regular officer of the Church of Christ, sent forth on established and ordinary service, he was not their superior; and he embraced frequent opportunities of testifying that this was his own view of the subject.

The next instance of an ordination performed by

presbyters, is that of Timothy, which is spoken of by the apostle Paul, in the following terms. 1 Tim. iv. 14. "Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery." The greater portion of Episcopal writers, and all Presbyterians, agree that the apostle is here speaking of Timothy's ordination; and this ordination is expressly said to have been performed with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery—that is, of the eldership, or a council of presbyters.

To this instance of Presbyterian ordination it is objected, by some Episcopal writers, that although a council of presbyters appear, from this passage, to have laid their hands on Timothy upon this occasion, yet the ordination was actually performed by the apostle alone, who elsewhere addresses Timothy in this language—"Wherefore I put thee in remembrance, that thou stir up the gift of God which is in thee, by the putting on of *my* hands," 2 Tim. i. 6. They contend that, as Paul speaks of the ordination as being performed *by* the putting on of *his* hands, and *with* the laying on of the hands of the presbytery, we are to infer that the power was conveyed by *him* only, and that the presbyters only imposed their hands by way of *concurrence*, and to express their *approbation*.

If we suppose that the apostle, in both passages, is speaking of the ordination of Timothy, and that he and the presbytery both participated in the transaction, the supposition will be fatal to the Episcopal cause. For let it be remembered, that all Episcopalians, in this controversy, take for granted that Timothy was, at this time, ordained a diocesan bishop. But if this were so, how came presbyters to lay their

hands on him at his ordination? We know that presbyters in the Episcopal church, are in the habit of laying on their hands, with those of the bishop, in ordaining presbyters; but was it ever heard of, in the Christian Church, after the distinction between bishops and presbyters arose, that those who admitted this distinction suffered presbyters to join with bishops, by imposing hands in the consecration of a bishop? No; on Episcopal principles, this would be an irregularity of the most incongruous and inadmissible kind.

Some Episcopal writers, in order to avoid the difficulties above stated, have taken the liberty of supposing, that by the word presbytery ( $\piρεσβυτερειον$ ) in this passage is to be understood, not a council of presbyters, but the college of the apostles. But this supposition is adopted without the least proof or probability. No instance has been, or can be produced, either from the New Testament, or from any early Christian writer, of the apostles, as a collective body, being called a presbytery. On the contrary, this word is always used, in Scripture, in the writings of the primitive fathers, and particularly in the writings of Ignatius, (who is of the highest authority with our opponents in this dispute,) to signify a council of presbyters, and never in any other sense. But, allowing the word presbytery to have the meaning contended for, and that Timothy was ordained by the bench of apostles; how came the modest and humble Paul to speak of the whole gift as conveyed by *his* hands, and not so much as to mention any other name? Were all the rest of the apostles mere concurring spectators, and not real ordainers, as before pleaded? Then it must follow, not only that Paul claimed a superiority



over his brethren, which was never heard of before; but also that one bishop is sufficient for the regular ordination of another bishop, which is opposed to every principle of Episcopal government, as well as to the established canons, so far as I know, of every church on earth.

Finally, it has been urged by some, against this instance of Presbyterian ordination, that the word here translated presbytery, signifies the office conferred, and not the body of ministers who conferred it. Though this construction of the passage has been adopted by some respectable names,\* it is so absurd and unnatural, and so totally inconsistent with every rational principle of interpretation, that it scarcely deserves a serious refutation. Let us see how the text will read with this meaning attached to the word in question. "Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of thine office." If this be not nonsense, it is difficult to say what deserves that name. But suppose we make such a monstrous inversion of the whole passage as no rule of grammar will justify,

\* Among those names, that of the great and venerable Calvin appears, who, when he wrote his Institutes, adopted this unnatural sense, and expressed himself in the following terms—" *Quod de impositione manuum Presbyterii dicitur, non ita accipio quasi Paulus de seniorum collegio loquatur; sed hoc nomine ordinationem ipsam intelligo.*" *Instit. lib. iv. cap. 3. sect. 16.* Such an interpretation of a plain passage of Scripture, even from so great a man, deserves little regard. But Calvin, soon afterwards, when he came to write his Commentary, and when his judgment was more mature, gave a very different opinion. ["*Presbyterium.*"] *Qui hoc collectivum nomen esse putant, pro collegio Presbyterorum positum, recte sentiunt meo iudicio.*" *Comment. in loc.* The truth is, the word presbyterium is borrowed from the synagogue, and was in familiar use to express the bench of elders or presbyters, ever found in the synagogue system.

and read it thus—"Neglect not the gift of the presbyterate which is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of hands." It will then follow, that the office conferred upon Timothy was the presbyterate, or the office of presbyter; but this, while it entirely coincides with the Presbyterian doctrine, will prove fatal to the Episcopal scheme, which constantly takes for granted that Timothy was not a mere presbyter, but a diocesan bishop.

Some have alleged that Presbyterians are inconsistent with themselves in maintaining, that the presbytery laid on hands authoritatively in the ordination of Timothy, when it is well known that all our presbyteries are made up of both clerical and lay elders, and that we do not permit the latter to impose hands at all in the ordination of ministers. But there is no inconsistency here. We deny the right of an inferior officer to lay on hands in the ordination of a superior, and uniformly act accordingly. The presbytery lays on hands when all its *teaching* members do, although those who are *rulers* only, do not.

The last instance that I shall mention of ordination performed by presbyters, is that of Paul and Barnabas, who, after having been regularly set apart to the work of the ministry themselves, proceeded through the cities of Lystra, Iconium, &c. "And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they had believed." Our adversaries will perhaps say, that Paul alone performed these ordinations, in his apostolic or episcopal character; and that Barnabas only laid on hands to express his approbation of what Paul did. But the inspired writer, as usual, speaks a different language. He declares

that *they*, both of them, ordained. Perhaps it will be said, that Barnabas was himself an apostle, as he is so styled, Acts xiv. 14, and that he joined with Paul in ordaining presbyters, in virtue of his superior character. We all know that he was not one of the apostles, strictly so called, and, of course, that none of that pre-eminence which belonged to their character can be claimed for him. The word apostle signifies simply a messenger, a person sent. It was in use among the Greeks, and also among the Jews, before the time of Christ. The Jewish apostles were assistants to the high priest in discussing questions of the law; and were sometimes employed in inferior and secular duties. *Barronii Annales*, An. 32. Accordingly, besides the twelve apostles appointed by Christ himself, there were, in the primitive churches, apostles, or messengers, chosen either by the twelve, or by the churches themselves, to go to distant places, on special services. In this vague and general sense, the word apostle is repeatedly used in Scripture. In this sense Barnabas and Epaphroditus are called apostles. In this sense John the Baptist is called an apostle by Tertullian. And in the same sense this name is applied by early Christian writers to the seventy disciples, and to those who propagated the gospel long after the apostolic age. From this name, then, as applied to Barnabas, no pre-eminence of character can be inferred.\* Besides, the supposition that he bore an ecclesiastical rank above that of presbyter,

\* The translators of our Bible very clearly recognise this distinction between the appropriate and the general sense of the word apostle. Thus in 2 Cor. viii. 23, they render the phrase *αποστολοι εκκλησιων*, the messengers of the churches. And in Philip. ii. 25, they translate the word *αποστολος* as applied to Epaphroditus, messenger.

is effectually refuted by the fact that he was himself ordained by the presbyters of Antioch. As a presbyter, therefore, he ordained others; and the only rational construction that can be given to the passage, renders it a plain precedent for Presbyterian ordination.

IV. A <sup>fifth</sup> ~~fourth~~ source of direct proof in favour of the Presbyterian plan of Church Government, is found in the model of the Jewish Synagogue, and in the abundant evidence which the Scriptures afford, that the Christian Church was formed after the same model.

At Jerusalem alone, where the temple stood, were sacrifices offered, and the Mosaic rites observed. But in almost every town and village in Judea, synagogues were erected, like parish churches of modern times, for prayer and praise, for reading and expounding the Scriptures. The temple worship was, throughout, typical and ceremonial, and of course was done away by the coming of Christ. But the synagogue worship was altogether of a different nature. It was that part of the organized religious establishment of the Old Testament Church, which, like the decalogue, was purely moral and spiritual, or at least chiefly so; and, therefore, in its leading characters, proper to be adopted under any dispensation. Accordingly we find that our Lord himself frequented the synagogues, and taught in them; and that the apostles and other Christian ministers in their time did the same. It is well known, also, that in the city of Jerusalem, where the gospel first began to be preached, after the resurrection of Christ, and where the New Testament Church was first organized, there were, if we may believe the best writers, several hundred synagogues.

It is equally certain that the first converts to Christianity were Jews; that they came into the Christian Church with all the feelings and habits of their former connexions and mode of worship strongly prevalent; and that they gave the apostles much trouble by their prejudices in favour of old establishments, and against innovation. It was probable, therefore, beforehand, that, under these circumstances, the apostles, who went so far as to admit circumcision, in particular cases, for the sake of keeping peace with some of the first converts, would make as little change, in converting synagogues into Christian churches, as was consistent with the spirituality of the new dispensation. To retain the ceremonial worship of the temple, they could not possibly consent. To join the priests in offering up sacrifices, when the great Sacrifice had been already offered up *once for all*; to attend on the typical entrance of the high priest, once a year, with the blood of the sacrifice, into the holy of holies, while they were, at the same time, teaching that all these things were done away, and that the great High Priest of our profession had finally entered into the holiest of all, even into heaven for us; would have been an inconsistency not to be admitted. But no such inconsistency could be charged against a general conformity to the synagogue model. And, therefore, as might have been expected, we find that this conformity was actually adopted. This will appear abundantly evident to every impartial inquirer, by attending to the following considerations.\*

1. The words *synagogue* and *church* have the

\* Those who wish to see the evidence, that the Christian Church was formed after the model of the Jewish Synagogue, presented more strongly and fully than is possible in this manual, will do well to con-

same signification. They both signify an assembly or congregation of people convened for the worship of God; and they both signify, at the same time, the *place* in which the assembly is convened. This community of signification, indeed, is so remarkable, that in the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament, the Hebrew word for expressing an *assembly*, is thirty-seven times rendered *synagogue* (συναγωγή) and seventy times translated *church*, (ἐκκλησία) the precise word employed in the New Testament to express a Christian assembly. In fact, in one instance, a Christian congregation is by an inspired writer denominated a synagogue. The apostle James says—"My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. For if there come unto your assembly, (in the original *your synagogue*) a man with a gold ring, &c." I am aware that this coincidence in the meaning of these words is not absolutely conclusive; but it is one among the numerous concurring facts which prove that our Lord and his apostles adopted that language which was familiar to the Jews, and to all who were acquainted with their Scriptures; and especially to those who frequented the Synagogue service.

2. The *mode of worship* adopted in the Christian Church by the apostles, was substantially the same with that which had been long practised in the synagogue. In the synagogue, as we learn from Maimonides and others, divine service was begun by the solemn reading of a portion of Scripture, by a person appointed for that service; to this succeeded an exhortation or sermon, by the *ruler* of the synagogue,

sult the learned and able work of Vitranga, entitled *De Synagoga Vetere*, which presents a complete and conclusive view of the subject.

or *bishop*, whose office will be hereafter noticed. The sermon being finished, solemn prayers were offered up, by the same ruler, at the end of which the people said, *Amen*. Now, if we examine the New Testament, and those writings of the primitive fathers, whose authenticity has never been questioned, we shall find, not only a striking similarity, but almost a perfect coincidence, in the mode of conducting the worship of Christian assemblies. That the ministers of the Christian Church, in like manner, made a practice, in their religious assemblies, of reading the Scriptures, delivering discourses, and offering up solemn prayer, at the close of which the people gave their assent, by saying, *Amen*, is expressly stated in Scripture. And when Justin Martyr gives an account of the Christian worship, in his day, it is in the following terms\*—"Upon the day called Sunday, all the Christians, whether in town or country, assemble in the same place, wherein the commentaries of the apostles and the writings of the prophets are read as long as the time will permit. Then the reader sitting down, the President of the Assembly stands up and delivers a sermon, instructing and exhorting to the imitation of that which is comely. After this is ended, we all stand up to prayers: prayers being ended, the bread, wine, and water are all brought forth; then the President again praying and praising according to his ability,† the people testify their assent by say-

\* This passage in Justin Martyr, as well as others found in the early writers, shows that *standing* was the constant posture then adopted in public prayer. Indeed it is notorious that as late as the Council of Nice, in A. D. 325, *kneeling* in public prayer was expressly forbidden, except on days of fasting and humiliation.

† There were, evidently, no *liturgies* in the days of Justin Mar-

ing, *Amen.*” Here we see no material difference between the synagogue and Christian worship, excepting the introduction of the Lord’s Supper into the latter.

3. The titles given to the officers of the synagogue were transferred to the officers of the Christian Church. In every synagogue, as those who are most profoundly learned in Jewish Antiquities tell us, there were a bishop, a bench of elders, and deacons. The first named of these officers was called indifferently, minister, bishop, pastor, presbyter, and angel of the church.\* The presbyters or elders in each synagogue, according to some writers, were three, and according to others, more numerous. And the bishop was called a presbyter, because he sat with the presbyters in council, and was associated with them in authority. It is remarkable that all these titles were adopted in the organization of the Christian Church, as will appear on the slightest perusal of the New Testament. And it is still more remarkable that, not only the same variety, but also precisely the same interchange of titles, in the case of the principal officer of the synagogue, was retained by the apostles in speaking of the pastors of Christian congregations.

4. Not only the titles of officers, but also their characters, duties, and powers, in substance, were transferred from the synagogue to the Christian Church. The bishop or pastor who presided in each synagogue,

tyr. The officiating minister offered up prayers “according to his ability.”

\* Maimonides, the celebrated Jewish Rabbi, who lived in the 12th century, in his learned work, *De Sanhed.* cap. 4, describes the bishop of the synagogue, as “the presbyter who laboured in the word and doctrine.”



directed the reading of the law; expounded it when read; offered up public prayers; and, in short, took the lead in conducting the public service of the synagogue. This description applies with remarkable exactness to the duties and powers of the Christian bishop. The bench of elders in the synagogue had entrusted to them the general powers of government and discipline: and, in like manner, the elders or presbyters in the Christian Church are directed to *rule the flock*, and formal directions are given them, for maintaining the purity of faith and practice. The bench of elders, in the synagogue, was made up of both clergy and laity, *i. e.* of those who were authorized to teach and rule, and of those who only ruled. And accordingly, in the Christian Church we read of elders who labour in the word and doctrine, as well as rule; and of other elders who rule only. In the synagogue the office of the deacons was to collect and distribute alms to the poor, and, when called upon, to assist the bishop, in conducting the public service. In conformity with which, the deacons of the Christian Church are represented, in the sixth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, as appointed for the purpose of ministering to the poor, and serving tables.

5. Finally, the mode of ordaining officers in the synagogue was transferred to the Christian Church. In the introduction of men to the ceremonial priesthood of the Jews, or into the offices pertaining to the temple service, there was no such thing, strictly speaking, as ordination. Both the priests and Levites came to their respective offices by inheritance, and were inducted or installed, simply by being brought before the Sanhedrim, and receiving the approbation of that body. But, in the synagogue service, the officers

were solemnly elected, and ordained by the imposition of hands. Every presbyter, who had himself been regularly ordained, was authorized to act in the ordination of other presbyters: and to make a valid ordination in the synagogue, it was necessary that three ordainers should be present, and take part in the transaction. In like manner, we learn from the New Testament, that in apostolic times, as well as ever since, the ministers of the Christian Church were ordained by the imposition of hands; that presbyters, as well as the apostles themselves, were empowered to ordain; and that in the first ordination of ministers of the gospel recorded by the inspired writers, there were always a plurality of ordainers present, and engaged in the solemnity.

Thus I have given a very brief sketch of the evidence that Christian churches were organized by the apostles, after the model of the Jewish synagogues. I have shown that the mode of worship adopted in the Church, the titles of her officers, their powers, duties, and mode of ordination, were all copied from the synagogue. This evidence might be pursued much further, did the limits which I have prescribed to myself admit of details. It might easily be shown, that in all those respects in which the service of the synagogue differed from that of the temple, the Christian Church followed the former. The temple service was confined to Jerusalem; the synagogue worship might exist, and did exist wherever there was a sufficient number of Jews to form a congregation. The temple service was restricted with regard to the vestments of its officers; while in the synagogue there was little or no regulation on this subject. And, finally, it is remarkable that the mode in which the bishop and

elders of each synagogue were seated during the public service, was exactly copied into the Christian assemblies. With regard to these and many other particulars which might be mentioned, the Christian churches in primitive times, it is well known, departed from the ceremonial splendour of the temple, and followed the simplicity of the synagogue. In fact, there is ample proof, that the similarity between the primitive Christian churches and the Jewish synagogues was so great, that the former were often considered and represented by the persecuting pagans as "synagogues in disguise."

The foregoing representation that the apostolic Church was organized, not after the model of the temple, but of the synagogue, is not either an invention or a peculiarity of Presbyterians. It has been maintained, in common with them, by some of the most learned and able writers of which the Episcopal church can boast. The following is a small specimen out of many who might be cited to establish this fact.

The first quotation shall be taken from Bishop Burnet. "Among the Jews, (says he,) he who was the chief of the synagogue, was called Chazan Hakeneseth, i. e. the bishop of the congregation, and Sheliach Tsibbor, the angel of the church. And the Christian Church being modelled as near the form of the synagogue as they could be; as they retained many of the rites, so the form of the government was continued, and the names remained the same." And again, "In the synagogues there was, first, one who was called the bishop of the congregation; next, the three orderers and judges of every thing about the synagogue, who were called Tsekenim, and by the Greeks

πρεσβυτεροι, or γεροντες, that is, elders. These ordered and determined every thing that concerned the synagogue, or the persons in it. Next to them were the three Parnassin, or deacons, whose charge was to gather the collections of the rich, and distribute them to the poor.”\*

The next quotation shall be taken from Dr. Lightfoot, another Episcopal divine, still more distinguished for his oriental and rabbinical learning. “The apostle,” says he, “calleth the minister, Episcopus, (or bishop,) from the common and known title of the Chazan or overseer in the synagogue.” And again, “Besides these, there was the public minister of the synagogue, who prayed publicly and took care about reading the law, and sometimes preached, if there were not some other to discharge this office. This person was called שליח ציבור, the angel of the church, and חזן הכנסת the Chazan, or bishop of the congregation. The Aruch gives the reason of the name. The Chazan, says he, is שליח ציבור the angel of the church, (or the public minister,) and the Targum renders the word רואה by the word חוזה, one that oversees. For it is incumbent on him to oversee how the reader reads, and whom he may call out to read in the law. The public minister of the synagogue himself read not the law publicly; but every sabbath he called out seven of the synagogue, (on other days fewer) whom he judged fit to read. He stood by him that read, with great care, observing that he read nothing either falsely or improperly, and called him back, and corrected him, if he had failed in any thing. And hence he was called Chazan, that is Επισκοπος, bishop, or overseer. Certainly the signifi-

\* Observations on the 1 Can. p. 2 and 11. Can. p. 83.

cation of the words bishop and angel of the church, had been determined with less noise, if recourse had been had to the proper fountains, and men had not vainly disputed about the signification of words taken I know not whence. The service and worship of the temple being abolished, as being ceremonial, God transplanted the worship and public adoration of God used in the synagogues, which was moral, into the Christian Church; viz. the public ministry, public prayers, reading God's Word, and preaching, &c. Hence the names of the ministers of the gospel were the very same, the angel of the church, and the bishop, which belonged to the ministers in the synagogues. 'There was in every synagogue, a bench of three. This bench consisted of three elders, rightly and by imposition of hands preferred to the eldership.' 'There were also three deacons, or almoners, on whom was the care of the poor.' '\*

In another place, the same learned orientalist says, describing the worship in the Jewish synagogue, "In the body of the church the congregation met, and prayed, and heard the law, and the manner of their sitting was this—the elders sat near the chancel, with their faces down the church: and the people sat one form behind another, with their faces up the church, toward the chancel and the elders. Of these elders there were some that had rule and office in the synagogue, and some that had not. And this distinction the apostle seemeth to allude unto, in that much disputed text, 1 Tim. v. 17. The elders that rule well, &c. where 'the elders that ruled well,' are set not only in opposition to those that ruled ill, but to those that ruled not at all. We may, see then, whence these

\* Lightfoot's Works, vol. i. p. 308; vol. ii. p. 133. 755.

titles and epithets in the New Testament are taken, namely, from the common platform and constitution of the synagogues, where *Angelus Ecclesiæ*, and *Episcopus* were terms of so ordinary use and knowledge. And we may observe from whence the apostle taketh his expressions, when he speaketh of some elders ruling, and labouring in word and doctrine, and some not; namely, from the same platform and constitution of the synagogue, where ‘the ruler of the synagogue’ was more singularly for ruling the affairs of the synagogue, and ‘the minister of the congregation,’ labouring in the word, and reading the law, and in doctrine about the preaching of it. Both these together are sometimes called jointly, ‘the rulers of the synagogue;’ Acts xiii. 15; Mark v. 22, being both elders that ruled; but the title is more singularly given to the first of them.”\*

Again, he says, “In all the Jews’ synagogues there were *Parnasin*, deacons, or such as had care of the poor, whose work it was to gather alms for them from the congregation, and to distribute it to them. That needful office is here (Acts vi.) translated into the Christian Church.†

The same doctrine concerning the synagogue is largely asserted and proved by Bishop Stillingfleet, in his *Irenicum*, part ii. chap. 6. To do justice to the learning and strength of his demonstration would require larger extracts, and more space than can be afforded in such a manual. A single citation shall suffice.

“It is a common mistake to think that the ministers of the gospel succeed by way of correspondence and analogy to the priests under the law; which mistake

\* Lightfoot’s Works, vol. i. 611, 612.

† Ibid. i. 279.

hath been the foundation and original of many errors. For when, in the primitive Church, the name of priests came to be attributed to gospel ministers, from a fair compliance (as was then thought) of the Christians only to the name used both among Jews and gentiles; in process of time, corruptions increasing in the Church, those names that were used by the Christians by way of analogy and accommodation, brought in the things themselves primarily intended by those names; so by the metaphorical names of priests and altars, at last came up the sacrifice of the mass, without which they thought the name of priest and altar insignificant. This mistake we see run all along through the writers of the Church, as soon as the name priests was applied to the elders of the Church, that they derived their succession from the priest's of Aaron's order. That which we lay, then, as a foundation, whereby to clear what apostolical practice was, is, that the apostles in forming churches did observe the customs of the Jewish synagogue. About the time of Christ we find synagogues in very great request among the Jews. God so disposing it that the moral part of his service should be more frequented now that the ceremonial was expiring; and by those places so erected, it might be more facile and easy for the apostles to disperse the gospel, by preaching it in those place to which it was the custom of the people to resort. I shall, therefore, endeavour particularly to show *how* the apostles did observe the model of the synagogue in the public service of the church; in the community of names and customs; in the ordination of church officers; in forming presbyteries in the several churches, and in ruling and governing those presbyteries; and even in forming Christian churches out of Jewish synagogues."

The celebrated Grotius, whose great learning and talents will be considered by all as giving much weight to his opinion on any subject, is full and decided in maintaining that the primitive Church was formed after the model of the synagogue. Many passages might be quoted from his writings, in which this opinion is directly asserted. The following may suffice. In his Commentary on Acts xi. 30, he expresses himself thus: "The whole polity (*regimen*) of the Christian Church was conformed to the pattern of the synagogue." And in his Commentary on 1 Tim. v. 17, he has the following passage. "Formerly, in large cities, as there were many synagogues, so there were also many churches, or separate meetings of Christians. And every particular church had its own president, or bishop, who instructed the people, and ordained presbyters. In Alexandria *alone* it was the custom to have one president or bishop for the whole city, who distributed presbyters through the city, for the purpose of instructing the people; as we are taught by Sozomen i. 14."

Out of many more modern writers who concur in the same testimony, I shall content myself with producing three, whose opinion on such a point no adequate judge will disregard.

The first is the celebrated Dr. Augustus Neander, Professor in the University of Berlin, and generally considered as, perhaps, more profoundly skilled in Ecclesiastical History, than any other man now living. He is, moreover, connected with the Lutheran Church, and, of course, has no sectarian spirit to gratify in vindicating Presbyterianism. After showing at some length that the government of the primitive Church was not monarchical or lordly, but dictated through-



out by a spirit of mutual love, counsel, and prayer, he goes on to express himself thus—"We may suppose that where any thing could be found in the way of church forms, which was consistent with this spirit, it would be willingly appropriated by the Christian community. Now there happened to be in the Jewish synagogue a system of government of this nature, not *monarchical*, but rather *aristocratical*, (or a government of the most venerable and excellent.) A council of elders,  $\alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\iota$  πρεσβυτεροι, who conducted all the affairs of that body. It seemed most natural that Christianity, developing itself from the Jewish religion, should take this form of government. This form must also have appeared natural and appropriate to the Roman citizens, since their nation had, from the earliest times, been, to some extent, under the control of a senate, composed of seniors or elders. When the church was placed under a council of elders, they did not always happen to be the oldest in reference to years; but age here, as in the Latin *Senatus*, and the Greek γερουσια was expressive of *worth* or *merit*. Besides the common name of these overseers of the church, to wit, πρεσβυτεροι, there were many other names given, according to the peculiar situation occupied by the individual, or rather his peculiar field of labour; as ποιμενες, shepherds, ηγουμενοι, leaders, προεστωτες των ασελφων, rulers of the brethren, and επισκοποι, overseers."\*

Of the same purport, is the judgment of the celebrated German Commentator, Professor Kunoel, of Leipsic, as exhibited in his Commentary on the 20th chapter, and 28th verse of the Acts of the Apostles. After showing conclusively that the very same per-

\* Kirchengeschichte, p. 283—285.

sons, who in the New Testament are called bishops, and shepherds, are also called presbyters, which he says, "some have rashly denied, dreaming of a difference between bishops and presbyters in the primitive Church;" he goes on to say, that the Christians in the time of the apostles, established in the Church a form of government and discipline similar to what prevailed in the Jewish synagogue. It was the duty, he says, of the rulers of the synagogue to preserve discipline, superintend the external concerns of the respective societies over which they were placed, and also to teach and explain the law. In the same manner it was the duty of the bishops or presbyters to superintend the government of the church, and to teach the doctrines of the Christian religion. They were both governors and teachers. The rulers of the synagogues were confined to particular societies, and so were the first bishops or presbyters. No one had any control, except in the single society over which he had been appointed.

Rosenmüller, a far famed critic and commentator, also of Germany, delivers with great confidence, a similar opinion, with respect to the conformity of the order of the primitive Church to the model of the synagogue. And asserts, with equal confidence, that presbyters and bishops, in the time of the apostles, were the same; but that afterwards, bestowing the title of bishop upon one, by way of eminence, was brought in *by the custom of the Church*.\*

Some of the advocates of Episcopacy find no other means of evading the force of the argument drawn from the fact of the Christian Church being formed on

\* D. J. Rosenmülleri Scholia N. T. in Acta Apostol. vi. 3; xi. 30; xiii. 1; xx. 17. 28. In Epist. 1 Tim. v. 17.

the model of the Jewish synagogue, than by alleging that the synagogue was a mere human institution, and that it is, therefore, utterly incredible that it should be made the pattern of any Divine institution. This objection is entirely futile. It is a matter of perfect indifference to us how or whence the synagogue system originated. All that the argument assumes is, that such a system existed when our Saviour came in the flesh, and had existed for several centuries; that synagogues were the regular parish churches of the Jews, the places of their stated sabbatical worship; that the mass of the Jewish people had been long accustomed and were greatly attached to that worship; that its whole character was not ceremonial, but moral, and adapted to all nations and ages; that the Saviour and his apostles were accustomed to sanction the synagogue service with their presence; that all the first converts to Christianity were Jews, who had been long habituated to the synagogue worship; and that, as a matter of fact, almost every feature, custom, and title which had distinguished the synagogue were actually found in the church. These are not only facts, but they are self-evident facts, which no one who knows what the synagogue system was, and who has the New Testament in his hand, can for a moment call in question. This is sufficient for our purpose.

Unless I deceive myself, I have now established the five positions which were stated at the beginning of this chapter, viz. That there is no foundation whatever in Scripture for the "order of deacons," as ministers of the gospel:—That the Scriptures contain but one commission for the gospel ministry, and that there is no evidence of the powers conveyed by this

commission being afterwards divided between different orders:—That the words bishop and presbyter are uniformly used in the New Testament as convertible titles for the same office:—That the same character and powers are, also, in the sacred writings, ascribed interchangeably to bishops and presbyters, thus plainly establishing their identity of order as well as of name:—And that the Christian Church was organized by the apostles, after the model of the Jewish synagogue, which was undeniably Presbyterian in its form.

These positions thus established, decide the controversy. Such a concurrence of *language* and of *facts* in support of the doctrine of ministerial parity, is at once remarkable and conclusive. I mean conclusive as to the fact, that this was the system adopted in the apostles' days. This, undoubtedly, was the "truly primitive and apostolic form." And the more closely we adhere to this form, the more we testify our respect for that system which was framed by inspired men; sanctioned by miraculous powers; and made pre-eminently instrumental in the midst of a frowning and hostile world in building up the Church in holiness, through faith unto salvation.

## CHAPTER III.

## TESTIMONY OF SCRIPTURE CONTINUED.

WE have seen what the Scriptures declare in support of our doctrine concerning the Christian ministry. On this testimony the cause might safely be rested. But as it is my wish to do ample justice to every part of the argument, I would not overlook or suppress a single plea urged by the friends of Episcopacy. I shall, therefore, now proceed to examine the principal arguments in favour of their system, which they suppose and allege are to be found in the Word of God.

In examining these arguments, I must again request the reader to keep steadily in view the doctrine for which our Episcopal brethren contend, and the nature of that proof which it is incumbent on them to produce. They appeal to Scripture to prove that bishops are an order of clergy superior to presbyters, that is, superior to those who are authorized to preach and administer the sacraments of the Church; that their superiority rests on the appointment of Christ; that with this superior order alone are deposited all the power to ordain, to confirm, and to consecrate churches and chapels, and, in short, all the treasures of authority and succession; and that no ministry is regular or valid excepting that which is constituted by this order. Now, to support such a claim, we are surely warranted in demanding scriptural testimony of a very direct and explicit kind. We require those who make the claim

to produce passages of Scripture which contain direct precept, or plain undoubted example, or at least some established principle, from which their conclusion necessarily flows. On a subject so fundamental as they represent this to be, we cannot be content with gratuitous assumptions, or ingenious analogies, which have nothing to support them but a fertile imagination or human authority. We must have no remote hint; no circuitous inference; but express warrant; a warrant decisive and clear; a warrant which would be indubitable and satisfactory, if all books excepting the Bible were banished from the Church. Let us see whether our claimants are prepared with testimony of this kind.

I. The first argument urged by the friends of prelacy is, "That, as the Mosaic economy was intended to prefigure the gospel dispensation, we may reasonably suppose the Christian ministry to be modelled after the Jewish priesthood; and that, as there were in the temple service, an high priest, priests, and Levites, so we may consider it as agreeable to the will of Christ, that there should be the corresponding three-fold orders of bishops, priests, and deacons, in the New Testament Church."

After the ample proof adduced in the foregoing chapter, that the Christian Church was organized by the apostles, not after the model of the temple, but of the synagogue service, I might with propriety dismiss this argument, as sufficiently refuted by the establishment of that fact. But as much stress has been laid upon the argument in question, and as some cautious inquirers may wish to see it further discussed, let us proceed to a more particular examination of its merits.

You will observe the form of this argument. It may "reasonably be supposed" that such a correspondence of orders should exist. But why "suppose" it? Does the Word of God, the great charter of the Christian Church, say that this is the case? Is there a single passage to be found in the sacred volume, which asserts, or gives the least hint, that such a likeness or analogy either does, or ought to exist? I will venture to say, there is not. I have met, indeed, with much animated declamation in favour of this analogy, urging it as a "supposable" thing—as a "reasonable" thing, &c. &c. but I have never yet heard of a single passage of Scripture, which is even pretended to teach the doctrine in question. For the general position, that many of the Old Testament institutions had a reference to, and were intended to prefigure New Testament blessings, it will be instantly seen by every discerning reader is nothing to the purpose.

But this is not all. There is not only nothing to be found in Scripture which bears the least appearance of support to this argument; but there is much to be found which contradicts and destroys it. It is impossible to read the New Testament without perceiving, that the Jewish priesthood was a typical and temporary institution, which had both its accomplishment and its termination in Christ. This is taught in passages too numerous to be quoted; but, more particularly, at great length, and with irresistible force of argument, in the Epistle to the Hebrews,\* in which the sacred writer declares, that since Christ the substance is come, the types which prefigured him are done away; that the Levitical priesthood was chiefly employed in offering sacrifices, and attending on other

\* See especially the vii. viii. ix. and x. chapters.

ceremonial observances of the typical economy, for which there is no place, since the great Sacrifice was offered up once for all; and that Christ Jesus himself is now the great high priest of our profession. Is it not above measure wonderful, that any who have the Bible in their hands, and profess to make it the rule of their faith, should, in the face of language so explicit and decisive, represent any human officer in the Christian Church as standing in the place of the high priest under the ceremonial dispensation?

But it will be asked, Do we deny all connection between the Old and the New Testament dispensations? Do we deny that the types and ceremonies of the Mosaic economy, were a shadow of good things to come? By no means. We warmly contend for this connection. We maintain, with no less zeal than our opponents, that the whole system of typical and figurative observances enjoined upon the Jews, was full of important meaning, and had a pointed reference to gospel blessings. We agree, also, that the Jewish priesthood was typical; but of what?—of a mere *human* priesthood, to be established under the New Testament dispensation? So far from this, that the apostle in writing to the Hebrews, says directly the contrary. He tells us, that, as the sacrifices offered by the priests under the law, prefigured the death of Christ, and could not with propriety be continued after that event had taken place; so the Levitical priesthood was a type of that Divine High Priest, who once offered himself a sacrifice to satisfy offended justice, and entered, by his own blood, into the holiest of all, even into heaven. If any insist that, because the ministrations under the law were a shadow of heavenly things, we must have a priesthood under the gospel of similar grades and



organization; they are bound, on the same principle, to carry the parallel through, and to maintain the continuance of sacrifices, and of many other things connected with the priestly office; and I may venture to affirm, that they will find it quite as easy to make the Scriptures speak in favour of the latter as of the former.

Accordingly the words priest and priesthood are never, in one instance, in the New Testament, applied to the ministers of the Christian Church, as such.\* Episcopals appear to be particularly fond of this language. It is frequently introduced into their public forms, and no less frequently used by their standard writers. But they employ it without the smallest countenance from Scripture. This is the decided opinion of eminent Episcopal divines. We have seen in the preceding chapter, that Dr. (afterwards bishop) Stillingfleet reprobates this whole language as unscriptural, and adapted to nourish radical

\* I am not ignorant that some advocates for this language have contended, that as the word priest is evidently a corruption of the word presbyter; and as the latter (or elder,) is certainly applied to New Testament ministers, the former may be considered as having a kind of scriptural warrant. But this conclusion is founded on a quibble. In the original Hebrew of the Old Testament Scriptures, the sacred office of one who ministered in the temple service, is expressed by a word which, in the Septuagint, is always rendered ἱερεὺς. This was the Old Testament word for a Levitical priest. Now this word is never once used in the New Testament to designate a minister of the Christian Church. And accordingly, the translators of our English Bible, faithful to the distinction which they observed to be uniformly kept up in the sacred language, between the ministers of the temple and those of the Church, uniformly call the former priests, and their office the priesthood; while they as uniformly avoid applying these names to the latter, but call them, elders, bishops, pastors, &c.

error. It is also well known that Archbishop Cranmer, Bishop Ridley, and several other eminently pious reformers of the Church of England, made zealous opposition to the use of the word altar, and the whole system of phraseology connected with it, as a Popish affectation of conformity to the temple service of the Jews; as utterly unsupported by Scripture; and as highly mischievous in its tendency.

No less opposed to this principle is the opinion of Dr. Haweis, an Episcopal divine, expressed in his *Ecclesiastical History*. "If, says he, the unfounded idea, that bishops, priests, and deacons, were to succeed to the high priests, priests, and Levites, were true, we must surely have found some intimation of it in the Epistle to the Hebrews. That men of research," he adds, "should broach such puerilities is surprising.\*

Dr. Mosheim,† in his account of the corruptions which began to creep into the Church, in the second century, makes the following remarks. "The Christian doctors had the good fortune to persuade the people, that the ministers of the Christian Church succeeded to the character, rights, and privileges of the Jewish priesthood; and this persuasion was a new source both of honours and profits to the sacred order. This notion was propagated with industry some time after the reign of Adrian, when the second destruction of Jerusalem had extinguished among the Jews all hopes of seeing their government restored to its former lustre, and their country arising out of ruins. And accordingly the bishops considered themselves as

\* *History of the Church of Christ*, Cent. I. Chap. IV.

† It is generally known that Dr. Mosheim was a Lutheran divine, and one of the most learned men of the 18th century.

invested with a rank and character similar to those of the high priest among the Jews, while the presbyters represented the priests, and the deacons the Levites. It is, indeed, highly probable, that they who first introduced this absurd comparison of offices so entirely distinct, did it rather through ignorance and error, than through artifice or design. The notion, however, once introduced, produced its natural effects; and these effects were pernicious.”\*

But admitting, for a moment, that the Levitical priesthood is a proper model for the Christian ministry; what is the consequence? It follows inevitably that as there was but one high priest over the Jewish church, so there ought to be but one bishop over the Christian Church. So far, then, as the argument has any force, it goes to the establishment, not of diocesan Episcopacy, but of a Pope, as the sole vicar of Jesus Christ upon earth, and as the proper head of the Church. In fact, representing the Aaronic priesthood as a type of the ministry in the Protestant Episcopal church, borders, if it does not actually encroach, on the province of incongruous absurdity. How can one head be a type of many heads? The type sets at defiance the principles of the antetype. The argument belongs to the papists alone. By them it has been often and confidently wielded against Protestant Episcopalians; and they alone, of all the claimants under it, have made a rational and legitimate use of it.

If the advocates of Episcopacy, however, while they confess, as they must, that there is an entire failure of the typical likeness between the one high priest over the whole Jewish church, and the many

\* Mosheim, Cent. II. Part II. Chapter II.

bishops in their denomination; if, I say, notwithstanding this acknowledged failure, they attempt to lay the whole stress of the argument simply on the likeness in the number of the classes of officers in the temple service, and in the Christian Church; Presbyterians can meet them with a claim quite as unexceptionable and striking as their own. Though there be an entire want of conformity between the one high priest, and their many bishops; yet they may and do allege that, as there were three classes of officers in the temple service, so there must be a corresponding number in the Christian Church. Be it so. But do they not forget that in the bishops, elders, and deacons of the Presbyterian church, there is just as complete a similarity as in their own? Here are three orders of officers, bearing the same names with theirs, and having just as much conformity as theirs to the Aaronic priesthood. We, however, disclaim the argument; not because we have not just as good a right, and just as solid materials, for making use of it as they; but because we think it altogether destitute of countenance from the Word of God, nay, in its principle, wholly unscriptural.

II. Another argument usually urged with great confidence by the advocates of Episcopacy, is, "That the apostles, while they lived, possessed a rank, and a class of powers superior to those of all other ministers; that, in virtue of this superior rank, they ordained other ministers; that ordination was confined to them; that bishops are the proper successors of the apostles; and that they hold a corresponding superiority of rank and power."

If this argument be examined, it will be found, in all its branches, to be wholly without support from

Scripture, and to have no other force than that which consists in a mere gratuitous assertion of the point to be proved.

The ministry of the apostles was, in some respects, extraordinary, and of course terminated with their lives. In other respects, it was ordinary, and transmitted to their successors. Considering them in the former light, as men distinguished by the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost; as endowed with immediate inspiration, with the knowledge of tongues, with the power of discerning spirits, and working miracles, and of conferring that power on others; and as invested with authority to order every thing relating to the churches of Christ, under the unerring guidance of the Spirit of God, until the canon of Scripture, the grand charter and directory of the Church, should be completed—considering them in this character, the apostles had no successors. They were exalted above all bishops. The Scriptures give no hint of any class of ministers coming after them, to be endowed with a similar character; and until those who claim something like apostolic pre-eminence, produce satisfactory testimonials that they possess similar gifts and powers, they must excuse us for rejecting their claims.

Considering the ministry of the apostles in those respects in which it was ordinary, and perpetual, they had, and still have, successors; and nothing is more easy than to show that these successors consist of all those, without exception, who are empowered to go forth and teach men the way of salvation, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; that is, all regular ministers, who are clothed with authority to preach the gospel and administer sacraments. For it was in immediate con-

nection with the command to perform these ordinary functions, that the promise, which is considered as constituting the ministerial succession, was given—"Lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Could the advocates of Episcopacy, show from Scripture, that the powers possessed by the apostles were afterwards divided; that, while one class of ministers succeeded them in the ordinary duties of preaching and administering sacraments, another class succeeded them in some higher and more appropriate duties, their cause would rest on better ground; but this, as was before observed, can never be proved. There is not a syllable in Scripture that looks like such a divided succession; nor has it ever been so much as pretended that a passage is to be found which gives a hint of this kind. On the contrary, as has been repeatedly before mentioned, the Scriptures uniformly represent preaching the gospel, and administering sacraments, as the most important and honourable of all ministerial functions.

Accordingly, when we ask those who adduce this argument, whence they derive the idea that diocesan bishops peculiarly succeed the apostles in their apostolic character, (for this supposition alone is to their purpose,) they refer us to no passages of Scripture asserting or even hinting it; but to some vague suggestions, and allusions of the *fathers*. Now on such a subject, even if the fathers were unanimous, we might and ought to hesitate, if nothing like what they intimate were to be found in the Word of God. It is the testimony of Scripture which we are now seeking, and nothing else can be admitted. But it ought to be known and remembered, that the fathers contradict one another, and the same fathers contradict

themselves on this subject. Several of them expressly represent presbyters as the successors of the apostles. Among others, Ignatius, than whom no father is more highly esteemed, or more frequently quoted as an authority by Episcopalians, generally represents presbyters as standing in the place of the apostles. The following quotations are from his far-famed Epistles. "The presbyters succeed in the place of the bench of the apostles." "In like manner let all reverence the deacons as Jesus Christ, and the bishop as the father, and the presbyters as the sanhedrim of God and college of the apostles." "Be subject to your presbyters as to the apostles of Jesus Christ our hope." "Follow the presbytery as the apostles," &c. Other quotations from the fathers might easily be adduced, equally pointed and decisive against the argument in question; but these are reserved for a subsequent chapter.

But the fact is, the apostles, in their appropriate apostolical character, had no successors. The following quotation from Dr. Barrow's treatise on the "Pope's Supremacy," though long, will set this matter in a clear light. See how conclusively one of the most learned and zealous Episcopal divines of the seventeenth century, when arguing against the Romanists, can demonstrate the impossibility of any Christian ministers being the successors of the apostles.

"The apostolical office, as such, was personal and temporary, and therefore, according to its nature and design, not successive, nor communicable to others in perpetual descendance from them."

"It was, as such, in all respects extraordinary, conferred in a special manner, designed for special purposes, discharged by special aids, endowed with spe-

cial privileges, as was needful for the propagation of Christianity, and the founding of churches.”

“To that office it was requisite that the person should have an immediate designation and commission from God; such as Saint Paul so often doth insist upon for asserting his title to the office; “Paul, an apostle, not from men, nor by man.” Not by men, saith St. Chrysostom, this is a property of the apostles. It was requisite that an apostle should be able to attest concerning our Lord’s resurrection or ascension, either immediately, as the twelve, or by evident consequence, as St. Paul; thus St. Peter implied at the choice of Matthias—‘Wherefore, of those men which have companied with us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of the resurrection; and, am I not, saith St. Paul, an apostle? Have I not seen the Lord? According to that of Ananias—The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth; for thou shalt bear witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard.’”

“It was needful also that an apostle should be endowed with miraculous gifts and graces, enabling him both to assure his authority, and to execute his office; wherefore St. Paul calleth these the marks of an apostle, which were wrought by him among the Corinthians in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.”

“It was also, in St. Chrysostom’s opinion, proper to an apostle, that he should be able, according to his discretion, in a certain and conspicuous manner, to impart spiritual gifts; as St. Peter and St. John did at Samaria, which to do, according to that father, was the peculiar gift and privilege of the apostles.”



“Apostles did also govern in an absolute manner, according to discretion, as being guided by infallible assistance, to the which they might upon occasion, appeal, and affirm; It hath seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us. Whence their writings have passed for inspired, and therefore canonical, or certain rules of faith and practice.”

“Now such an office, consisting of so many extraordinary privileges and miraculous powers, which were requisite for laying the foundation of the Church, and the diffusion of Christianity, against the manifold difficulties and disadvantages which it then needs must encounter, was not designed to continue by derivation; for it contained in it divers things which apparently were not communicated, and which no man, without gross imposture and hypocrisy, could challenge to himself.”

“Neither did the apostles pretend to communicate it. They did, indeed, appoint standing pastors and teachers in each church: they did assume fellow-labourers or assistants in the work of preaching and governance; but they did not constitute apostles equal to themselves in authority, privileges, or gifts: for who knoweth not, saith St. Augustine, that principate of apostleship to be preferred before any Episcopacy? And, the bishops, saith Bellarmine, have no part of the true apostolical authority.”

“If it be objected that the fathers commonly do call bishops successors of the apostles; to assail that objection, we may consider, that whereas the apostolical office virtually did contain the functions of teaching and ruling God’s people; the which, for preservation of Christian doctrine and edification of the Church, were requisite to be continued perpetually in

ordinary standing offices, these, indeed, were derived from the apostles, but not properly in the way of succession, as by universal propagation, as by ordination, imparting all the power needful for such offices; which therefore were exercised by persons, during the apostles' lives concurrently, or in subordination to them: even as a Dictator of Rome might create inferior magistrates, who derived from him, but not as his successors; for as Bellarmine himself telleth us, there can be no proper succession but in respect of one preceding; but apostles and bishops were together in the Church."\*

The reasoning of this learned Episcopal divine is conclusive. It never has been, and never can be refuted. The apostles, besides their special and extraordinary powers, as men endowed with inspiration and other miraculous gifts, did sustain the ordinary authority of teaching and ruling the body of believers, and administering the sealing ordinances of the Church. The sacred office, as embracing these ordinary functions, was alone intended to be permanent, and was alone transmitted by the apostles. To contend for any succession to the apostolical office in its pre-eminent character and powers is a vain dream, to which the Scriptures do not afford the smallest countenance.

The advocates of Episcopacy, without the least warrant from Scripture, assure us, that, in the apostolic age, the power of ordaining others to the gospel ministry was confined to the apostles. When, in reply to this plea, we turn to the New Testament, and show them that Timothy, and Titus, and Barnabas,

\* Barrow's *Pope's Supremacy*, Supposition II. p. 122—125. New York edition.

and the presbytery in the case of Timothy, are all represented as having acted as ordainers, they tell us that all these men were apostles; in other words, that they were all invested with the peculiar and pre-eminent powers of the apostolic office; and that it was in virtue of this pre-eminence of rank that they officiated in ordinations. The foregoing quotation from Dr. Barrow will be quite sufficient to refute this plea, in the estimation of all impartial readers. But, independently of his authority, the slightest examination of the proof professed to be drawn from Scripture in support of this plea, will be sufficient to cover it with ridicule in the view of every intelligent inquirer. The following specimen of the sort of proof relied on by the advocates of Episcopacy, will suffice. In the introduction to the first Epistle to the Thessalonians, we find the apostle expressing himself thus—“Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus unto the Church of the Thessalonians,” &c. And in the second chapter of the same Epistle, verse 6th, he tells the Thessalonians—“Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when *we* might have been burdensome as the apostles of Christ.” Now, say the advocates of Episcopacy, the same persons who, in the inscription to this epistle, salute the Thessalonians, afterwards speak of themselves as apostles; *ergo* they all equally bore that office. The inference here is so utterly fallacious, that the only wonder is, it was ever gravely thought of for such a purpose. In the latter verse, the apostle, undoubtedly, either speaks of himself in the plural number, which those who are familiar with the Scriptures know he often does; or he refers to others of the apostles, of all whom the same might be said. That, in using this language, he did

not refer to his companions in the inscriptions, is plain, because, in a verse or two before, he says, still using the plural number, "We were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi." When the apostle was beaten and imprisoned at Philippi, we read that Silas (supposed to be Silvanus) participated with him in this shameful treatment, but no mention is made of Timothy as being his fellow sufferer. Indeed we know that he was neither a partaker nor a witness of that brutal treatment. Besides, Paul's mode of speaking of Timothy on other occasions, plainly shows that he did not consider his youthful "son in the faith" as bearing an office similar to his own. Take as an example, 2 Cor. i. 1. "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, *and Timothy, our brother.*" And again, Colossians i. 1. "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, *and Timothy, our brother.* Surely the humble and affectionate Paul would not have expressed himself thus, if Timothy had possessed an equal right with himself to the title of "an apostle of Jesus Christ," in the official and appropriate sense of that title.

But after all, the bare application of the name apostle, to any man, by no means proves that it was intended to be applied in the official sense of that term. It is well known that all the ecclesiastical titles in the New Testament have a general and an official sense, which are to be distinguished by the connection in which they occur. For example, thus *διακονος* signifies either a servant or a deacon; (see Matt. xxii. 13; Phil. i. 1,) *πρεσβυτερος* either an old man or a presbyter; (John viii. 9; Titus i. 5,) and *αποστολος* either a messenger, (or one who is sent,) or an apostle. Which of these meanings ought to be affixed to the

title in each case, is ascertained only by the connexion. The authors of our translation of the Bible, who, by the way, were all Episcopalians, have, in most cases, decided this question, with much good judgment and fidelity. Accordingly, in translating John xiii. 16, they have very properly done it thus—"The servant is not greater than his lord, neither he that is sent (αποστολος) greater than he that sent him." And again, in translating Philippians ii. 25, they have, with equal fidelity to the original, rendered it in the following language—"Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and companion in labour, and fellow soldier, but your messenger (υμων δε αποστολον) and he that ministered to my wants." Epaphroditus, we are told, had been sent as a special messenger, by the Philippians, to bear the bounty of their church to the apostle Paul. Accordingly the translators, who were certainly among the most learned friends of Episcopacy then on earth, faithful to what was evidently matter of fact, speak of him, not as an apostle, in the official sense of that title, but as a *messenger*. Yet this is one of the cases in which modern Episcopalians, forsaking the judgment of their more learned fathers, assure us, on the ground of this passage alone, that Epaphroditus was an apostle, in the official sense of that term, though not one of the requisites which the Scriptures inform us were indispensable to that office, met in his person.\* Nay,

\* The advocates of Episcopacy tell us that Epaphroditus was the *apostle*, or, in other words, the *prelatical bishop* of the church of Philippi. And yet, in an epistle to the Philippians, sent to them by the hands of Epaphroditus himself, their alleged bishop, the inspired Paul says not one word of the authority over them with which he was alleged to be invested, or of the duty which they owed him, in this character. Is this credible? Nay, is it possible? I will ven-

they go further, and in their eagerness to make as many apostles as may be in the primitive church, they reckon Andronicus, and Junia, who was probably a *woman*,\* among the number, and that only on the ground of the following passage in Romans xvi. 7. "Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me." All that can be legitimately inferred from this passage is, that the persons here mentioned were peculiarly valued or highly esteemed by or among the apostles. At any rate this interpretation corresponds quite as well with the rest of the apostle's language in this place as that which prelacy affixes to it; and far better with the

ture to say, that nothing more is necessary to refute the allegation that Epaphroditus was the prelate of Philippi, than to read the epistle to that church of which he was the bearer. To suppose that St. Paul, with the opinions and feelings of modern Episcopalians, could, in such circumstances, have written such a negative epistle, would be the greatest outrage on his character. Accordingly, the learned Grotius, with all his leaning to Prelacy, in his commentary on Philippians ii. 25, remarks on the word *apostle*, as it occurs in this place, that "it is taken largely for those who were collectors and bearers of alms and contributions, and so can be of no service for the establishing of Epaphroditus as the bishop of Philippi."

\* The name, as it stands in the original, is *Ιουνίαν*, which has no article to indicate the gender, and which may come as well from *Ιουνία*, as from *Ιουνίας*. Father Calmet remarks, "St. Chrysostom, Theophylact, and several others, take Andronicus for a man, and Junia for a woman, perhaps his wife. The Greeks and Latins kept their festival, May 17th, as *husband and wife*." Rosenmueller's annotation on the passage is as follows—"καὶ Ἰουνίαν; Quæ videtur fuisse uxor Andronici. Aliis Junias est nomen viri, pro Junius." What renders it more probable that Junia was a woman is, that a man and his wife, a man and his sister, and two other females, are undoubtedly saluted in the preceding and following verses of the same chapter.

account which this same inspired man gives, in other places, of the apostolic office.

When, therefore, Barnabas, in one place, is called an apostle, it is plain that nothing can be inferred from the mere name as to the character of his ministry. It imports nothing more than that he was *sent forth* or *commissioned* to perform a particular work.

It is evident, then, that none of these persons can be proved to have been apostles, in the official and preeminent sense of that title; and as we know that Timothy, Titus, and Barnabas ordained, it follows, inevitably, that the ordaining power was not confined to the apostles while they lived; and, of course, that the whole argument with which this allegation is connected falls to the ground. Nothing can be plainer than that “pastors,” “teachers,” and “evangelists,” even while the apostles lived, often officiated in ordinations, not merely as humble witnesses or assistants, as is gratuitously pretended, but as principals, in investing others with the sacred office.

IV. A fourth argument urged by the advocates of Episcopacy, is—“That Timothy and Titus were each appointed to the fixed superintendency of a large diocese, the former over Ephesus, the latter over Crete; that the duties required of them, and the powers vested in them were evidently superior to those of ordinary presbyters; in a word, that they were no other than proper diocesan bishops.”

This argument is a corner stone of the Episcopal fabric, adduced with much zeal, and relied on with the utmost confidence, by most of the advocates of prelacy.

It is unfortunate, however, that all the premises from which the conclusion is drawn, are assumed

without any satisfactory, or even plausible evidence. How does it appear that Timothy and Titus were bishops, in the Episcopal sense of the word? They are no where, in Scripture, called by this name. Timothy, on the contrary, is expressly styled an evangelist, 2 Tim. iv. 5. Now it is worthy of remark, that evangelists are very carefully distinguished by St. Paul, from apostles and other ministers. "And he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some *evangelists*, and some pastors and teachers," Ephes. iv. 11. Here Timothy's office is pointed out. And it is probable that Titus, being called to similar duties, bore the same office. Now what is meant by an evangelist? He was an officer, says Eusebius, appointed "to lay the foundations of the faith in barbarous nations, to constitute them pastors, and having committed to them the cultivating of those new plantations, to pass on to other countries and nations."\* No description can apply more perfectly to the work assigned to Timothy and Titus, as every one who looks into the sacred history must instantly perceive. They were not settled pastors, but itinerant missionaries. They sustained no fixed or permanent relation to the churches of Ephesus or Crete; and amidst their numerous and almost constant travels, were probably as long, and perhaps longer, in other places than in these. As for Titus, Dr. Whitby himself acknowledges, that he was only left at Crete to ordain elders

\* After quoting an authority so often referred to by Episcopalians, and so high in their estimation as that of Eusebius, I will add, that the word *evangelist* is still used in the Presbyterian Church, and with the same sense attached to it as in the days of Eusebius. Among us, an ordained minister, who has no pastoral charge, and who itinerates to preach the gospel in regions which are destitute of it, is called an *evangelist*.



in every city, and to set in order the things that were wanting; and that, having done that work, he had done all that was assigned him in that station; and, therefore, St. Paul sends for him the very next year to Nicopolis. Titus iii. 12.” And with respect to Timothy, the same learned Episcopal writer also confesses, that “there is no satisfactory evidence of his having resided longer at Ephesus, than was necessary to execute a special and temporary mission to the church in that place.” *Preface* to his *Comment. on Titus*.

Some Episcopalians of slender information have exulted, because in our common Bibles, at the close of the Second Epistle to Timothy, there is a postscript, in the following words—“The second Epistle unto Timotheus, ordained the first bishop of the Church of the Ephesians, was written from Rome, when Paul was brought before Nero the second time.” And, also, at the close of the Epistle to Titus, a similar postscript, importing that Titus was the first bishop of Crete. But it is well known that these postscripts make no part of the sacred text. It is acknowledged, by all learned men, that they were interpolated, by some officious transcribers, more than 400 years after the Christian æra. They are not to be found in any of the oldest and most authentic copies of the original. They are not the same in all the copies in which they are found. They were solemnly excluded from the earliest English translations; and for a long time after their introduction, they were generally printed in a different type from the inspired text, in order to show that they form no part of the sacred canon. Of course, as all Episcopal writers of respectability ac-

knowledge, they afford no evidence which deserves the least attention in the case before us.

But if there be no evidence that Timothy and Titus were diocesan bishops, either in the sacred text, or in the spurious interpolations, which, by ignorant persons, have been sometimes mistaken for it; whence, you will ask, has this notion, so confidently maintained by Episcopal writers, taken its rise? It seems to have been first suggested by Eusebius, in the 4th century, as a thing which tradition "reported" in his day, but of which he found no certain record;\* and after him this tradition has been servilely copied, and assumed as a fact by a succession of writers. Dr. Whitby, notwithstanding all his zeal for Episcopacy,

\* Eusebius says, "It is reported (*ῥητορευται*) that Timothy received the first oversight of the parish of Ephesus, and Titus of Crete." This important writer, to whom ecclesiastical historians are so much indebted, frankly confesses that he was obliged to rely much on *tradition*; nay, that he was able to affirm little but what he could gather from the account of Paul himself in the New Testament, and from the Acts of the Apostles. *Eccles. Hist. Lib. iii. cap. 4.* Here, then, is the sum of the evidence from the Fathers, as to this point. Eusebius stands first on the list. He quotes, as his main authority, the New Testament; and assures us that he had little beside to guide him excepting tradition. All the other fathers who speak on the same subject, as Ambrose, Epiphanius, Jerome, Chrysostom, &c., follow Eusebius. The fathers, then, virtually confess that they know very little more of the matter than we do; and, of course, their testimony is, to us, perfectly worthless. Eusebius lived in a day when clerical impurity had made considerable progress; and, of course, tradition would be apt to attach the same ideas to the character of a bishop in the apostles' days, as actually belonged to it in the fourth century. But let it never be forgotten, that Episcopalians themselves admit, that the title of *bishop* is applied in Scripture to the *pastors* of particular congregations only; and let it be carefully observed, too, that Eusebius, in speaking of the pastoral charge of Timothy, calls it a *parish*.

speaks on the subject in this manner. "The great controversy concerning this, and the Epistle to Timothy is, whether Timothy and Titus were indeed made bishops, the one of Ephesus, and the proconsular Asia; the other of Crete. Now of this matter I confess I can find nothing in any writer of the *first three centuries*, nor *any intimation* that they bore that name." And afterwards he adds, generally concerning the whole argument—"I confess that these two instances, absolutely taken, afford us no convincing arguments in favour of a settled diocesan Episcopacy, because there is nothing which proves they did or were to exercise these acts of government rather as bishops than as evangelists."

But it is still urged, that some of the powers represented in Scripture as given to Timothy and Titus clearly indicate a superiority of order. Thus Paul besought the former to abide still at Ephesus, and gave him directions with regard to the selection and ordination of ministers. And he also appointed the latter to ordain elders in every city of Crete, giving him, at the same time, particular instructions as to the manner in which he should exercise his ordaining power, and set in order the things that were wanting. "Here," say the advocates for Episcopacy, "we find *in fact* the preeminent powers of diocesan bishops vested in these men; and as long as they possessed the preeminent *powers* of bishops, it is of small moment by what *name* they were called." But on this argument several remarks immediately occur, which entirely destroy its force.

In the first place, the whole argument is founded on a *petitio principii*, and is, therefore, perfectly worthless. Shall we never have done with this arti-

fice so unworthy of fair reasoners? It begins by taking for granted the main question in dispute. When carefully analysed and reduced to logical rules, it simply amounts to the following syllogism: "None but diocesan bishops, as a superior order of clergy, have a right to ordain ministers and organize churches; but Timothy and Titus were sent to perform services of this kind; therefore Timothy and Titus were diocesan bishops." Now in this syllogism, the major proposition, as logicians call it—viz. that which asserts that none but bishops, as a superior order, can ordain, is taken for granted. But does not every intelligent reader see that this is precisely the main point in controversy; and, of course, that it cannot be assumed without proof? Why may not all these functions have been as well discharged by presbyters as by bishops? In the Presbyterian Church presbyters daily discharge them. And, of course, to commence with taking for granted that none but prelates could ever have been empowered to discharge them, is surely to abuse popular credulity. We utterly deny that the ordaining power either was in the time of Timothy, or is now confined to prelates; and until our opponents can prove that it is, the argument from the cases of Timothy and Titus can be of no value to their cause. Do not the judicatories of the Presbyterian Church every year send out evangelists (precisely what Timothy was) into remote parts of the country, empowering and directing them to plant churches; to "ordain elders and deacons in every church;" and to "set in order whatever may be wanting," in every organization? But suppose some future ecclesiastical historian should infer from this well known habit that the Presbyterian Church is

now, and always has been a prelatical body? would not his statement be considered as illegitimate in reasoning, and false in fact? Yet precisely such is the statement of our Episcopal brethren in reference to Timothy and Titus. True, the evangelists whom we send forth are empowered to ordain *ruling elders* and *deacons* only, and not *teaching elders*, or “ministers of the word and doctrine;” but this is only a peculiar ecclesiastical regulation, which might have been ordered otherwise, without an essential invasion of scriptural principle. Though an ordination of a minister performed by a single person, would not now be deemed regular in our church, yet we should, doubtless, acknowledge and receive as validly invested with the sacred office, any one who had been set apart by a single ordainer, in a body which we deemed a regular church of Christ, and whose rules admitted of such an ordination. But,

*Secondly*, it has not been, and cannot be proved, that either Timothy or Titus ever did *alone* ordain a single individual. If we look into the second epistle to Timothy, we shall see that Mark *might* have been with him, and assisted him in every ordination; and from an inspection of the epistle to Titus, it is plain that Zenas and Apollos might have been with him. Nothing is certain on this point. Neither can it be shown that there were presbyters at either of the places in question when these evangelists were sent thither. Episcopalians take for granted that, when Timothy and Titus were sent to Ephesus and Crete to attend to the ordination of presbyters and deacons, and to “set in order the things which were wanting,” there were already at both those places presby-

ters, who, upon Presbyterian principles, might have ordained others. And hence they conclude that presbyters were not considered by the apostle as lawfully invested with the power of ordaining, "or else," say they, "he would not have thought it necessary "to send superior officers so great a distance, to perform this work." But this supposition is made wholly without evidence. Archbishop Potter, one of the highest authorities among Episcopalians, concedes that we have no reason to believe there were any ministers ordained in Crete prior to the mission of Titus to that island.\* This simple concession, when traced to its legitimate consequences, amounts, so far as Titus is concerned, to a surrender of the whole argument; for it all turns on taking for granted that there were presbyters present, who yet had no power to preside in ordinations.

But, *thirdly*—Admitting, for the sake of argument, that there were presbyters ordained, and residing, both at Ephesus and Crete, previous to the respective missions of Timothy and Titus, still no advantage to the Episcopal cause can be derived from this concession. We learn, from the epistles directed to these evangelists, that divisions and difficulties existed in both the churches to which they were sent. Among the Christians at Ephesus there had crept in ravenous wolves, who annoyed and wasted the flock; and also some who had turned aside unto vain jangling, desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding what they said, or whereof they affirmed. And, in the church of Crete, it appears, that there were many unruly and vain talkers, and deceivers, espe-

\* Discourse of Church Govt. chap. iii. p. 100.

cially they of the circumcision; who gave heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men that turned from the truth. Under these circumstances, the pious and benevolent Paul, who had laboured so much in those churches, would naturally feel himself called upon to do something for their relief. But what was to be done? He was not able, or he did not think proper, to go himself to direct their affairs. He could not send them copies of that sacred Charter, with which the churches are now furnished, viz. the New Testament, a considerable portion of which was not then in existence. The ministers there, if any, were probably themselves involved in the disputes and animosities which prevailed; and, therefore, could not be considered as suitable persons to compose tumults, and to settle differences in which they had taken a part. There was no alternative, but to send *special missionaries*, immediately empowered by a person of acknowledged authority, to act in the various exigencies which might arise; to curb the unruly; to reclaim the wandering; to repress the ambition of those who wished to become teachers, or to thrust themselves into the ministry, without being duly qualified; to select and ordain others, of more worthy character; and in general to set in order the affairs of those churches. Now, as both Timothy and Titus had been recently with the apostle, when they set out on their respective missions, it is not to be supposed that the Epistles which we find directed to them, were written solely, or even principally for their instruction. It is probable that they were rather intended as credentials, to be shown to the churches of Ephesus and Crete; as means of commanding their

respect and obedience to these missionaries; and, after answering this occasional purpose, to be placed on record in the sacred Canon, to serve as a guide to the Church in every age. Whether we suppose, then, that there were, or were not, presbyters already ordained and residing at the places to which these evangelists were sent, the argument is not in the least affected on either supposition.

*Fourthly*, the advocates of Episcopacy tell us, that the circumstance of the epistles to Timothy and Titus being directed to them *personally*, proves that *they alone* were empowered to perform the services enjoined. But this plea has just as little real force as any that have been mentioned. Presbyterians, in ordaining candidates for the gospel ministry, constantly address to each individual the very same charges which are addressed to these evangelists, and in the very same words, without being conscious of the least inconsistency with their principles. We constantly say to every candidate, as Paul said to his "son in the faith," "Lay hands suddenly on no man"—"That which thou hast received, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also;" but who ever thought of our expecting him to be the sole ordainer in any case? Further; directions are given to Timothy respecting the performance of public preaching, and the topics of public prayer; but surely we are not to understand from this that he alone was to preach and to pray. Besides, it is evident that some parts of the epistles directed to these evangelists, were intended to guide the churches as well as the ministers to whom they were directed. And even if these epistles were intended for the use of the clergy alone, at Ephesus and



Crete, it would have been a matter of course, according to Presbyterian habits, to direct each of them to the moderator of the Presbytery, or the leading man in each place, to be imparted to his brethren,

*Fifthly*, the account given of the ordination of Timothy is wholly irreconcilable with the notion of his having been a diocesan bishop. That account is contained in the following passages—"Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery," 1 Tim. iv. 14. "Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God which is in thee, by the putting on of my hands," 2 Tim. i. 6. These passages are generally considered, both by Presbyterians and Episcopalians, as furnishing a record of Timothy's ordination, and the common opinion is understood to be, that the apostle himself presided in the Presbytery, and in the laying on of hands, when the ordination took place. The original word (πρεσβυτεριον,) translated *presbytery*, in the first passage, whenever used in the New Testament, or in the early ecclesiastical writers, invariably signifies a bench or body of elders; and the inevitable conclusion seems to be that a plurality of elders, or presbyters, laid on hands, with the apostle, in setting apart Timothy to the sacred office. To avoid this example of Presbyterian ordination, some of the advocates of prelacy contend that the apostle represents Timothy's ordination as having been effected *by* (δία) the laying on of *his* hands, and *with* (μετα) the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Hence they infer that the apostle only, in this transaction, imparted *authority*; while the presbyters imposed hands merely to express *consent*. Without stopping

to discuss this point of Greek philology—which no one who has a mature acquaintance with the original language of the New Testament will sustain—it is sufficient to state, as intimated in the preceding chapter, that if this criticism, and the plea founded upon it be admitted, it will wholly destroy that branch of the Episcopal argument which it is designed to support; for, although on the principles of prelacy, presbyters or elders may and do lay on hands in the ordination of *presbyters*, yet they never are or can be allowed to do so in the consecration of *bishops*; to which office Timothy is alleged to have been now set apart. If, therefore, the criticism on these Greek words, which has been so much laboured by Episcopal writers, be adhered to, it must destroy Timothy's bishopric. This, however, was sufficiently argued in the preceding chapter.\*

\* The view of Timothy's ordination, taken by Mr. Townsend, a late and popular Episcopal writer, in his "Chronological and Historical Bible," is the following—"Timothy had a special call of God to the work of an evangelist, which the elders of the church at Lystra knowing, set him solemnly apart to the work by the imposition of hands, (1 Tim. iv. 14.) And they were particularly led to this by several prophetic declarations relative to him, by which his divine call was most clearly ascertained. (See 1 Tim. i. 18. and iii. 14.) After this appointment by the elders, the apostle himself laid his hands on him; not, perhaps, for the purpose of his evangelical designation, but that he might receive those extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit, so necessary, in those primitive times, to demonstrate the truth of the gospel—(See 1 Tim. i. 6. 7.) It is *not* probable that Timothy had *two* ordinations; one by the elders of Lystra, and another by the apostle; as it is most probable that St. Paul acted with that *πρεσβυτεριον*, or eldership, mentioned 1 Tim. iv. 14, among whom, in the imposition of hands, he would undoubtedly act as chief." *New Testament* II. 324, 325. This is a probable and rational view of the subject, which must commend itself to the judgment of every impartial reader.

To escape from this difficulty, another class of Episcopalians, as before mentioned, (for they are wholly disagreed among themselves as to this point,) allege that by the *presbytery* (πρεσβυτεριον) in this case, we are to understand, not a body of *presbyters*, but *the college of the apostles*. This supposition is a mere subterfuge. There is not a shadow of countenance for it to be found in Scripture. It is confessed, on all hands, that the word is never used in this sense in any other place in the New Testament. Besides, if the college of apostles united with Paul in this transaction, then the whole criticism concerning *by* (δια) and *with* (μετα,) so often and so laboriously urged by other learned Episcopalians, must be abandoned, as not only irrelevant, but subversive of the whole argument,\* indeed, as absurd.

*Sixthly.* Another consideration is worthy of notice in regard to the alleged character of Timothy as bishop of Ephesus. If he ever bore that office it must have been when Paul's first epistle to him was written: for it is in this Epistle alone that the supposed evidence of his Episcopal powers is found. But this epistle, as the most learned and judicious commentators agree, was written from Macedonia, about the year of Christ 58; a short time before the celebrated interview of Paul with the elders of Ephesus, at Miletus. This is the date assigned to it by Athanasius and Theodoret, among the ancients; and

\* So embarrassing did this affair of Timothy's being ordained by "the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery" appear to Bishop Onderdonk, that, in his *Episcopacy Tested by Scripture*, he has abandoned both passages in 1 Tim. iv. 14, and 2 Tim. i. 6, as neither of them relating to the ordination of Timothy at all! In this he differs entirely from Archbishop Potter, and from nineteen-twentieths of the most learned divines of his own denomination.

by Dr. Hammond, the learned Grotius, Dr. Lightfoot, Dr. Benson, Dr. Doddridge, Professor Michaelis, and other modern critics of equal reputation. Indeed this is pronounced the most common and best supported opinion by Mr. Townsend, in his "Chronological and Historical Bible," now so popularly current among American Episcopalians. Now if Timothy were constituted bishop of Ephesus at this period, how came the apostle Paul, in his conference with the elders whom he met at Miletus, when Timothy was present, not to say one word to them about him as their ecclesiastical superior; but to style *them* the bishops of that church, and to commit to them its government, as we have seen in a former chapter? Was Timothy, after holding this office a few months, so soon displaced? Or, if he still bore the office, is it credible that the Apostle should have totally forgotten the circumstance; that he should declare the presbyters of that church to be its bishops, and charge them to execute Episcopal duties; and that, when predicting divisions and heresies which were about to arise among them, he should say nothing of any superior officer, as their spiritual guide, and bond of union? It is not credible. No impartial reader can believe that Timothy, at this time, bore any such fixed relation to the church of Ephesus, as that for which the friends of prelacy contend. But even if we suppose the epistle in question to have been written at a later period, even as late as A. D. 64 or 65, as some contend, still the Episcopal cause will not be aided in the least degree by adopting this alternative. It will rather be still more weakened. For about that very time, as most biblical critics agree, the apostle Paul addressed a most affectionate

and interesting letter to the Ephesians, in which he gives not the least hint of any such ecclesiastical superior as a prelate, as existing among them, or as ever having been placed over them. And although the apostle speaks of corruption in the midst of them, and of disorders as needing to be corrected, he says not one word of such a superior officer as either necessary or desirable for rectifying what was amiss, and watching over the church there. This is an omission which never could have occurred had there been such an officer in that church, or had it been governed at all upon Episcopal principles. This indisputable fact is conclusive. It does not merely render the Episcopal claim improbable; it places its support out of the question.

*Seventhly*, the continual journeying of Timothy and Titus plainly shows that they were rather evangelists, as the apostle distinctly calls one of them, than fixed diocesan bishops. It is evident from the New Testament history that neither of these ministers was long stationary in any one place. They appear to have been almost constantly itinerating, to preach the gospel, and organize churches. With respect to Timothy, we find him at one period with Paul at Philippi, and Thessalonica; a little afterwards at Athens; then at Thessalonica again. Some years after this, we find him successively at Ephesus, Macedonia, and Corinth; then returning to Ephesus; soon afterwards revisiting Corinth and Macedonia; then going to Jerusalem; and, last of all, travelling to Rome, where the sacred history leaves him. In like manner, we may trace Titus in his successive journeys, from Syria to Jerusalem; thence to Corinth; from Corinth to Macedonia; back again to

Corinth; thence to the island of Crete; afterwards to Dalmatia, and, as some suppose, back again to Crete. Does this look like a fixed Episcopal charge? Nothing more unlike it.

Such is the amount of proof of the prelatical powers of Timothy and Titus, as alleged to be drawn from Scripture. It fails in every point. Every thing is taken for granted; nothing proved. It has not been shown that either of these ministers ever bore a permanent pastoral relation to Ephesus or Crete. It has not been shown that, in their temporary designation to those places, they ever sustained any higher rank or power than that of evangelist. It has not been shown that either of them ever performed a single ordination alone; and even if it were shown, it would not contribute any thing toward the establishment of the character claimed for them. Not one of these things has been or can be shown; and yet they are *all* essential to the Episcopal argument. Nay more; not only is the New Testament searched in vain for a shadow of proof of any of these positions, but it furnishes much which is utterly irreconcilable with them; much which, upon Episcopal principles, is not only inexplicable, but altogether incredible.

V. Another argument frequently adduced in favour of diocesan Episcopacy, is founded on the addresses in Rev. ii. and iii. to the angels of the Asiatic churches. "These angels," say the advocates of prelacy, "were individuals, who presided over the Seven Churches, which are addressed in those chapters; and who, of course, could be no other than *bishops*."

On this argument, also, much stress is laid. But, really, its sole merit, as in several preceding cases,

consists in confident assertion, and in begging the whole question.

Is it certain that by these angels were meant individual ministers? and if so, why may they not have been Presbyterian pastors, as well as Episcopal bishops? Every word that is said of them applies quite as appropriately and strictly to the former as to the latter. Some, and, among the rest, very respectable Episcopal commentators, have thought that by this word *collective bodies* of pastors were intended. Again; supposing individuals to be meant, what is there in the word *angel* which ascertains its meaning to be a diocesan bishop? *Angel* signifies a *messenger*; and accordingly, some able Episcopal writers have conjectured (and no mortal can do more than conjecture) that the angels referred to in this passage of Scripture were a kind of itinerant *legates*, or special *missionaries* to the several churches mentioned in connexion with them. But, admitting that they were resident ministers; perhaps they were pastors of single congregations; or, perhaps, in each of those cities, the eldest and most conspicuous pastor was selected as the medium for addressing the church of the city in which he lived. I say *perhaps*, for each of these opinions has had its advocates, among Episcopalians, as well as others; and it is impossible to be certain which of them approaches nearest to the truth. Amidst this total uncertainty, then, is it not abusing the credulity of men, to the last degree, to take the whole question in controversy for granted; to pronounce with confidence that no other than diocesan bishops could have been intended; and to represent as blinded with prejudice all who do not see and acknowledge this to be the case? The fact is,

the whole language used respecting these apocalyptic angels, applies much more naturally to the Presbyterian than to the prelatical hypothesis.

Let it be remembered, too, that, so far as the insulated word *angel* carries with it a meaning to us, that meaning is much more favourable to Presbytery than Episcopacy. It was shown in a former letter, that, in every synagogue among the Jews, there was an officer, who, among other names, was called *the Angel of the Church*, and that that officer was not a prelate. It was also shown that the synagogue model, particularly with respect to the names and duties of ministers, was adopted in the Christian Church. Now if this statement be admitted, we must consider these angels as ordinary pastors, and the whole strain of the addresses to them serves rather to confirm than invalidate this conclusion. We know not that there were more than a single congregation in either of the cities to which these epistles were sent. We know certainly that it was customary to have but *one communion table* in a PARISH, as the bishop's charge was generally called during the first two or three centuries; and if there was but one organized church each in Ephesus, Smyrna, &c., then, as in the synagogue system, the *angel* was the *parochial bishop*, or *pastor* of each congregation addressed; and the Presbyterian sense of the word *angel* follows of course.

VI. One more Episcopal argument attempted to be drawn from Scripture remains to be considered. It is the allegation "that the Apostle James was the bishop of Jerusalem," and that we have in his case a decisive example of the rank and power of a prelate. The reader will, no doubt, be astonished when he is told on what sort of evidence this inference is



made. It is from such considerations as the following: 1. That in the Synod at Jerusalem (Acts xv.) he spoke last, and expressed himself thus, "Wherefore my sentence is," &c. 2. That the apostle Peter, after his release from prison, said to certain persons, "Go show these things unto James, and to the brethren," Acts xii. 17. And 3. That, in Acts xxi. 17, 18, it is said, "And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. And the day following Paul went in with us unto James, and all the elders were present." This is the sum total of the Scriptural testimony adduced in support of the claim in question. When stripped of all its plausible decorations it stands simply thus. In the synod which assembled at Jerusalem the Apostle James had a seat, and spoke last; *therefore*, he was Bishop of Jerusalem! When Peter was delivered from prison, he requested that an account of his release might be sent "to James and to the brethren"—*therefore* James was the Bishop of Jerusalem. Paul and his company, when they came, on a certain occasion, to Jerusalem, "went in unto James; and all the elders were present"—*therefore*, James was the diocesan Bishop of Jerusalem, and these elders were his "clergy!" Does this deserve the name of sober reasoning? Do not facts of the same kind happen even with respect to Presbyterian clergymen? Does the circumstance of a minister of the gospel speaking *last* in a debate in a deliberative assembly; or having intelligence of an interesting ecclesiastical event sent to him; or having a meeting of brother ministers at his house on a special occasion—constitute him a prelate? When controvertists who would be thought to argue and not to trifle, can condescend to amuse their readers with re-

presentations of this kind, under the garb of reasoning, it is really difficult to answer them in the language of respect or gravity.

The reader has now seen a full and candid exhibition of the testimony attempted to be drawn from Scripture in favour of Episcopacy. No part of it has been designedly kept back. The whole of it is substantially before him. Now let it be remembered that Episcopalians make a high and exclusive claim; a claim which, if substantiated, would confine to themselves, among Protestants, the possession of true ecclesiastical character, and consign all others to the "uncovenanted mercies of God." Of course, as has been said, the burden of proof lies on them. Has, then, even plausible proof from Scripture, of any one point in the controversy, been produced? It has not; nor can it be. Let any intelligent and impartial reader take the New Testament in his hand, and read it carefully through; bearing in mind the concession now unanimously made by Episcopalians—that the title of "bishop," as used in Scripture, never means a prelate; and then ask himself whether there is a single passage in the whole which so much as looks like a Divine institution of prelacy? Whether there is a single declaration, statement, or hint, which tends to establish any one part of the Episcopal claim? On such a subject—a subject entering so deeply, if we may believe our Episcopal neighbours, into all the most important questions of Christian ordinances, and Christian hopes—we have a right to demand Scriptural warrant of the most clear and unquestionable kind. But instead of being referred to testimony of this character from the New Testament, we are put off with passages which we are told *may* have a

meaning favourable to prelacy ; which *probably* have such a meaning ; and which, therefore, it ought not to be questioned, have in fact such a meaning ! This is really no caricature of their mode of reasoning. It is the spirit of their whole argument, as attempted to be drawn from Scripture. They have not produced, and they cannot produce, a single passage from the whole New Testament which solidly supports any one of their allegations; nay, which does not more naturally accord with the Presbyterian system than with that of prelacy. The truth is, the moment that modern Episcopalians consent to bring their cause to the “test of Scripture,” it is gone. Their wiser fathers saw and confessed that the Bible alone would not bear them out in their claim; but that it was necessary to unite the testimony of Scripture with that of the Fathers to sustain it. Even with this aid, as we shall presently see, they are destitute of solid support. But without it, their testimony is a mere shadow, which cannot fail of being driven from any sober, impartial tribunal, as scarcely worthy of answer.

I say again, then, to suppose that our Saviour and his inspired apostles concurred in opinion with modern divine-right Episcopalians; and yet that they could have closed the sacred canon without recording one unequivocal decisive sentence in support of that opinion, is, of all incredible things one of the most incredible.

## CHAPTER IV.

## TESTIMONY OF THE FATHERS.

THE most respectable and authentic writers in the Christian Church, who lived during the first four or five centuries after Christ, are emphatically styled, by ecclesiastical historians, by way of eminence, the Fathers. The writings of these venerable men have been much resorted to in this controversy. Many, even of those who acknowledge the feebleness and insufficiency of the arguments in support of Episcopacy from Scripture, believe that the fathers speak decidedly in its favour. Whatever doubts may attend the evidence in support of this system drawn from other sources, here, they imagine, there can be no question. For the sake of such persons, and to enable every reader to decide how far many positive declarations which are made by the friends of Episcopacy are entitled to credit, it becomes necessary to inquire what these early writers attest on the subject before us.

Before we proceed, however, to this branch of our subject, it is proper to pause and ask, what is the character of the fathers, and how far we may regard their writings with confidence? Were they inspired men? Far from it. It is impossible for any intelligent man, whose understanding is not absolutely blinded by prejudice, to open the pages of any one of them without seeing evidence enough that they were not guided by

the unerring Spirit of wisdom. Were they, for the most part, sound and judicious theologians? No; the praise of this must also be denied them. Of the whole number there was but a single man who held and taught a tolerably consistent and scriptural system. Most of the rest, though some of them were men of talents, learning, and eloquence, were chargeable with so many serious errors, that they would be poor guides indeed for Bible Christians. When we open their numerous and ponderous volumes, we find so much weakness; so much miserable superstition; so much crude thinking; so many important mistakes concerning Christian doctrine and practice, as to make it perfectly evident, that if it were safe or proper to take any uninspired writers as guides, in spiritual things, it would be neither proper nor safe to take *them*. Those who wish to see a learned and able account of the real character and proper use of the fathers, will be gratified by a perusal of a work on that subject by the celebrated John Daillé, a distinguished Protestant minister of France; and also of another work of great erudition and ability, on the same subject, by the famous Andrew Rivet, a Protestant divine, of the highest reputation, also of France. The admirable work of Daillé, ought to be in the hands of every one who wishes thoroughly to examine this subject. It was received and read with the highest approbation by the celebrated Chillingworth, a well known Episcopal divine of England.

But, as Presbyterians, we protest against appealing to any uninspired guides in relation to the question before us. The *Bible*—the *Bible*, is the only infallible rule of faith and practice. This is the only sta-

tute book of the Redeemer's kingdom that we are acquainted with; and we insist on the question before us being decided by this standard. What is it concerning which the fathers are brought forward to bear witness? It is the assertion that Episcopacy, in the prelatical sense of that word, is an institution of Jesus Christ. Now, if it be an institution of Jesus Christ, it is, doubtless, in the Bible; and if it be really there, we, having the Bible in our hands, are as good judges of what it contains as the fathers were. By holy Scripture the fathers themselves are to be tried; and, therefore, to all arguments drawn from the authority of the fathers, we might return the same answer which the venerable Augustine did, when pressed with the authority of Cyprian. "His writings," says he, "I hold not to be canonical, but examine them by the canonical writings, and in them whatever agrees with the word of God, I accept with his praise; what agrees not, I reject with his leave."

Suppose it could be shown, that all the fathers, without any exception, do testify that prelacy existed every where in fifty years after the last apostle? We know, indeed, that no such fact, nor any thing like it, can be shown, as we shall by and by see; but suppose it could be shown—still if prelacy is not to be found in the New Testament, it would be only showing that the Church very early became corrupt—and certainly nothing more. The truth is, if we do not find prelacy in the Bible, we are not bound to tell *how* or *when* it arose. That is the province of its advocates, not ours. We may, perhaps, be able to throw some light on that subject in a future chapter. But even if we were wholly unable to do so; if the order of which we speak, makes no part of the sacred canon,

it is, surely, not incumbent on *us* to say by whose folly, or ambition, or oversight, it crept into the Church.

To illustrate our meaning by an example: Suppose it were shown—as it doubtless may be, from the fathers—that administering milk and honey, and exorcism, and the sign of the cross, and anointing with oil, were added, pretty generally, to baptism before the close of the second century; and that the persons baptized were clothed in long white garments; and suppose that testimony equally concurrent and strong could be produced, that, quite as early, the practice of praying toward the East was extensively prevalent; and suppose it were argued from the acknowledged early existence of these superstitious practices, that they existed in the time of the apostles, and were authorized by them? Every candid reader of the Bible and of early ecclesiastical history, would perceive the conclusion to be as illegitimate in reasoning, as it is false in fact.

Now, the argument of our Episcopal brethren, that Episcopacy, in their sense of the term, is an apostolical institution, because the fathers of the second and third centuries, with one voice, speak of it as really existing in their day—even if the alleged fact could be made out, that the early fathers *do* thus speak, (which we know cannot be,) would be essentially defective as an argument. It would still no more prove that this fact existed in the days of the apostles, than proving that the existence of the superstitious additions to baptism just mentioned, in the days preceding those of Tertullian and Cyprian, shows that our Saviour or his inspired apostles authorized those additions.

But, say the friends of Episcopacy, if we take this ground, if we refuse to resort to the testimony of the fathers for deciding a point which the Bible leaves somewhat uncertain, then how shall we establish a number of things which we consider as very important in Christian practice? For example, say they, how shall we vindicate the divine authority of the first day Sabbath, or of infant baptism, without resorting to the testimony of the fathers, who bear testimony to the early practice of the Church in respect to these two institutions? Nay, they ask with confidence how we could obtain evidence in favour of the sacred canon itself, without resorting to the testimony of the fathers to ascertain the fact, and some of the circumstances of its reception?

To this it is replied, that if it were really so, that a divine warrant for infant baptism, and the Christian Sabbath is not to be found in the Bible; but that we are under the necessity of going to the fathers for this warrant; then every intelligent and consistent Christian will say, give them up; instantly discard them. We ought not to retain them an hour. But it is not true that these important institutions cannot be established by the Bible alone, or that we are compelled to resort to the fathers for our warrant to observe them. On the contrary, the divine right of infant baptism, and of the observance of the first day of the week as the Christian Sabbath, *can* be decidedly and fully established from Scripture alone. We should have in the Bible an ample foundation for both, if every shred of uninspired antiquity had been committed to the flames a thousand years ago.

The same remark, in substance, may be applied to the testimony in behalf of the canon of the New Tes-



tament Scriptures. The arguments from miracles, from prophecy, and especially from all that rich and immense amount of testimony arising from what Dr. Owen emphatically calls the "self-evidencing power" of the Scriptures, would still remain unimpaired, if the writings of all the fathers were blotted out of existence.

But perhaps it may be supposed by some, indeed it has been asserted by many of our Episcopal brethren, that we object in this manner to the testimony of the fathers, because we are afraid of their testimony. Indeed the ardent advocates of prelacy have often insinuated, that we have no other way of avoiding destruction to our cause, than by destroying the credibility of the fathers, or refusing to appeal to them. Never was there a greater mistake. We are not afraid of the testimony of these early witnesses. On the contrary, we are persuaded that the more this branch of testimony is examined, the more it will be found to fail its Episcopal advocates, and to sustain the Presbyterian cause.

After the foregoing protest, then, against appealing to the fathers as authority on this subject, we shall waive all further objection, and consent to examine their testimony, and abide the result.

But before we proceed to examine what the fathers say on the subject before us, let us be careful to recollect precisely what it is that our Episcopal brethren contend for, and what they are bound to prove by these witnesses, in order to make good their claims. When they show us passages in which these early writers merely speak of bishops, they seem to imagine that their point is gained: but such passages are, in fact, nothing to their purpose. We do not deny

that there were bishops in the primitive Church; on the contrary, we contend that the word bishop was a title given, in apostolic times, and long afterwards, to every pastor of a particular congregation. And our opponents themselves generally acknowledge the same thing. Nay, they acknowledge that the title bishop is *always* used in the New Testament in a Presbyterian sense. Again, when they quote passages which barely enumerate bishops, presbyters, and deacons, as distinct officers in the church, they can derive no assistance even from these; because there were, doubtless, presbyters, at that time, as well as now, who, though in full orders, were not invested with a pastoral charge; and who must, therefore, be distinguished from such as were literally overseers or bishops of particular flocks. Besides, we know that there were ruling elders in the primitive Church; a class of presbyters confessed to be inferior to teaching presbyters in their ecclesiastical character. In enumerating church officers, then, there was frequently a necessity for making the distinction above stated, without in the least favouring the pretended superiority of order among those who laboured in the word and doctrine. No; the advocates for diocesan Episcopacy, if they would derive any support to their cause from the writings of the fathers, must do what they have never yet done. They must produce, from those venerable remains of antiquity, passages which prove, either by direct assertion, or fair inference, that the bishops of the primitive Church were a distinct order of clergy from those presbyters who were authorized to preach and administer sacraments, and superior to them; that these bishops, when they were advanced to this superior office, had a new and dis-

tinct ordination; that each bishop had under him a number of congregations, with their pastors, whom he governed; that these bishops were exclusively invested with the right of ordaining, and administering the rite of confirmation; and that this kind of Episcopacy was considered, by the whole primitive Church, as an institution of Jesus Christ. When any one of these facts is fairly proved, from early antiquity, the friends of Presbyterian church government will feel as if they had something like solid argument to contend with; but not till then. Now, after having given much close and serious attention to this subject, I can venture to assure the reader, that in all the authentic writings which have come down to us, of those fathers who lived within the first two hundred years after Christ, there is not a single sentence which can be considered, by an impartial reader, as affording the least support to any one of these positions.

When one finds the friends of Episcopacy asserting that the fathers, in the "plainest terms," "unanimously," and "with one voice" declare in their favour, he would naturally expect to find these early writers saying much, and expressing themselves in decisive and unequivocal language on this subject. But, how will he be surprised to learn, that there is not a single authentic writing extant, composed within the first three hundred years after Christ, that speaks directly and formally to the purpose, on any one point in this controversy! The first writer who undertook to discuss the question, whether bishops and presbyters were distinct in the apostles' days, was Jerome, who lived in the fourth century: and how he has decided the question we shall see in the next chapter. In all the writings of earlier date, the

character and powers of church officers are mentioned in an indistinct and cursory manner; frequently by way of remote allusion, so as to leave it doubtful whether they were intended at all; generally without any apparent design to convey information respecting them; and always as if the subject were considered by the writers as of minor importance. It is from these hints, allusions, and occasional intimations, that we are to deduce the early opinions on the point before us.

Let us make the experiment. Let us bring forward the testimony of these ancient worthies in order. And in doing this, it shall be my aim, not only to adduce those passages which appear favourable to my own cause; but also faithfully to state a fair specimen of the strongest of those which are usually quoted by our Episcopal brethren in support of their claim.

In the catalogue of the fathers, who say any thing worthy of our attention on this subject, Clemens Romanus holds the first place. He lived towards the close of the first century; had doubtless conversed with several of the apostles; and left behind him one epistle, directed to the brethren of the church at Corinth, the authenticity of which is generally admitted. The occasion of the epistle was this. There had been a kind of schism in the church of Corinth, in which the body of the brethren had risen up against their pastors, and unjustly deposed them. The design of Clemens in writing was to call these brethren to a sense of their duty, and to induce them to restore and obey their pastors. In this epistle the following passages are found. "The apostles, going abroad, preaching through countries and cities, appointed the

first fruits of their ministry to be *bishops* and *deacons*. Nor was this any thing new; seeing that long before it was written concerning bishops and deacons. For thus saith the Scripture in a certain place, ‘I will appoint their bishops in righteousness and their deacons in faith.’\* Again—“The apostles knew by our Lord Jesus Christ, that contentions would arise about the name of *episcopacy*; and, therefore, having a perfect foreknowledge of this, they appointed persons, as we have before said; and gave direction how, when they should die, other chosen and approved men should succeed in their ministry. Wherefore we cannot think that those may be justly thrown out of their ministry, who were either appointed by them, or afterwards chosen by other eminent men, with the consent of the whole church. For it would be no small sin in us should we cast off those from their *episcopate* (or bishopric) who holily and without blame fulfil the duties of it. Blessed are those *presbyters* who, having finished their course before these times, have obtained a perfect and fruitful dissolution. For they have no fear lest any one should turn them out of the place which is now appointed for them.” And a little afterwards—“It is a shame,

\* Clemens here, no doubt, refers to Isa. lx. 17, which, in our English Bibles, is rendered, *I will also make thy officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness*; but which, in the Septuagint, with which he was probably most conversant, is interpreted thus: *I will appoint thy rulers in peace, and thy bishops (ἐπισκοπους) in righteousness*. If we interpret Clemens rigidly, he will stand as an advocate for *two* orders instead of *three*. But he, doubtless, only meant to quote this passage as a general promise, that under the New Testament dispensation there should be a regularly organized church, and proper officers; without undertaking to define either their *number* or *grades*.

my beloved, yea, a very great shame, and unworthy of your Christian profession, to hear, that the most firm and ancient church of the Corinthians, should, by one or two persons, be led into a sedition against its *presbyters*. Only let the flock of Christ be in peace with the *presbyters* that are set over it. He that shall do this, shall get to himself a very great honour in the Lord. Do ye, therefore, who first laid the foundation of this sedition, submit yourselves to your *presbyters*; and be instructed into repentance, bending the knee of your hearts.”\*

Clemens, in these passages, evidently represents the church at Corinth as subject not to an individual, but to a company of persons, whom he calls *presbyters*, or *elders*. He exhorts the members of that church to be *obedient* to these *presbyters*; and expostulates with them, because they had opposed and ill-treated their *presbyters*, and cast them out of their *bishopric*. Thus we see that in the writings of Clemens, as well as in the New Testament, the titles *bishop* and *presbyter*, are interchangeably applied to the same men. This venerable father gives not the least hint of any distinction between the office of *bishop* and *presbyter*, but plainly represents them as the *same*; nor does he once speak of *three orders* in the Christian ministry. He mentions a plurality of *bishops* in the same city; nay, he not only represents the great cities as being furnished with *bishops*, but speaks of them as being also appointed in the *country villages*.

Had there been an individual in the church at Corinth vested with the powers of a modern bishop, could Clemens, with any decency have avoided men-

\* Clemens's epistle to the Corinthians, sections 42, 43, 44.

tioning or alluding to him? Who so proper to settle differences between presbyters and their people, as the bishop, empowered to rule both? And if the place of such a bishop were vacant, by death, or otherwise, was it not natural for Clemens to say something about the appointment of a successor, as the most likely way to restore order in the church? The single fact of his total silence concerning such an officer, under these circumstances, is little short of conclusive evidence, that the venerable writer knew of no other *bishops* than the *presbyters* to whom he exhorted the people to be subject.\*

Our Episcopal brethren tell us that, after the death of the last apostle, the title of *bishop*, which had been before given to "the *second* order of clergy," was taken from them and appropriated to the *first*. But the writings of Clemens contradict this story. He continues to use *bishop* and *presbyter* interchangeably for the same office, as the inspired writers had constantly done.

There is one passage in this epistle of Clemens Romanus, which has been frequently and confidently quoted by Episcopal writers, as favourable to their cause. It is in these words; sect. 40, 41. "Seeing, then, these things are manifest to us, it will behove us to take care that we do all things in order, whatsoever our Lord has commanded us to do. And, particularly, that we perform our offerings and ser-

\* The learned Grotius speaks of it as a proof of the antiquity and genuineness of Clemens's epistle, "that he no where takes notice of that peculiar authority of bishops, which was first introduced into the church of Alexandria, and from that example into other churches; but evidently shows, that the churches were governed by the common council of *presbyters*, who, by him, and the apostle Paul, are all called *bishops*."—*Epist. ad Bignonium*.

vice to God at their appointed seasons; for these he has commanded to be done, not rashly and disorderly, but at certain times and hours. And, therefore, he has ordained, by his supreme will and authority, both where, and by what persons, they are to be performed. They, therefore, who make their offerings at the appointed season are happy and accepted; because, that, obeying the commandments of the Lord, they are free from sin. For the *High-Priest* has his proper services; and to the *priests* their proper place is appointed; and to the *Levites* appertain their proper ministries; and the lay-man is confined within the bounds of what is commanded to lay-men. Let every one of you, therefore, brethren, bless God in his proper station, with a good conscience, and with all gravity; not exceeding the rule of the service to which he is appointed. The daily sacrifices are not offered every where; nor the peace-offerings; nor the sacrifices appointed for sin and transgression; but only at Jerusalem: nor in any place there; but only at the altar before the temple; that which is offered being first diligently examined by the High-Priest, and the other ministers we before mentioned."

From this allusion to the priesthood of the Jews, the advocates of Episcopacy infer that Clemens intended to exhibit that priesthood as a pattern for the Christian ministry. But nothing more is necessary to set aside this inference than a little attention to the scope and connexion of the passage. Clemens is endeavouring to convince the members of the Corinthian church of the necessity of submission to their pastors, and of the great importance of ecclesiastical order. For this purpose, in passages a little preceding that which is above quoted, he alludes to the



regularity which prevails in the *natural world*, and particularly among the various members of the human body. He refers also to the subordination which is found necessary in military affairs, remarking, that some are only common soldiers, some prefects, some captains of fifties, some of hundreds, and some of thousands; every one of whom is bound to keep his own station. And, finally, in the passage under consideration, he calls the attention of those to whom he wrote to the strict order that was observed in the temple service of the Jews, and especially with respect to the times and circumstances of their offering the commanded sacrifices. Such is the plain and unquestionable scope of the whole passage. Is there any thing here like an intimation of *three orders* in the Christian ministry? As well might it be contended that Clemens would have the Christian Church organized like an *army*; and that he recommends *four* orders of ministers, corresponding with the four classes of military officers, to which he alludes. How wonderful must be the prejudice that can make this use of an allusion! And, above all, how weak and desperate must be that cause, which cannot be supported but by recurring to such means!

The next early writer, who says any thing on this subject, is *Hermas*. Concerning the life and character of this father, we have no information. We only know, that he left behind him a work entitled *Pastor*, which has come down to our times, and the authenticity of which is generally admitted. It was originally written in Greek; but we have now extant only an old Latin version, of the author or date of which we know nothing. In this work the following passages relating to the ministry are found.

“Thou shalt, therefore, say to those who preside over the Church, that they order their ways in righteousness, that they may fully receive the promise, with much glory.” Again—“After this, I saw a vision at home, in my own house; and the old woman, whom I had seen before, came to me, and asked me, whether I had yet delivered her book to the *elders*. And I answered that I had not yet. She replied, thou hast done well; for I have certain words more to tell thee. And when I have finished all the words, they shall be clearly understood by the elect. And thou shalt write two books, and send one to Clement, and one to Grapte. For Clement shall send it to the foreign cities, because it is permitted to him to do so. But Grapte shall admonish the widows and orphans. But thou shalt read in this city *with the elders who preside over the church*.” Again—“Hear now concerning the stones that are in the building. The square and white stones, which agree exactly in their joints are the apostles, and bishops, and doctors, and ministers, who, through the mercy of God, have come in, and governed, and taught, and ministered, holily and modestly, to the elect of God.” Again—“As for those who had their rods green, but yet cleft; they are such as were always faithful and good; but they had some envy and strife among themselves, concerning *dignity and pre-eminence*. Now all such are *vain and without understanding*, as contend with one another about these things. For the life of those who keep the commandments of the Lord, consists in doing what they are commanded; *not in principality, or in any other dignity*.” Once more—“For what concerns the tenth mountain, in which were the trees covering the cattle, they are

such as have believed, and some of them have been bishops, that is, *presidents of the churches*. Then such as have been set over inferior ministries, and have protected the poor, and the widows," &c.\*

From one of the foregoing extracts, it is evident that Hermas resided at Rome; that he had a particular reference to the church in that city; and that the period at which he wrote was, when Clement, before mentioned, was one of the *bishops* or *presidents* of that church. From a comparison of these extracts, it will also appear that Hermas also considered *bishops* and *elders* as different titles for the same office. He speaks of *elders* as *presiding over the church of Rome*; he represents a *plurality* of *elders* as having this *presidency* at the same time; having used the word *bishops*, he explains it as meaning those *who presided over the churches*; and immediately after *bishops*, (without mentioning *presbyters*) he proceeds to speak of *deacons*, that is, those who are intrusted with *the protection of the poor and of the widows*.

On one of the passages quoted above, some zealous friends of Episcopacy have laid considerable stress. It is this. "The square and white stones, which agree exactly in their joints, are the apostles, and bishops, and doctors, and ministers, who, through the mercy of God," &c. On this passage, Cotelerius, a learned Roman Catholic editor, has the following note. "You have here the distinct orders of the hierarchy, in apostles, in bishops, exercising episcopacy, in *doctors* or *presbyters*, teaching, and in *deacons* ministering." In language of the same import, some protestant friends of prelacy have commented

\* *Vision*, II. 4. III. 5, 6. *Similitude*, IX. 27.

on the passage. It is really amusing to find grave and sober men attempting to make so much of a passage, in every respect, so little to their purpose. For, to say nothing of the evidently loose and fanciful nature of the whole comparison, it is not a warrant for *three*, but for *four* orders of clergy; and, of course, if it proves any thing, will prove too much for the system of any protestant Episcopalian. Besides, Hermas says nothing like apostles and bishops being the same, which is a favourite doctrine with modern prelatists.

The epistle of Polycarp to the church at Philippi, written early in the second century, stands next on the roll of antiquity. This venerable martyr, like Clemens, speaks of only *two orders* of church officers, viz. presbyters and deacons.\* He exhorts the Philipians to obey these officers in the Lord. "It behoves you," says he, "to abstain from these things, being subject to the *presbyters* and *deacons* as to God and Christ." And again: "Let the *presbyters* be compassionate and merciful towards all; turning them from their errors; seeking out those that are weak; not forgetting the widows, the fatherless, and the poor; abstaining from all wrath, respect of persons, and unrighteous judgment; not easy to believe any thing against any; nor severe in judgment; knowing that we are all debtors in point of law." The word *bishop* is no where mentioned in his whole epistle;

\* It is worthy of remark, that the apostle Paul, in writing to the same church about fifty or sixty years before, also speaks of their having only two orders of officers, viz. bishops and deacons. See Philip. i. 1. But those whom Paul styled *bishops*, Polycarp afterwards calls *presbyters*, the names in the time of Polycarp, as well as in the time of Paul, being still common.

nor does he give the most distant hint as if there were any individual or body of men vested with powers superior to presbyters. On the contrary, he speaks of the presbyters as being intrusted with the *inspection* and rule of the church; for, while, on the one hand, he exhorts the members of the church to submit to them, he intreats the presbyters themselves to abstain from unrighteous judgment, and to have no respect of persons.

Perhaps it will be asked, Is not Polycarp spoken of, by several early writers, as bishop of Smyrna? And does not this fact alone establish the principle for which Episcopalians contend? I answer, by no means. Polycarp is indeed called by this name. So also is Clement called bishop of Rome, and Ignatius of Antioch. Nor, perhaps, have we any reason to doubt that they were so. But *in what sense* were they *bishops*? We say, they were scriptural, primitive bishops, that is, *pastors*, or *among the pastors of particular congregations*. And in support of this assertion, we produce the testimony of Scripture, and the uniform language of the truly primitive church. But whatever kind of bishop Polycarp was, we shall presently see that a contemporary father exhorts him to be *personally acquainted* with every member of his flock; to seek out *all by name*; and not to overlook even the *servant men and maids* of his charge. Whether the minister who could do this, was more than the pastor of a single congregation, I leave every man of common sense to judge.

The fourth place, in the list of apostolical fathers, belongs to Ignatius. The epistles which go under the name of this venerable Christian bishop, have been the subject of much controversy. That some copies

of them were interpolated, and exceedingly corrupted, in the dark ages, all learned men now agree.\* And, that even the "shorter epistles," as published by Usher and Vossius, are unworthy of confidence, as the genuine works of the father whose name they bear, is the opinion of many of the ablest and best judges in the protestant world.

These epistles were first published at Strasburg in the year 1502. And, although only *seven* are now received as genuine, they were then *eleven* in number. In an edition published a few years afterwards there appeared *twelve*; and not long after that, *fifteen*; together with an additional letter from the Virgin Mary to Ignatius. Nor did they alter thus in *number* merely; for in some of those editions, several of the epistles were nearly twice as *large* as in others. Accordingly, archbishop Wake, in the preface to his translation of these epistles, remarks: "there have been considerable differences in the epistles of this holy man, no less than in the judgment of our Latin critics concerning them. To pass by the first and most imperfect of them, the best that for a long time was extant, contained not only a great number of epistles falsely ascribed to this author, but even those that were genuine, so *altered* and *corrupted*, that it was hard to find out the true Ignatius in them. The first that began to remedy this confusion, and to restore this great writer to his primitive simplicity,

\* It is even agreed that some of these interpolations were made with the express view of furnishing support to the ambitious claims of bishops. Speaking of some of the interpolations, Dr. Hammond, a zealous Episcopalian, represents them as "immoderate," "extravagant," and "senseless," and concludes that they are evidently the work of some "impostor."

was our most reverend and learned Archbishop Usher, in his edition of them at Oxford, *Anno* 1664.” The venerable Archbishop of Armagh found two copies of six of these epistles in England; not in the original Greek, but in very barbarous Latin translations. In 1646, the learned Isaac Vossius found in the Medicean Library, a copy in Greek, containing seven epistles, and published it soon afterwards in Amsterdam. From these three copies Archbishop Wake has formed his English version, adopting from each what he thought most likely to be correct. Usher had much doubt of the genuineness of the seventh epistle to Polycarp. “Nor,” observes Archbishop Wake, “does Isaac Vossius himself deny but that there are some things in it, which may seem to render it suspicious.” Yet, on the whole, he published it, and Wake adopted it as genuine, with the other six. From the time of Usher to the present, there has been unceasing controversy concerning the genuineness of these epistles. The great body of Episcopal writers have felt so much interest in their supposed importance as witnesses in favour of prelacy, that they have generally contended for them as the genuine remains of the pious father whose name they bear. But it is believed, that a large majority of the learned of other Protestant denominations, for nearly two centuries have been of the opinion that they could not be relied upon, and ought never to be quoted as the unadulterated work of Ignatius; but that they bear manifest marks of having been interpolated long after the martyrdom of their reputed author. The following judgment of a learned and zealous Episcopalian, who writes in the *Christian*

*Observer*, an English periodical, conducted with great ability by members of the established Church, is worthy of notice. "Could six of the seven epistles, usually ascribed to Ignatius be cited with the same undoubting confidence which has accompanied the foregoing quotations, the controversy concerning the early existence of Episcopacy would be at an end. But, after travelling so long in comparative obscurity, after being compelled to close and strongly directed attention, in order to pick up three or four rays of scattered light, we are in a moment oppressed and confounded by the brightness of the mid-day sun. For in these epistles we have the three orders of bishops, priests, and deacons, marshalled with unseasonable exactness, and repeated with importunate anxiety. There appear, moreover, so many symptoms of contrivance, and such studied uniformity of expression, that these compositions will surely not be alleged by any *capable* and *candid* advocate for primitive Episcopacy, without great hesitation: by many they will be entirely rejected. I do not mean to insinuate that the whole of these six epistles is a forgery; on the contrary many parts of them afford strong internal evidence of their own genuineness: but with respect to the particular passages which affect the present (the Episcopal) dispute, there is not a sentence which I would venture to allege. The language, at the earliest, is that of the fourth century."\* When a zealous advocate of prelacy can write thus, there is surely ground for utter distrust of these epistles, when quoted as testimony on the subject before us.

\* *Christian Observer*, Vol. ii. p. 723.



But, instead of entering into this controversy, I will take for granted that the shorter epistles of Ignatius, (and they alone are now quoted among Protestants) are genuine, and worthy of implicit confidence.\* On this supposition let us examine them. And I will venture to affirm that instead of yielding to the cause of *diocesan Episcopacy* that efficient support which is imagined, they do not contain a *single sentence* which can be construed in its favour; but, on the contrary, much which can only be reconciled with the primitive, *parochial Episcopacy*, or Presbyterian government, so evidently portrayed in Scripture, and so particularly defined in the first chapter.

The following extracts from these epistles are

\* The author has been reproached, in the most coarse and vulgar manner, for consenting to refer to the epistles of Ignatius, as authority, for any purpose, when he confidently believed that they had been interpolated as to a particular subject. He feels it to be due—not to his calumniators, but to himself—to say, that he has no doubt that Ignatius did really write some epistles; that many parts of those which bear his name were probably written by him; that he would quote them, without scruple, on a variety of subjects, after apprizing his readers of their dubious reputation; but that when the epistles of this Father speak of parochial bishops (for there were no others in his day) there appears such a laboured and fulsome study to honour them above measure, as gives reason to suspect the foulest interpolation. Neander and Schroeckh, the celebrated German ecclesiastical historians, do not hesitate to quote the epistles of Ignatius on a variety of subjects; but express a strong persuasion of their interpolation on the subject of clerical character. The latter, in his epitome, says—“Apparuit tandem, etiam breviores earum, nisi ab alio scriptas, at certe interpolatas esse in gratiam Episcoporum,” *i. e.* “It is evident that even his shorter epistles, unless written by some other hand, have *certainly* been interpolated for the purpose of exalting bishops.” The writer of this manual has never made a citation from the epistles of Ignatius upon principles not reconcilable with this statement.

among the strongest quoted by Episcopal writers in support of their cause.\*

*Epistle to the church of Ephesus.* Sect. v. "Let no man deceive himself; if a man be not within the altar he is deprived of the bread of God. For if the prayer of one or two be of such force, as we are told; how much more powerful shall that of the bishop and the whole church be? He, therefore, that does not come together into the same place with it, is proud, and has already condemned himself."

*Epistle to the church of Magnesia.* Sect. 2. "Seeing then, I have been judged worthy to see you, by Damas, your most excellent bishop, and by your worthy presbyters, Bassus and Apollonius, and by my fellow servant, Sotio, the deacon—I determined to write unto you." Sect. 6. "I exhort you that ye study to do all things in divine concord; your bishop presiding in the place of God; YOUR PRESBYTERS IN THE PLACE OF THE COUNCIL OF THE APOSTLES; and your deacons most dear to me, being intrusted with the ministry of Jesus Christ, who was with the Father before all ages, and appeared in the end to us. Let there be nothing that may be able to make a division among you; but be ye united to your bishop, and those who preside over you, to be your pattern and direction in the way to immortality." Sect. 7. "As, therefore, the Lord did nothing without the Father being united to him; neither by himself, nor yet by his apostles: so neither do ye any thing without your bishop and presbyters. Neither endeavour to let any thing appear rational to yourselves apart;

\* To cut off all occasion of doubt as to the fairness used in translating these extracts, I think proper to state, that I adopt the translation of Archbishop Wake.

but being come together into the same place, have one common prayer, one supplication, one mind; one hope, in charity, and in joy undefiled. There is one Lord Jesus Christ, than whom nothing is better. Wherefore come ye all together as unto one temple of God; as to one altar; as to one Jesus Christ; who proceeded from one Father, and exists in one, and is returned to one."

*Epistle to the Trallians.* Sect. 2. "Whereas ye are subject to your bishop as to Jesus Christ, ye appear to me to live not after the manner of men, but according to Jesus Christ; who died for us, that so believing in his death, ye might escape death. It is therefore necessary, that, as ye do, so without your bishop you should do nothing. ALSO BE YE SUBJECT TO YOUR PRESBYTERS, AS TO THE APOSTLES OF JESUS CHRIST our hope, in whom if we walk, we shall be found in him. The deacons, also, as being the ministers of the mysteries of Jesus Christ, must by all means please all." Sect. 2. "In like manner let all reverence the deacons as Jesus Christ, and the bishop as the Father, and THE PRESBYTERS AS THE SANHEDRIM OF GOD, AND COLLEGE OF THE APOSTLES." Sect. 7. "Wherefore guard yourselves against such persons. And that you will do, if you are not puffed up; but continue inseparable from Jesus Christ our God, and from your bishop, and from the command of the apostles. He that is within the altar is pure; but he that is without, that is, that does any thing without the bishop, and presbyters, and deacons, is not pure in his conscience."

*The Epistle to the Church at Smyrna.* Sect. 8. "See that ye all follow your bishop, as Jesus Christ, the Father; and THE PRESBYTERY AS THE APOSTLES:

and reverence the deacons as the command of God. Let no man do any thing of what belongs to the church separately from the bishop. Let that Eucharist be looked upon as well established, which is either offered by the bishop, or by him to whom the bishop has given his consent. Wheresoever the bishop shall appear, there let the people also be: as where Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic church. It is not lawful, without the bishop, either to baptize or to celebrate the holy communion. But whatsoever he shall approve of, that is also pleasing to God; that so whatever is done, may be sure and well done." Sect. 12. "I salute your very worthy bishop, and your venerable presbytery, and your deacons, my fellow servants; and all of you in general, and every one in particular, in the name of Jesus Christ."

*Epistle to Polycarp.* "Ignatius, who is called Theophorus, to Polycarp, bishop of the church which is at Smyrna; their overseer, but rather himself overlooked by God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ; all happiness!" Sect. 1. "Maintain thy place with all care, both of flesh and spirit: Make it thy endeavour to preserve unity, than which nothing is better. Speak to every one as God shall enable thee." Sect. 4. "Let not the widows be neglected: be thou, after God, their guardian. Let nothing be done without thy knowledge and consent: neither do thou any thing but according to the will of God; as also thou dost with all constancy. Let your assemblies be more full: inquire into all by name: overlook not the men nor maid servants; neither let them be puffed up, but rather let them be more subject to the glory of God, that they may obtain from him a better liberty." Sect. 5. "It becomes all such as are married, whether

men or women, to come together with the consent of the bishop; that so their marriage may be according to godliness, and not in lust." Sect. 6. "Hearken unto the bishop, that God also may hearken unto you. My soul be security for them that submit to their bishop, with their presbyters and deacons."

These are the passages in the epistles of Ignatius, which Episcopal writers have triumphantly quoted, as beyond all doubt establishing their claims. Nothing stronger or more decisive is pretended to be found in these far-famed relics of antiquity. Now I ask, whether there is in these extracts, a sentence that can serve their purpose? Let me again remind the reader that they plead, not for such bishops as we acknowledge, that is, pastors of single congregations, each furnished with elders and deacons, to assist in the discharge of parochial duties. On the contrary, they plead for diocesan bishops, as a distinct and superior order of clergy, who alone are invested with the right to govern the church, to ordain, and to confirm. But is there a single hint in these extracts which looks as if the bishops mentioned in them were of a distinct and superior order? Is there a single word said about the powers of ordaining and confirming being appropriated to these bishops? Not a syllable that has the most distant resemblance to any thing of this kind is to be found in all the epistles before us.\* On the contrary, it is evident—

\* Accordingly, Dr. (afterwards Bishop) Stillingfleet declares—"Of all the thirty-five testimonies produced out of Ignatius his epistles, for Episcopacy, I can meet with but one which is brought to prove the least semblance of an institution of Christ for Episcopacy, and, if I be not much deceived, the sense of that place is clearly mistaken."—*Irenicum*.

1. That the bishop so frequently mentioned by this venerable father, is only a parochial bishop, or, in other words, the pastor of a single congregation. The church of which this bishop has the care is represented, throughout the epistles, as coming together to one place; as worshipping in one assembly; as having one altar, or communion table; as eating of one loaf; having one prayer; and, in short, uniting in all the acts of solemn worship. But all this can only apply to a single congregation. Again, the bishop here spoken of, is represented as present with his flock whenever they come together; as conducting their prayers, and presiding in all their public service; as the only person who was authorized, in ordinary cases, to administer baptism and the Lord's supper; as the person by whom all marriages were celebrated; and whose duty it was to be personally acquainted with all his flock; to take notice, with his own eye, of those who were absent from public worship; to attend to the widows and the poor of his congregation; to seek out all by name, and not to overlook even the men and maid-servants living in his parish. I appeal to the candour of every reader, whether these representations and directions can be reasonably applied to any other officer than the pastor of a single church?

2. It is equally evident, that the presbyters and presbytery so frequently mentioned in the foregoing extracts, together with the deacons, refer to officers which, in the days of Ignatius, belonged, like the bishop, to each particular church. Most of the epistles of this father are directed to particular churches; and in every case, we find each church furnished with a bishop, a presbytery, and deacons. But what kind of officers were these presbyters? The friends of pre-

lacy, without hesitation, answer, they were the "inferior clergy," who ministered to the several congregations belonging to each of the dioceses mentioned in these epistles; an order of clergy subject to the bishop, empowered to preach, baptize, and administer the Lord's Supper; but having no power to ordain or confirm. But all this is said without the smallest evidence. On the contrary, the presbyters or presbytery are represented as always present, with the bishop and his congregation, when assembled; as bearing a relation to the same flock equally close and inseparable with its pastor; and as being equally necessary in order to a regular and valid transaction of its affairs. In short, to every altar, or communion table, there was one presbytery, as well as one bishop. To suppose then that these presbyters were the parish priests, or rectors of different congregations, within the diocese to which they belonged, is to disregard every part of the representation which is given respecting them. No; the only rational and probable construction of the language of Ignatius is, that each of the particular churches to which he wrote, besides its pastor and deacons, was furnished with a bench of elders or presbyters, some of them, probably, ordained to the work of the ministry,\* and therefore empowered to teach and administer ordinances, as well as rule; and others empowered to rule only. The whole strain of these

\* It is said some of these elders were probably ordained to the work of the ministry, and of course, empowered to preach and administer ordinances: But this is not certain. They might all have been ruling elders for aught that appears to the contrary. For in all these epistles, it is no where said that they either preached or dispensed the sacraments. It cannot be shown then, that Ignatius, by his presbyters and presbytery, or eldership, means any thing else than a bench of ruling elders in each church.

epistles, then, may be considered as descriptive of Presbyterian government. They exhibit a number of particular churches, each furnished with a bishop or pastor, and also with elders and deacons, to whose respective ministrations every private member is exhorted, as long as they are regular, implicitly to submit.\*

3. It is particularly worthy of notice, too, that Ignatius constantly represents the presbyters (not the bishops) as the *successors of the apostles*. This statement is found so frequently and pointedly made in the foregoing extracts, that it cannot have escaped the notice of any reader. In fact, Ignatius *never* represents the bishops as succeeding in the place of the apostles. How this fact is to be disposed of by those

\* Every regularly organized Presbyterian church has a bishop, elders, and deacons. Of the bench of elders, the bishop is the standing president or moderator. Sometimes, where a congregation is large, it has two or more bishops, united in the pastoral charge, and having in all respects an official equality. When this is the case, each of the bishops is president or moderator of the eldership in turn. In some Presbyterian churches, the bishop, instead of having one or more colleagues, of equal authority and power with himself, has an assistant or assistants. These assistants, though clothed with the whole ministerial character, and capable without any other ordination, of becoming pastors themselves; yet as long as they remain in this situation, they bear a relation to the bishop similar to that which curates bear to the rector, in some Episcopal churches; and of course, cannot regularly baptize or administer the Lord's Supper without the concurrence of the bishop. Ignatius, therefore, could scarcely give a more perfect representation than he does of Presbyterian government. And if a modern Presbyterian were about to speak of the officers of his church, and were to use the Greek language as Ignatius did, he would almost necessarily say as he did, *Επισκοποι, πρεσβυτεροι και διακονοι*. So perfectly futile is the allegation that this language is decisive in support of prelacy! It is absolutely in perfect coincidence with our system.



prelatists who make the plea that, on the decease of the apostles, the bishops succeeded them in their appropriate station—a plea which is the sheet-anchor of their whole system—must be left to their ingenuity.\*

I have been thus particular in attending to the testimony of Ignatius, because the advocates of prelacy have always considered him as more decidedly in their favour than any other father, and have contended for the genuineness of his writings with as much zeal as if the cause of Episcopacy were involved in their fate. But it will be perceived that these writings, when impartially examined, instead of affording aid to that cause, furnish decisive testimony against it. The Church, as represented by Ignatius is *Presbyterian throughout*, and agrees with nothing else.

Papias, bishop of Hierapolis, a city of Asia, is said to have been “an hearer of John, and a companion of Polycarp.” He flourished about the year 110 or 115. Some fragments of his writings have been preserved. Out of these the following passage is the only one that I have been able to find, that has any relation to the subject under debate. It is cited by Eusebius, in his Ecclesiastical history, lib. iii. cap. 39.

“I shall not think it grievous to set down in writing, with my interpretations, the things which I have learned of the presbyters, and remember as yet very well, being fully certified of their truth. If I met any where with one who had conversed with the presbyters, I inquired after the sayings of the presbyters;

\* It has, indeed, been stoutly denied that Ignatius does make such a representation concerning presbyters; and the author of this volume has been loaded with the most slanderous abuse, by certain Episcopal writers, for making the statement. The above quotations will speak for themselves, and show the real character of the slander alluded to.

what Andrew, what Peter, what Philip, what Thomas, or James had said ; what John, or Matthew, or any other disciples of the Lord were wont to say ; and what Ariston, or John the presbyter, said ; for I am of the mind that I could not profit so much by reading books, as by attending to those who spake with the living voice."

The only thing remarkable in this passage, is, that the writer, obviously, styles the apostles presbyters ; and this when speaking of them, not with the lightness of colloquial familiarity, but as oracles, whose authority he acknowledged, whose character he revered, and whose sayings he treasured up. Could we have more satisfactory evidence that this title, as employed in the primitive Church, was not considered as expressing official inferiority in those to whom it was applied?

Irenæus, who was a disciple of Polycarp, and who is said to have suffered martyrdom about the year 202 after Christ, is an important and decisive witness on the subject before us. The following passages are found in his writings.

*Book against Heresies*, lib. iii. cap. 2. "When we challenge them (the heretics) to that apostolical tradition which is preserved in the churches through the succession of the presbyters, they oppose the tradition, pretending that they are wiser, not only than the presbyters, but also than the apostles."

Lib. iii. cap. 3. "The apostolic tradition is present in every church. We can enumerate those who were constituted bishops by the apostles in the churches, and their successors even to us, who taught no such thing. By showing the tradition and declared faith of the greatest and most ancient church of Rome,

which she received from the apostles, and which is come to us through the succession of the bishops, we confound all who conclude otherwise than they ought.”

“The apostles, founding and instructing that church, (the church of Rome) delivered to Linus the Episcopate; Anacletus succeeded him; after him Clemens obtained the Episcopate from the apostles. To Clemens succeeded Evaristus; to him Alexander; then Sixtus; and after him Telesphorus; then Hugynus; after him Pius; then Anicetus; and when Soter had succeeded Anicetus, then Eleutherius had the episcopate in the twelfth place. By this appointment and instruction that tradition in the Church, and publication of the truth, which is from the apostles, is come to us.”

“*Polycarp*, also, who was not only taught by the apostles, and conversed with many of those who had seen our Lord; but was also appointed by the apostles, bishop of the church of Smyrna in Asia.”

*Lib. iv. cap. 43.* “Obey those *presbyters* in the Church who have *the succession as we have shown from the apostles; who with the succession of the Episcopate*, received the gift of truth, according to the good pleasure of the Father.”

*Lib. iv. cap. 44.* “We ought, therefore, to adhere to those *presbyters who keep the apostles’ doctrine*, and together with *the presbyterial succession*, do show forth sound speech. Such *presbyters*, the church nourishes; and of such the prophet says: I will give them *princes* in peace, and *bishops* in righteousness.”\*

\* It will be observed that Clemens, in a preceding page, applies this text to the *bishops* constituted by the apostles. Irenæus here

*Lib. iv. cap. 53.* “True knowledge is the doctrine of the apostles *according to the succession of bishops*, to whom they delivered the church in every place, which doctrine hath reached us preserved in its most full delivery.”

*Lib. v. cap. 20.* “These are far later than *the bishops to whom the apostles delivered the churches*; and this we have carefully made manifest in the third book.”

*Epistle to Victor*, then bishop of Rome.\* “Those *presbyters* before Soter, who *governed* the church which *thou, Victor, now governest*, (the church of

applies it to *presbyters*, whom he represents as receiving and conveying the *apostolic succession*.

\* Eusebius tells us, that the occasion on which Irenæus wrote this letter to Victor, then bishop of Rome, was as follows. A dispute had arisen about the proper time of celebrating Easter. In this dispute, the churches of Asia took one side, and the western churches another. Both sides declared that they had the most decided apostolical authority in their favour: the former pleading the authority of John and Philip; and the latter with equal confidence, adducing Peter and Paul in justification of their practice. In the progress of this dispute, Victor, bishop of the Romish church, issued letters proscribing the churches of Asia, and the neighbouring provinces, and endeavouring to cut them off from the communion of the faithful. Upon this occasion Irenæus addressed to him the letter in question, showing him the imprudence and injustice of the step which he had taken. *Eccles. Hist. 1. lib. v. cap. 24.* These facts show, 1. That even in the second century Christians began to *teach for doctrines the commandments of men*. 2. That even so near the apostolic age, the authority of the *apostles* was confidently quoted in favour of *opposite* opinions and practices, plainly showing, how little reliance, in religious controversies, is to be placed on any testimony excepting that of the written word of God. 3. That as early as the time of Irenæus, the principal *pastor* or bishop of the church of Rome had begun to usurp that pre-eminence, which afterwards attained such a wonderful height; and which all Protestants allow to be totally unscriptural and antichristian.

Rome) I mean Anicetus, Pius, Hugynus, Telesphorus, and Sixtus, they did not observe it; (he is speaking of the day of keeping Easter) and those *presbyters who preceded you*, though they did not observe it themselves, yet sent the Eucharist to those of other churches who did observe it. And when blessed Polycarp, in the days of Anicetus, came to Rome, he did not much persuade Anicetus to observe it, as he (Anicetus) declared that the custom of *the presbyters who were his predecessors* should be retained."

*Epistle to Florinus.* "This doctrine, to speak most cautiously and gently, is not sound. This doctrine disagreeeth with the church, and bringeth such as listen to it into extreme impiety." (And having mentioned Polycarp, and said some things of him, he proceeds:) "I am able to testify before God, that if that holy and apostolical *presbyter* had heard any such thing, he would at once have exclaimed, as his manner was, "Good God! into what times hast thou reserved me!"

The foregoing extracts comprise some of the strongest passages, in the writings of Irenæus that bear on the subject before us. And I take for granted that no impartial reader can cast his eye on them without perceiving how strongly and unequivocally they support our doctrine. This father not only applies the names *bishop* and *presbyter* to the same persons, but he does it in a way which precludes all doubt that he considers them as only different titles for the same office. That regular *succession* from the apostles which in one place he ascribes to *bishops*, he in another expressly ascribes to *presbyters*. Nay, he explicitly declares that *presbyters* received the succession of the *Episcopate*. Those ministers whom

he mentions by name as having presided in the church of Rome, viz. Linus, Anacletus, Clemens, &c. and whom he in one instance calls *bishops*, he in another denominates *presbyters*. In one paragraph he speaks of the apostolic *doctrine* as handed down *through the succession of bishops*; in another, he as positively affirms that the same apostolic doctrine is handed down *through the succession of presbyters*. In short, the *Apostolical succession*, the *Episcopal succession*, and the *Presbyterial succession*, are interchangeably ascribed to the *same persons*, and expressly represented as the *same thing*. What could be more conclusive? If this venerable father had been taking pains to show that he employed the terms *bishop* and *presbyter* as different titles for the same office, he could scarcely have kept a more scrupulous and exact balance between the dignities, powers, and duties connected with each title, and ascribed interchangeably to both. What becomes of the Episcopal allegation, that after the death of the last apostle, the title of bishop was taken away from presbyters, and confined to prelates?

But much is made by the friends of prelacy of that portion of the foregoing extracts in which Irenæus speaks of the *succession* in particular churches as flowing through *single individuals*; whereas there were, doubtless, a number of presbyters in each of the churches to which he refers. "Why," say they, "single out Linus, Anacletus, &c. in the church of Rome, when there were probably many contemporaneous presbyters in that church?" The answer is obvious and easy. One of the presbyters was, no doubt, the *pastor* or *president*, and the others his assistants. This has often happened in Presbyterian

churches, both in ancient and modern times. And surely a *succession* may flow as properly and perfectly through a series of *pastors* as of *prelates*. This at once illustrates and harmonizes all that Irenæus has said.

The testimony of Justin Martyr, who also lived in the second century, comes next in order. In describing the mode of worship adopted by the Christians in his day, he says, "Prayers being ended, bread and a cup of water and wine are then brought to *the president of the brethren*, and he, receiving them, offers praise and glory to the Father of all things through the name of the Son and the Holy Spirit: and he is long in giving thanks, for that we are thought worthy of these blessings. When he has ended prayer, and giving of thanks, the whole people present signify their approbation by saying *amen*. The *president* having given thanks, and the whole people having expressed their approbation, those that are called among us *deacons*, distribute to every one of those that are present,\* that they may partake of the bread and wine, and water, for which thanks have been given; and to those that are not present, they carry." And again, a little afterwards, he tells us, "Upon Sunday, all those who live in cities and country-towns, or villages belonging to them, meet together, and the writings of the apostles and prophets are read, as the time will allow. And the reader being silent, (or having ended) the *president* delivers a discourse, instructing and exhorting to an imitation of those things that are comely. We then all rise up, and pour out prayers. And, as we have related,

\* This is still one of the functions of the deacons in the Presbyterian Church.

prayers being ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the *president*, as above, gives thanks *according to his ability*;\* and the people signify their approbation, saying, *amen*. Distribution and communication is then made to every one that has joined in giving thanks; and to those that are absent it is sent by the deacons. And those that are wealthy and willing, contribute according to their pleasure. What is collected is deposited in the hands of the *president*, and he helps the orphans and widows, those that are in want by reason of sickness, or any other cause; those that are in bonds, and that come strangers from abroad. He is the kind guardian of all that are in want. We all assemble on Sunday, because God, dispelling the darkness and informing the first matter, created the world; and also because, upon that day, Jesus Christ our Saviour rose from the dead." *Apol.* 1. p. 95—97.

It is generally agreed, by Episcopal writers as well as others, that the officer several times mentioned in these extracts from Justin Martyr, viz. the *president*, was the *bishop* of the church, whose public service is described. Now as this venerable father is obviously describing the manner in which each particular con-

\* This passage is one among numerous testimonies with which antiquity abounds, that there were no *Forms of Prayer* used in the primitive church. Each *pastor* or *bishop* led the devotions of his congregation *according to his ability*. For the first three hundred years after Christ, no trace of prescribed liturgies is to be found. The liturgies which go under the names of Peter, Mark, James, Clemens, and Basil, have been given up as forgeries, even by the most respectable Episcopal writers. See *A Discourse concerning Liturgies*, by the Rev. David Clarkson, a Presbyterian minister of England, the venerable ancestor of the large family of that name in the United States.



gregation conducted its worship in his day, it follows, that in the time of Justin, every congregation had its *bishop*; or, in other words, that this was a title applied in primitive times to the ordinary pastors of particular churches.

The testimony of Clemens Alexandrinus, who flourished at the close of the second century, is likewise in favour of our doctrine concerning the Christian ministry. Clement was a *presbyter* of the church in Alexandria, and a prodigy of learning in his day. The following extracts from his writings will enable us to judge in what light he ought to be considered as a witness on this subject.

*Pædagog. lib. 1.* “*We who have rule over the churches, are shepherds or pastors, after the image of the Good Shepherd.*” *Ibid. lib. iii.* In proof of the impropriety of women wearing foreign hair, among other arguments, he uses this, “On whom, or what will the *presbyter* impose his hand? To whom or what will he give his blessing? Not to the woman who is adorned, but to strange locks of hair, and through them to another’s head.” *Ibid.* “Many other commands, appertaining to select persons, are written in the sacred books; some to *presbyters*, some to *bishops*, some to *deacons*, and some to widows.”

*Stromat. lib. i.* “Just so in the church, the *presbyters* are intrusted with the *dignified* ministry; the *deacons* with the *subordinate*.” *Ibid. lib. iii.* Having cited the apostolic directions concerning marriage, in 1 Tim. v. 14, &c. he adds, “But he must be the husband of one wife only, whether he be a *presbyter*, or *deacon*, or *layman*, if he would use matrimony without reprehension.” Again—“What can they say to

these things who inveigh against marriage? Since the apostle enjoins, that the bishop to be set over the church be one who rules his own house well. *Ibid. lib. vi.* "This man is in reality a *presbyter*, and a true *deacon* of the purpose of God—not ordained of men, nor because a *presbyter*, therefore esteemed a righteous man; but because a righteous man, therefore now reckoned in the *presbytery*; and though here upon earth he hath not been honoured with the chief seat, yet he shall sit down among the four and twenty thrones, judging the people, as John says in the Revelation." Again, *Ibid.* "Now in the church here, the progressions of *bishops*, *presbyters*, *deacons*, I deem to be imitations of the evangelical glory, and of that dispensation which the Scriptures tell us they look for, who following the steps of the apostles, have lived according to the Gospel in the perfection of righteousness. These men, the apostle writes, being taken up into the clouds, shall first minister as *deacons*, then be admitted to a rank in the *presbytery*, according to the progression in glory: for glory differeth from glory, until they grow up to a perfect man." Again—"Of that service of God about which men are conversant, one is that which *makes them better*; the other *ministerial*. In like manner in the church, the *presbyters* retain the form of that kind which makes men better; and the *deacons* that which is ministerial. In both these ministries, the angels serve God in the dispensation of earthly things." Again, in his book, *Quis dives salvandus sit*, he has the following singular passage: "Hear a fable, and yet not a fable, but a true story reported of John the apostle, delivered to us, and kept in memory. After the death of the tyrant, when he (John)

had returned to Ephesus, out of the isle of Patmos, being desired, he went to the neighbouring nations, where he appointed *bishops*, where he set in order whole cities, and where he chose by lot unto the ecclesiastical function, of those who had been pointed out by the Spirit as by name. When he was come to a certain city, not far distant, the name of which some mention, and among other things had refreshed the brethren; beholding a young man of a portly body, a gracious countenance, and fervent mind, he looked upon the *bishop*, who was set over all, and said, I commit this young man to thy custody, in presence of the church, and Christ bearing me witness. When he had received the charge, and promised the performance of all things relative to it, John again urged, and made protestations of the same thing; and afterwards departed to Ephesus. And the *presbyter*, taking the young man, brought him to his own house, nourished, comforted, and cherished him; and at length baptized him."

From these extracts it will be seen that Clement, though a presbyter of the church of Alexandria, speaks of himself as of one of its governors, and claims the title of "a shepherd or pastor, after the image of the good Shepherd," a title which the greater part of Episcopal writers acknowledge to have been given in the primitive Church to the highest order of ministers. He represents the presbyters as intrusted with "the dignified ministry," and the deacons with the subordinate, without suggesting any thing of a more dignified order. He applies the apostolic direction in 1 Tim. iii. 2, 4, in one place to bishops, and in another to presbyters, which would have no pertinency if he did not refer in both cases to the same order of ministers.

He compares the grades of church officers with the orders of angels; but we read only of angels and archangels. It is observable also, that the person to whom John committed the young man, is in one place called a bishop, and immediately afterwards a presbyter, which we cannot suppose would have been done, had the superiority of order for which prelatists contend, been known in his day. It is further supposed by some, that when Clement speaks of imposition of hands on the heads of those females who wore false hair, he alludes to the rite of confirmation. If this be so, which is extremely doubtful, it is the first hint we have, in all antiquity, of this right being practised; but, unfortunately for the Episcopal cause, the imposition of hands here mentioned, is ascribed to presbyters. "On whom or what will the presbyter impose his hands?" From these circumstances we may confidently infer, that Clement knew nothing of an order of bishops, distinct from and superior to presbyters, and that the purity of the apostolic age was not, when he wrote, in this respect, materially corrupted.

It is readily granted, that this father once speaks of "bishops, presbyters, and deacons," and once more, inverting the order, of "presbyters, bishops, and deacons." He also represents these as "progressions which imitate the angelic glory," and refers to the "chief seat in the presbytery." But none of these modes of expression afford the least countenance to the Episcopal doctrine. He no where tells us that there was any difference of order in his day, between bishops and presbyters; and far less does he convey any hint, that only the former ordained and confirmed. He says nothing of either of these rites, directly or indirectly, in any of his works. And when the friends

of Episcopacy suppose, that the mere use of the words bishop and presbyters, establishes their claim, they only adopt the convenient method of taking the point in dispute for granted, without a shadow of proof. If we suppose the bishop, alluded to by Clement, to be the pastor of the church, the president or presiding presbyter, and the other presbyters to be his assistants, or perhaps ruling elders, it will account for the strongest expressions above recited, and will entirely agree with the language of Scripture, and of all the preceding fathers.

The well informed reader will observe, that I have taken no notice of certain writings, called the "Apostolical Canons," and the "Apostolical Constitutions," which have been sometimes quoted in this controversy. They are so generally considered as altogether unworthy of credit, that I deem no apology necessary for this omission. When Episcopal writers of the greatest eminence style them "impudent forgeries," and their author "a cheat, unworthy of credit," I may well be excused for passing them by.

Indeed, concerning the "Apostolical Constitutions," it is believed that scarcely any writer of intelligence and credit pretends to plead for their authenticity. As to the "Apostolical Canons," though Beveridge, and a few others have been disposed to contend in their behalf, it is certain that the weight of evidence is against them. Bishop Taylor speaks of them in the following strong terms: "Even of the fifty (Canons) which are most respected, it is evident that there are some things so mixed with them, and no mark of difference left, that the credit of all is much impaired; insomuch that Isidore, of Seville, says, "they were apocryphal, made by heretics, and pub-

lished under the title apostolical; but neither the Fathers nor the Church of Rome did give assent to them.”\*

I have now given a fair specimen of the manner in which the fathers of the first two hundred years speak on the subject before us. I know not of a single passage to be found among the writers of that early period, more direct or decisive in favour of prelacy than those which I have quoted. It would give me the greatest pleasure, if the limits to which this manual is confined allowed me, to present every line and word left by the early fathers, that can be considered as having the remotest relation to the subject under consideration. I am perfectly persuaded that the more complete and faithful the collection of such extracts, the greater would be the amazement of the reader at the claims which our Episcopal brethren profess to found upon them, and the stronger his conviction of the utter failure of their testimony.

Let me, then, appeal to the candour of the reader, whether the assertions made at the beginning of this chapter, are not fully supported. Has he seen a single passage which proves that Christian bishops, within the first two centuries, were, in fact, an order of clergy distinct from those presbyters who were authorized to preach and administer sacraments, and superior to them? Has he seen a sentence which furnishes even probable testimony, that these bishops received, as such, a new and superior ordination; that each bishop had under him a number of congregations with their pastors, whom he governed; and that with this superior order exclusively was deposited the power of ordaining and administering the rite of con-

\* Liberty of Prophesying, Sect. 5, Art. 9.

firmation? Has he found even plausible evidence in support of any one of these articles of Episcopal belief? Above all, has he found a syllable which intimates that these were not only facts, but also that they were deemed of so much importance as to be essential to the very existence of the Church? Even supposing he had found such declarations in some or all of the early fathers; what then? Historic fact is not divine institution. There were many facts in the apostolic church which none of us *now* think it our duty to adopt in practice. But has he found the fact? I will venture to say, he has not. We are so far from being told by the writers within this period, "with one voice," that bishops are a superior order to preaching presbyters, that not one among them says any thing like it. Instead of finding them "unanimously," and "constantly" declaring that the right of ordination is exclusively vested in bishops as a superior order, we cannot find a single passage in which such information, or any thing that resembles it, is conveyed. And, with respect to confirmation, which is claimed as one of the appropriate duties of the diocesan bishop, it is not so much as once mentioned by any authentic writer, within the first two hundred years, as a ceremony which was in use at all,\* and much less as appropriated to a particular order of clergy.

On the contrary, we have seen that these writers, with remarkable uniformity, apply the terms bishop, presbyter, president, shepherd, pastor, interchange-

\* Unless the doubtful passage before quoted from Clemens Alexandrinus, may be supposed to refer to this rite: and if so, then it will follow, from that passage, that, in the days of Clemens, presbyters confirmed.

ably to the same officers; that the apostolical succession is expressly ascribed to presbyters; that a bishop is represented as performing duties which would involve absurdity on any other supposition than that of his being the pastor of a single flock; and that in all cases in which any distinction is made between bishops and presbyters, it evidently points out, either the distinction between preaching and ruling presbyters; or that between those who were fixed pastors of churches, and those who, though in full orders, and of the same rank, had no pastoral charge, and, until they obtained such a place, acted the part of assistants to pastors. In short, when the testimony of the early fathers is thoroughly sifted, it will be found to yield nothing to the Episcopal cause but simply the use of the title bishop. Now, when the advocates of Episcopacy find this title in the New Testament evidently applied to presbyters, they gravely tell us that the mere title is nothing, and that the interchange of these titles is nothing. But when we find precisely the same titles in the early fathers, and the same interchange of these titles, as in the Scriptures, they are compelled either to alter their tone, and to abandon their former reasoning, or else to submit to the mortification of being condemned out of their own mouths.

The friends of prelacy have often, and with much apparent confidence, challenged us to produce out of all the early fathers, a single instance of an ordination performed by presbyters. Those who give this challenge might surely be expected, in all decency and justice, to have a case of Episcopal ordination ready to be brought forward, from the same venerable records. But have they ever produced such a case? They have not. Nor can they produce it. As there



is, unquestionably, no instance mentioned in Scripture of any person, with the title of bishop, performing an ordination; so it is equally certain that no such instance has yet been found in any Christian writer within the first two centuries. Nor can a single instance be produced of a person already ordained as a presbyter, receiving a new and second ordination as bishop. To find a precedent favourable to their doctrine, the advocates of Episcopacy have been under the necessity of wandering into periods when the simplicity of the gospel had, in a lamentable degree, given place to the devices of men; and when the "man of sin" had commenced that system of unhallowed usurpation, which for so many centuries corrupted and degraded the church of God.

I promised, in a preceding chapter, to produce some testimony from the fathers in regard to the *deacon's* office. The following extracts from early writers plainly show, not only that the deacon was originally what we have stated in a former chapter, but that this continued to be the case for several centuries. Hermas, one of the apostolical fathers, in his *Similitude*, ix. 27, tells us, that "of such as believed, some were set over inferior functions, or services, being intrusted with the poor and widows." Origen (*Tract.* 16, in *Matt.*) says, "The deacons preside over the money tables of the church." And again, "Those deacons who do not manage well the money of the church committed to their care, but act a fraudulent part, and dispense it, not according to justice, but for the purpose of enriching themselves; these act the part of money-changers, and keepers of those tables which our Lord overturned. For the deacons were

appointed to preside over the tables of the church, as we are taught in the Acts of the Apostles." Cyprian (Epist. 52) speaks of a certain deacon who had been deposed from his sacred deaconship on account of his fraudulent and sacrilegious misapplication of the church's money to his own private use, and for his denial of the widow's and orphan's pledges deposited with him." And, in another place, (Epist. ad Rogatianum) as a proof that his view of this office is not misapprehended, he refers the appointment of the first deacons to the choice and ordination at Jerusalem, as recited at large in the Acts of the Apostles. Ambrose, in speaking of the fourth century—the time in which he lived—(Comment. in Ephes. iv.) says, "The deacons do not publicly preach." Chrysostom, who lived in the same century, in his Commentary on Acts vi. remarks, that "The deacons had need of great wisdom, although the preaching of the gospel was not committed to them;" and observes further, that "it is absurd to suppose that they should have the offices of preaching and taking care of the poor committed to them, seeing it is impossible for them to discharge both functions adequately." Jerome, in his letter to Evagrius, calls deacons "ministers of tables and widows." And in the Apostolical Constitutions, which, though undoubtedly spurious as an apostolical work, may probably be referred to the fourth or fifth century, it is declared, (Lib. viii. cap. 28,) "It is not lawful for the deacons to baptize, or to administer the eucharist, or to pronounce the greater or smaller benediction." Other citations, to the same amount, might easily be produced. But it is unnecessary. The above furnish a

clear indication of the nature of the deacon's office, in the primitive Church, and during the first three or four centuries.

I will therefore only add, that the learned Suicer, of Germany, in his "Thesaurus Ecclesiasticus," under the article *Διακονοῦς*, speaks thus, "In the apostolic Church, deacons were those who distributed alms to the poor, and took care of them; in other words they were the treasurers of the Church's charity. The original institution of this class of officers is set forth in the sixth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. With respect to them, the sixteenth chapter of the council of Constantinople (in Trullo) says, "They are those to whom the common administering unto poverty is committed; not those who administer the sacraments." And Aristinus, in his Synopsis of the Canons of the same Council, Can. 18th, says, "Let him who alleges that the seven, of whom mention is made in the Acts of the Apostles, were deacons, know that the account there given is not of those who administer the sacraments, but of such as "served tables." Zonaras, ad Can. 16. Trullanum, p. 145, says, "Those who by the apostles were appointed to the deaconship, were not ministers of spiritual things, but ministers and dispensers of meats." Œcumenius, also, on the sixth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, says, "They laid their hands on the deacons who had been elected, which office was by no means the same with that which obtains at the present day in the Church, (i. e. under the same name,) but that with the utmost care and diligence, they might distribute what was necessary to the sustenance of widows and orphans."

Such is the result of the appeal to the early fathers.

They are so far from giving even a semblance of support to the Episcopal claim, that, like the Scriptures, they every where speak a language wholly inconsistent with it, and favourable only to the doctrine of ministerial parity. What then shall we say of the assertions so often and so confidently made, that the doctrine of a superior order to presbyters, styled bishops, has been maintained in the Church, "from the earliest ages," in "the ages immediately succeeding the apostles," and by "all the fathers, from the beginning?" What shall we say of the assertion, that the Scriptures, interpreted by the writings of the early fathers, decidedly support the same doctrine? I will only say, that those who find themselves able to justify such assertions, must have been much more successful in discovering early authorities in aid of their cause, than the most diligent, learned, and keensighted of their predecessors.

## CHAPTER V.

## TESTIMONY OF THE LATER FATHERS.

IN citing the fathers, it was necessary to draw a distinct line between those who are to be admitted as credible witnesses, and those whose testimony is to be suspected. I have accordingly drawn this line at the close of the second century. About this time, as will be afterwards shown, among many other corruptions, that of clerical impurity appeared in the Church; and even the Papacy, as we have before seen, had begun to urge its antichristian claims. From the commencement of the third century, therefore, every witness on the subject of Episcopacy is to be received with caution. As it is granted, on all hands, that the mystery of iniquity had then begun to work: as great and good men are known, from this time to have countenanced important errors, errors acknowledged to be such by Episcopalians as well as ourselves: as uncommanded rites and forms, both of Jewish and pagan origin, began to be introduced into Christian worship, and to have a stress laid upon them as unreasonable as it was unwarranted; we are compelled to examine the writers from the commencement of the third century downwards, with the jealousy which we feel towards men who stand convicted of having departed from the simplicity of the gospel; and concerning some of whom it is perfectly well known, that many of their alleged facts are as false as their principles.

But though the fathers from the beginning of the third century are not to be contemplated with the same respect, nor relied upon with the same confidence as their predecessors; still they deserve much attention; and in the perusal of their writings, we shall find many passages which confirm the doctrine and the statements exhibited in the foregoing pages. We shall sometimes, indeed, meet with modes of expression and occasional hints, which indicate that the love of pre-eminence, which has, in all ages, so much disturbed the church as well as the state, had begun to form into a system its plans and claims. Not a sentence, however, can be found until the fourth century, which gives any intimation that bishops were considered as a different order from presbyters; or that the former were peculiarly invested with the ordaining power. Let us then inquire in what manner some of these later fathers speak on the subject under consideration.

Tertullian began to flourish about the year 200. His writings are voluminous, and their authenticity is generally admitted. And though he has been often quoted by our opponents in this controversy, as a witness favourable to their cause, yet if I mistake not, a little attention to the few hints which he drops on this subject, will show that his testimony is directly of an opposite kind. The following passages are found in his works.

*Apolog.* "In our religious assemblies certain approved elders preside, who have obtained their office by merit and not by bribes." *De Corona.* "We receive the sacrament of the Lord's Supper from the hands of none but the presidents of our assemblies." In the same work, cap. 3, he informs us, that the

Christians among whom he dwelt, were in the habit of receiving the Lord's Supper three times in each week, viz. on Wednesdays and Fridays, as well as on the Lord's days." *Ibid.* "Before we go to the water to be baptized, we first in the church, under the hand of the president, profess to renounce the devil." *De Baptismo.* "It remains that I remind you of the custom of giving and receiving baptism. The right of giving this ordinance belongs to the highest priest, who is the bishop; then to elders and deacons; yet not without the authority of the bishop, for the sake of the honour of the church. This being secured, peace is secured; otherwise, even the laity have the right." He then goes on to observe, that although the laity have the right of baptizing in cases of necessity, yet "that they ought to be modest, and not to assume to themselves the appointed office of the bishop." *De Hæretic.* "Let them (the heretics) produce the original of their churches; let them turn over the roll of their bishops; so running down in a continued succession, that their first bishop had some one of the apostles, or of the apostolic men (who persevered with the apostles) for his author and predecessor. Thus the apostolical churches have their rolls, as the church of Smyrna has Polycarp constituted there by John, and the Church of Rome, Clement ordained by Peter. And the other churches can tell who were ordained bishops over them by the apostles, and who have been their successors to this day."

These quotations are the strongest that Episcopalians produce from Tertullian in support of their system. Let us examine them. This father tells us, that in his day, presbyters presided in their assemblies; that the presidents of their assemblies alone, in ordi-

nary cases, baptized; and that they received the Lord's Supper from no other hands but those of the presidents: and at the same time he informs us, that administering baptism is the appropriate right of the highest priest, who is the bishop. What are we to infer from this representation, but that presbyter, president, and bishop, are employed by Tertullian as titles of the same men? Again; this father, while he declares that each bishop or president performed all the baptisms for his flock, and that they received the eucharist from no other hands than his, mentions that they were in the habit of attending on the eucharist three times in each week. Now the man who performed every baptism in the church under his care, and who administered the Lord's Supper three times every week to all the members of his church, could only have been the pastor of one congregation. To suppose that any minister, however great his activity and zeal, could steadily perform this service for more than a single church, involves a manifest impossibility. Nor is this all: absurdity is added to impossibility, by supposing, as Episcopalians must, that the bishop did all this when he had many presbyters under him, who were all invested by the very nature of their office, with the power of administering both sacraments as well as himself.

But it will be asked—why then is the bishop called by Tertullian the highest priest? Does not this expression indicate that there was one priest in a church, at that time, who had some kind of superiority over the other priests of the same church? I answer, this expression implies no superiority of order. The highest priest might have been the only pastor of the church; nor is there any thing in the title inconsistent



with this supposition. A common pastor is "the highest priest" known in the Presbyterian church. To draw a conclusion either in favour of diocesan Episcopacy, or against it, from language so entirely ambiguous in its import, is surely more calculated to expose the weakness than to exhibit the strength of the cause in which it is adduced. Besides, Tertullian informs us that this bishop, or highest priest, was alone invested with the right of baptizing and administering the Lord's Supper; that the bishop might, when he thought proper, empower elders and deacons to baptize; and that even private Christians, who bore no office in the church, might also baptize in cases of necessity. But still he declares that administering baptism was "the appointed office of the bishop," and that they received the Lord's Supper from no other hands than his. Either, then, Tertullian writes in a very confused and contradictory manner, or else both the bishop and elders mentioned by him are officers of a very different character from those who are distinguished by the same titles in modern Episcopal churches. His highest priest was evidently no other than the pastor of a single congregation; the president of the assembly, and of the presbytery or eldership, which belonged, like himself, to a particular church.

With respect to the passage quoted above, in which this father speaks of "the roll of bishops," and of the line of bishops running down in a continual succession, it is nothing to the purpose of those who adduce it to support diocesan Episcopacy. What kind of bishops were those of whom Tertullian here speaks? were they parochial or diocesan? If we consider them, as other passages in his writings compel us to consider them, as the pastors of single congregations, then

the obvious construction of the passage is perfectly agreeable to Presbyterian principles. But, what establishes this construction is, that Irenæus, who was nearly contemporary with Tertullian, in a passage quoted in a preceding chapter, in a similar appeal to the heretics, speaks of the list or roll of presbyters, and represents the apostolical succession as flowing through the line of presbyters; an incontestible proof that the words bishop and presbyter were used by both these fathers, as convertible titles for the same office.

Cyprian, the venerable bishop of Carthage, who flourished and wrote about the year 250, is often quoted by Episcopal writers as a strong witness in their favour. The following quotations will show in what light his testimony ought to be viewed. Epist. 73. "Whence we understand, that it is lawful for none but the presidents of the church to baptize and grant remission of sins." And again, Epist. 67. "The people should not flatter themselves that they are free from fault, when they communicate with a sinful priest, and give their consent to the presidency of a wicked bishop. Wherefore a flock that is obedient to God's commands, and fears him, ought to separate from a wicked bishop, and not to join the sacrifices of a sacrilegious priest; since the flock or people has the chief power of choosing worthy priests and refusing unworthy ones, which we see comes down to us from divine authority, that the priest should be chosen in the presence of the flock, and in the sight of all, that he may be approved as worthy and fit, by the judgment and testimony of all. This is observed, according to divine authority, in the Acts of the Apostles, when Peter, speaking to the people concerning the

ordination of a bishop in the place of Judas; it is said Peter rose up in the midst of the disciples, the whole multitude being met together. And we may take notice that the apostles observed this, not only in the ordination of bishops and priests, but also of deacons, concerning whom it is written in the Acts, that the twelve gathered together the whole multitude of the disciples, and said unto them, &c. which was, therefore, so diligently and carefully transacted before all the people, lest any unworthy person should, by secret arts, creep into the ministry of the altar, or the sacerdotal station. This, therefore, is to be observed and held as founded on divine tradition and apostolic practice; which is also kept up with us, and almost in all the provinces, that in order to the right performance of ordination, the neighbouring bishops of the same province meet with that flock to which the bishop is ordained, and that the bishop be chosen in presence of the people, who know every one's life, and are acquainted with their whole conversation. Which we see was done by you in the ordination of Sabinus, our colleague, that the Episcopacy was conferred on him by the suffrage of the whole brotherhood, and of the bishops who were met there, and wrote to you concerning him."

. *Epist.* 32. "Through all the vicissitudes of time, the ordination of bishops, and the constitution of the church, are so handed down, that the church is built on the bishops, and every act of the church is ordered and managed by them. Seeing, therefore, this is founded on the law of God, I wonder that some should be so rash and insolent as to write to me in the name of the church, seeing a church consists of a bishop, clergy, and all that stand faithful."

*Tract. De Unitat. Eccles.* "Our Lord speaks to Peter, I say unto thee, thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, &c. Upon one he builds his church; and though he gave an equal power to all his apostles, yet that he might manifest unity, he ordered the beginning of that unity to proceed from one person. The rest of the apostles were the same that Peter was, being endued with the same fellowship both of honour and power. But the beginning proceeds from unity, that the church may be shown to be one."

*Epist. 3.* "The deacons ought to remember, that the Lord hath chosen apostles, that is, bishops and presidents; but the apostles constituted deacons, as the ministers of their episcopacy and of the church."

These extracts are remarkable. Though they are precisely those which Episcopalians generally adduce from Cyprian in support of their cause; yet the discerning reader will perceive that all their force lies against that cause. It is evident from these extracts, that bishop and president are used by this father as words of the same import; that the officer thus denominated was the only one who had the power of administering baptism; that the bishop in Cyprian's days was chosen by the people of his charge, was ordained over a particular "flock," and received his ordination in the presence of that flock. All these circumstances agree perfectly with the Presbyterian doctrine, that the bishop is the pastor of a single congregation; but wear a most unnatural and improbable aspect when applied to a diocesan bishop, having a number of flocks or congregations with their pastors under his care.

It is readily granted, that Cyprian speaks of the

church of Carthage as having several presbyters or elders as well as deacons, and that he distinguishes between presbyters of that church, and himself their bishop. But how many of these were *ruling* presbyters, and how many were empowered to teach and administer sacraments, as well as to rule; and in what respects he differed from the other presbyters, whether only as a standing chairman or president among them, as seems to be intimated by his calling them repeatedly his colleagues or co-presbyters, we are no where informed. The probability is, that he was simply the pastor of the church, and that the presbyters of whom he speaks, were either his assistants, or ruling elders. All we know is, that writing to them in his exile, he requests them, during his absence, to perform his duties as well as their own; which looks as if Cyprian considered the presbyters of his church, or at least some of them, as clothed with full power to perform all those acts which were incumbent on him as bishop, and consequently as of the same order with himself.

Again; when Cyprian speaks of the Church as "being built on the bishops," and of all the acts of the Church as being managed by them, Episcopalians hastily triumph, as if this were decided testimony in their favour. But their triumph is premature. Does Cyprian, in these passages, refer to diocesan or parochial bishops? To prelates, who had the government of a diocese, containing a number of congregations and their ministers; or to pastors of single flocks? The latter, from the whole strain of his epistles, is evidently his meaning. He no where gives the least hint of having more than one congregation under his own care. He represents his whole church as ordinarily joining together in the celebration of the eucha-

rist. He declares his resolution to do nothing without the council of his elders, and the consent of his flock. He affirms that every church, when properly organized, consists of a bishop, clergy, and the brotherhood. All these representations apply only to parochial, and by no means to diocesan Episcopacy. For if such officers belong to every church, or organized religious society, then we must conclude that by the clergy of each church, as distinguished from the bishop, is meant those elders who assisted the pastor in the discharge of parochial duty. It is well known that Cyprian applies the term *clergy* to all sorts of church officers. In his epistles, not only the presbyters, or elders, but also the deacons, subdeacons, readers, and acolyths are all spoken of as belonging to the clergy. The ordination of such persons, (for it seems in his time they were all formally ordained) he calls *ordinationes clericæ*; and the letters which he transmitted by them, he styles *literæ clericæ*. The same fact may be clearly established from the writings of Ambrose, Hilary, and Epiphanius, and also from the canons of the Council of Nice. When Cyprian, then, speaks of a church, when properly organized, as consisting of a bishop, clergy, and brotherhood, he not only speaks a language which is strictly reconcilable with Presbyterian church government; but which can scarcely be reconciled with any thing else. For it is alone descriptive of a pastor or overseer of a single church, with his elders and deacons to assist in their appropriate functions. But there is one passage in the above cited extracts, which completely establishes the position, that Cyprian considered bishops and preaching presbyters as of the same order. He recognizes the same kind of pre-

eminence in bishops over presbyters, as Peter had over the other apostles. But of what nature was this superiority? He shall speak for himself. "The rest of the apostles," says he, "were the same that Peter was, being endued with the same fellowship, both of honour and power; but the beginning proceeds from unity, that the church may be shown to be one." In other words, every bishop is of the same order with those presbyters who labour in the word and doctrine: and only holds, in consequence of his being vested with a pastoral charge, the distinction of president or chairman among them. That I do not mistake Cyprian's meaning, you will readily be persuaded, when I inform you that Mr. Dodwell, that learned and able advocate for Episcopacy, expressly acknowledges, that Cyprian makes Peter the type of every bishop, and the rest of the apostles the type of every presbyter.

Firmilian, bishop of Cesarea, who was contemporary with Cyprian, in an epistle addressed to the latter, has the following passage. *Cyprian. Epist. 75.* "But the other heretics also, if they separate from the Church, can have no power or grace, since all power and grace are placed in the Church, where presbyters preside, in whom is vested the power of baptizing and imposition of hands, and ordination." This passage needs no comment. It not only represents the right to baptize and the right to ordain as going together; but it also expressly ascribes both to the elders who preside in the churches.

The testimony of Jerome on this subject is remarkably explicit and decisive. This distinguished father, who flourished about the year 380, and who was acknowledged by the whole Christian world to be one

of the most pious and learned men of his day,\* does not merely convey his opinion in indirect terms and occasional hints, as most of the preceding fathers had done, but in the most express and formal manner. In his Commentary on Titus we find the following passage. "Let us diligently attend to the words of the apostle, saying, That thou mayest ordain elders in every city, as I have appointed thee. Who discoursing in what follows, what sort of presbyter is to be ordained, saith, If any one be blameless, the husband of one wife, &c., afterwards adds, For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God, &c. A presbyter, therefore, is the same as a bishop; and before there were, by the devil's instinct, parties in religion, and it was said among the people, I am of Paul, I of Apollos, and I of Cephas,† the churches were govern-

\* The celebrated Erasmus declared concerning Jerome, that "he was, without controversy, the most learned of all Christians, the prince of divines, and for eloquence that he excelled Cicero."

† Some Episcopal writers have attempted, from this allusion of Jerome to 1 Cor. i. 12, to infer that he dates Episcopacy as early as the dispute at Corinth, to which this passage refers. But this inference is effectually refuted by two considerations. In the first place, Jerome adduces proof that bishop and presbyter were originally the same, from portions of the New Testament which were certainly written after the first Epistle to the Corinthians. In the second place, that language of the apostle, one saith I am of Paul, and another I am of Apollos, &c., has been familiarly applied in every age, by way of allusion, to actual divisions in the Church. And were those who put the construction on Jerome which I am opposing, a little better acquainted with his writings, they would know that in another place he himself applies the same passage to some disturbers of the Church's peace in the fourth century. Suppose any one were describing a division in a church in the nineteenth century, and were to say, as has been said a thousand times since the days of Paul, "They are all at strife, one saying, 'I am of Paul, and another I am of Apollos, &c.'" how would he be understood? As referring to that Scripture by way of allusion, or as meaning to say that the division which he described, took place in the days of Paul?



ed by the common council of presbyters. But afterwards, when every one thought that those whom he baptized were rather his than Christ's, it was determined through the whole world, that one of the presbyters should be set above the rest, to whom all care of the Church should belong, that the seeds of schism might be taken away. If any suppose that it is merely our opinion, and not that of the Scriptures, that bishop and presbyter are the same, and that one is the name of *age*, the other of *office*, let him read the words of the apostles to the Philippians, saying, "Paul and Timothy, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus that are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons." Philippi is a city of Macedonia, and certainly in one city there could not be more than one bishop as they are now styled. But at that time they called the same men bishops whom they called presbyters; therefore, he speaks indifferently of bishops as of presbyters. This may seem even yet doubtful to some, till it be proved by another testimony. It is written in the Acts of the Apostles, that when the apostle came to Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the presbyters of that church, to whom, among other things, he said, "Take heed to yourselves, and to all the flock over whom the Holy Ghost hath made you bishops, to feed the Church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood." Here observe diligently that calling together the presbyters of one city, Ephesus, he afterwards styles the same persons bishops. If any will receive that epistle which is written in the name of Paul to the Hebrews, there also the care of the Church is equally divided among many, since he writes to the people, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves, for

they watch for your souls as those that must give an account, that they may do it with joy and not with grief, for that is unprofitable for you." And Peter (so called from the firmness of his faith) in his epistle, saith, "The presbyters which are among you I exhort, who am also a presbyter, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed. Feed the flock of God which is among you, not by constraint but willingly." These things I have written to show, that among the ancients, presbyters and bishops were the same. But, by little and little, that all the seeds of dissension might be plucked up, the whole care was devolved on one. As, therefore, the presbyters know, that by the *custom of the church* they are subject to him who is their president, so let bishops know that they are above presbyters *more by the custom of the Church* than by the *true dispensation of Christ*; and that they ought to rule the Church in common, imitating Moses, who, when he might alone rule the people of Israel, chose seventy with whom he might judge the people."

In Jerome's epistle to Evagrius, he speaks on the same subject in the following pointed language.\* "I

\* Among the numerous expedients to get rid of this decisive testimony of Jerome, one is, to represent that the epistle to Evagrius was written in a fit of passion, in which the worthy father had particular inducements to magnify the office of presbyter as much as possible. To suppose that a man of Jerome's learning and piety, even in a fit of anger, would deliberately commit to writing a doctrine directly opposite to "the faith of the universal church from the beginning," and that too on a point of fundamental importance to the very existence of the Redeemer's kingdom on earth; that he should so earnestly insist upon it, and make such formal and solemn appeals to Scripture in support of it, is a supposition which can only be made by those who are driven to the utmost extremity for a subterfuge. But how shall we account for Jerome's having maintained the same doctrine,

hear that a certain person has broken out into such folly that he prefers deacons before presbyters, that is before bishops: for when the apostle clearly teaches that presbyters and bishops were the same, who can endure it, that a minister of tables and of widows should proudly exalt himself above those at whose prayers the body and blood of Christ is made? Do you seek for authority? hear that testimony: "Paul and Timothy, servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus that are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons." Would you have another example? In the Acts of the Apostles, Paul speaks thus to the priests of one church—"Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you bishops, that you govern the church which he hath purchased with his own blood." And lest any should contend about there being a plurality of bishops in one church, hear also another testimony, by which it may most manifestly be proved, that a bishop and presbyter are the same—"For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain presbyters in every city, as I have appointed thee. If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, &c. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God." And to Timothy—"Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery." And Peter also, in his first epistle, saith, "The presbyters which are among you I exhort, who

illustrated by the same reasonings, and fortified by the same Scriptural quotations, in his Commentary on Titus, before quoted, which must be supposed to have been written with much reflection and seriousness, and which was solemnly delivered as a legacy to the Church, by one of her most illustrious ministers?

am also a presbyter, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed; to rule the flock of Christ, and to inspect it, not of constraint, but willingly according to God;" which is more significantly expressed in the Greek *ἐπισκοποῦντες*, that is, superintending it, whence the name of bishop is drawn. Do the testimonies of such men seem small to thee? Let the evangelical trumpet sound, the son of thunder, whom Jesus loved much, who drank the streams of doctrine from our Saviour's breast. "The presbyter to the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth." And in another epistle, "the presbyter to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth." But that one was afterwards chosen, who should be set above the rest, was done as a remedy against schism; lest every one drawing the Church of Christ to himself, should break it in pieces. For at Alexandria, from Mark, the Evangelist, to Heraclas and Dionysius, the bishops thereof, the presbyters always named one, chosen from among them, and placed in an higher degree, bishop. As if an army should make an emperor; or the deacons should choose one of themselves whom they knew to be most diligent, and call him arch-deacon." And a little afterwards, in the same epistle, he says, "presbyter and bishop, the one is the name of *age*, the other of *dignity*: Whence in the epistles to Timothy and Titus, there is mention made of the ordination of bishop and deacon, but not of presbyters, because the presbyter is included in the bishop."

After perusing this most explicit and unequivocal testimony; a testimony which one would imagine could scarcely have been more formal or more decisive; the reader will be surprised to learn that some

Episcopal writers have ventured to say, that Jerome merely offers a "conjecture," that in the apostles' days, bishop and presbyter were the same. If the extracts above stated be the language of conjecture I should be utterly at a loss to know what is the language of assertion and proof. In what manner could he have spoken more clearly or more positively? But I will not insult the understanding of the reader by pursuing the refutation of this pretence. From the foregoing extracts, it is abundantly apparent:

1. That the interpretation given, in a former chapter, of those passages of Scripture which represent bishops and presbyters as the same, in office and power, as well as in title, is by no means a novel interpretation, invented to serve the purposes of a party, as Episcopalians have frequently asserted; but an interpretation more than fourteen hundred years old; and represented as the general sense of the apostolic age, by one who had as good an opportunity of becoming acquainted with early opinions on this subject as any man then living.

2. That a departure from the primitive model of church government had taken place in Jerome's day; that this departure consisted in making a distinction of order between bishops and presbyters; and that this distinction was neither warranted by Scripture, nor conformable to the apostolic model; but owed its origin to the decay of religion, and especially to the ambition of ministers. It commenced "when every one began to think that those whom he baptized were rather his than Christ's." And to crown all he asserts, that it was "founded on the custom of the Church," rather than upon "any true dispensation of Christ." This conclusively decides his meaning.

3. It is expressly asserted by Jerome, that this change in the constitution of the Christian ministry came in (*paulatim*) by little and little. He says, indeed, in one of the passages above quoted, that it was agreed "all over the world," as a remedy against schism, to choose one of the presbyters, and make him president or moderator of the body; and some commentators on this passage have represented it as saying that the change was made all at once. Fortunately, however, we have Jerome's express declaration in another place, that the practice came in *gradually*. But whether half a century or two centuries elapsed before the "whole world" came to an agreement on this subject, he does not say.

4. Jerome further informs us, that the first pre-eminence of bishops was only such as the body of the presbyters were able to confer. They were only standing presidents or moderators; and all the ordination they received, on being thus chosen, was performed by the presbyters themselves.\* This he tells us was the only Episcopacy that existed in the church

\* To this some Episcopal writers reply, that Jerome does not expressly assert that the presbyters ordained the bishop, but only that they chose him, placed him in a higher seat, and called him bishop. And hence they take the liberty of inferring that the election was by the presbyters, but the ordination by other diocesan bishops. To suppose this, is to make Jerome reason most inconclusively, and adduce an instance which was not only nothing to the purpose, but directly hostile to his whole argument. If the presbyters did not do all that was done, the case had nothing to do with his reasoning. Besides, Eutychius the patriarch of Alexandria, in his "*Origines Ecclesiæ Alexandrinæ*," published by the learned Selden, expressly declares, "that the twelve presbyters constituted by Mark, upon the vacancy of the see, did choose out of their number one to be head over the rest, and the other eleven did lay their hands upon him, and blessed him, and made him patriarch."

of Alexandria, one of the most conspicuous then in the world, until after the middle of the third century.

5. It is finally manifest, from these quotations, that while Jerome maintains the parity of all ministers of the gospel in the primitive Church, he entirely excludes deacons from being an order of clergy at all. "Who can endure it, that a *minister of tables and of widows* should proudly exalt himself above those at whose prayers the body and blood of Christ is made?"

Some zealous Episcopal writers have endeavoured to destroy the force of these express declarations of Jerome, by quoting other passages, in which he speaks of bishops and presbyters in the current language of his time. For instance, in one place, speaking of that pre-eminence which bishops had then attained, he asks, "What can a bishop do that a presbyter may not also do, excepting ordination?" But it is evident that Jerome, in this passage, refers, not to the primitive right of bishops, but to a prerogative which they had gradually acquired, and which was generally yielded to them in his day. His position is, that even then there was no right which they arrogated to themselves above presbyters, excepting that of ordination. In like manner, in another place, he makes a kind of loose comparison between the officers of the Christian Church, and the Jewish priesthood. These passages, however, and others of a similar kind, furnish nothing in support of the Episcopal cause.\* Jerome, when writing on ordinary occasions, spoke of

\* Accordingly bishop Stillingfleet declares, "Among all the fifteen testimonies produced by a learned writer out of Jerome, for the superiority of bishops above presbyters, I cannot find one that does found it upon divine right; but only on the convenience of such an order for the peace and unity of the Church."—*Irenicum*, Part II. Chapter 6th.

Episcopacy as it then stood. But when he undertook explicitly to deliver an opinion respecting primitive Episcopacy, he expressed himself in the words we have seen; words as absolutely decisive as any friend of Presbyterian parity could wish. To attempt to set vague allusions, and phrases of dubious import in opposition to such express and unequivocal passages; passages in which the writer professedly and formally lays down a doctrine, reasons at great length in its support, and deliberately deduces his conclusion, is as absurd as it is uncandid. Jerome, therefore, notwithstanding all the arts which have been employed to set aside his testimony, remains a firm and decisive witness in support of our principle, that the doctrine of ministerial parity was the doctrine of the primitive Church. Accordingly some of the most learned advocates of prelacy that ever lived interpret Jerome precisely as I have done, and consider him as expressly declaring that bishop and presbyter were the same in the apostolic age. Take the following as a specimen:

Bishop Bilson, a warm friend of prelacy, in his work against Seminaries, book i. p. 318, expressly quotes Jerome, as teaching the doctrine which we ascribe to him, viz. "That bishops must understand that they are greater than presbyters, rather by custom than by the Lord's appointment; and that bishops came in *after* the apostles' time."

Dr. Willet, a very eminent divine of the Church of England, in the latter part of the reign of Queen Elizabeth, in his "*Synopsis Papismi*," a large and learned work, dedicated to the queen, and professedly containing the doctrines of his Church, in opposition to the Romanists, speaks thus—"Of the difference between bishops and priests there are three opinions:



the first, of Acrius, who did hold that all ministers should be equal, and that a bishop *was not*, nor *ought to be* superior to a priest. The second opinion is the other extreme of the Papists who would have not only a difference, but a princely pre-eminence of their bishops over the clergy, and *that by the word of God*. The third opinion is between both; that although this distinction of bishops and priests as it is now received, *cannot be proved out of Scripture*, yet it is very necessary for the policy of the Church, to avoid schism, and to preserve it in unity. Jerome thus writeth, ‘The apostle teaches evidently that bishops and presbyters were the same, but that one was *afterwards* chosen to be set over the rest, as a remedy against schism.’ To this opinion of St. Jerome subscribeth bishop Jewel, and another most reverend prelate of our own church, Archbishop Whitgift.”—*Synopsis Papismi*, p. 273.

The celebrated Episcopal divine, Dr. Saravia, who was honoured and preferred in England, explicitly grants that Jerome was against the divine right of Episcopacy. “Jerome’s opinion,” says he, “was private, and coincided with that of Acrius.”\*

The learned prelate, Alphonso de Castro, understood Jerome in the same manner. He sharply reproveth a certain writer who had endeavoured to set aside the testimony commonly derived from that father in favour of Presbytery, and insists that the testimony, as usually adduced, is correct. “But Thomas Waldensis,” says he, “truly is deceived; for Jerome does endeavour to prove that, according to divine institution, there was no difference between presbyter and

\* De Gradibus Minist. Evangel. Cap. 23.

bishop.” He afterwards adds, “Neither ought any one to wonder that Jerome, though otherwise a most learned and excellent man, was mistaken.”\*

Bishop Jewel understood Jerome as we do, and expressly quotes the passage which is commonly quoted by Presbyterians, to show that this father asserts the original equality and identity of bishops and presbyters.†

Bishop Morton interprets Jerome in the same manner. He expressly acknowledges that Jerome represents the difference between bishop and presbyter as brought into the Church not by divine, but human authority. He further asserts, that there was no substantial difference, on the subject of Episcopacy, between Jerome and Aerius. And further, that not only all the Protestants, but also all the primitive Doctors were of the same mind with Jerome.‡

The learned Episcopalian, Professor Whitaker, of the University of Cambridge, England, who flourished in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, concurred in this interpretation. “If Aerius,” says he, “was a heretic in this point, he had Jerome to be his neighbour in that heresy; and not only him, but other fathers, both Greek and Latin, as is confessed by Medina. Aerius thought that presbyter did not differ from bishop by any divine law and authority; and the same thing was contended for by Jerome, and he defended it by those very Scripture testimonies that Aerius did.”§

Few men have been more distinguished for their

\* *Contra Heres.* p. 103, 104.

† *Defence of his Apology for the Church of England*, p. 248.

‡ *Cathol. Apolog. Lib. i.* p. 118—120.

§ *Controv. iv. Quest. i. Cap. iii. Sect. 30.*

learned and zealous labours in favour of Episcopacy than Dr. William Nichols. Yet this eminent Episcopalian, speaking of Jerome, thus expresses himself. "At last came St. Jerome, though not till above three centuries after the apostles' times, who valuing himself upon his learning, which, indeed, was very great; and being provoked by the insolence of some deacons, who set themselves above presbyters; to the end he might maintain the dignity of his order against such arrogant persons, he advanced a notion never heard of before, viz. that presbyters were not a different order from bishops; and that a bishop was only a more eminent presbyter, chosen out of the rest, and set over them, for preventing of schism."\*

Luther, in the Articles of Smalcald, which he framed, expressly declares that Jerome taught that bishop and presbyter were the same by divine right, and that the distinction between them was brought in only by human authority. This declaration was also subscribed by Melancthon. And in the Confessions of Wirtemberg and Helvetia the same statement is explicitly made.†

\* Defence of the Doctrine and Discipline of the Church of England, p. 241.

† The manner in which Hooker, the author of the "Ecclesiastical Polity," treats Jerome's testimony is remarkable. After giving one of those Episcopal glosses of the learned father which would fasten upon him either self-contradiction or absurdity, he adds "This answer to St. Jerome seemeth dangerous. I have qualified it as I may by the addition of some words of restraint. Yet I satisfy not myself. In my judgment it would be altered." Perhaps the most natural construction of this passage is, that the author wrote it on the margin of his manuscript, to express some misgiving of mind as to the gloss he had offered, and to suggest the propriety of some alteration; but that some ignorant transcriber incorporated it with the text.

I shall close my remarks on the testimony of Jerome, with the judgment of Bishop Croft, an English prelate, who flourished in the reign of Charles II., expressed in the following words—"And now I desire my reader, if he understands Latin, to view the epistle of St. Jerome to Evagrius; and doubtless he will wonder to see men have the confidence to quote any thing out of it for the distinction between Episcopacy and Presbytery; for the whole epistle is to show the identity of them."\*

But what strongly confirms our interpretation of Jerome is, that several fathers contemporary, or nearly so, with him, when called to speak specifically on the same subject, make, in substance, the same statement. In other parts of their writings, they speak, as Jerome did, in the current language of their time: but when they had occasion to express a precise opinion on the point now under consideration, they do it in a way not to be mistaken. Two or three examples of this will be sufficient.

Augustine, bishop of Hippo, in writing to Jerome, who was a presbyter, expresses himself thus: "I entreat you to correct me faithfully when you see I need it; for although, according to the names of honour *which the custom of the Church has now brought into use*, the office of bishop is greater than that of presbyter, nevertheless, in many respects, Augustine is still inferior to Jerome." *Epist. 19. ad Hierom.* It is worthy of notice that Bishop Jewel in the "Defence of his Apology for the Church of England," produces this passage for the express purpose of showing the original identity of bishop and

\* Naked Truth, p. 45.

presbyter, and translates it thus: "The office of bishop is above the office of priest, *not by authority of the Scriptures*, but after the names of honour which *the custom of the Church* hath now obtained." *Defence*, 122, 123.

If there is meaning in words, Augustine represents the superiority of bishops to presbyters as introduced *by the custom of the Church*, rather than *divine appointment*.

Hilary, (sometimes called Ambrose,) who wrote about the year 376, in his Commentary on Ephesians iv. 2, has the following passage. "After that churches were planted in all places, and officers ordained, matters were settled otherwise than they were in the beginning. And hence it is, that the apostles' writings do not in all things agree to the present constitution of the Church: because they were written under the first rise of the Church; for he calls Timothy, who was created a presbyter by him, a bishop, for so at first the presbyters were called; among whom this was the course of governing churches, that as one withdrew another took his place; and in Egypt, at this day, the presbyters ordain (or consecrate, *consignant*) in the bishop's absence. But because the following presbyters began to be found unworthy to hold the first place, the method was changed, the council providing that not order, but merit, should create a bishop."

In this passage, we have not only an express declaration that the Christian Church, in the days of Hilary, had deviated from its primitive pattern, but also that this deviation had a particular respect to the name and office of bishop, which, in the beginning, was the same with presbyter. He also declares, that, notwithstanding this change, presbyters, even then,

sometimes ordained; and that the reason of their not continuing to exercise this power was, that an ecclesiastical arrangement, subsequent to the apostolical age, alone prevented it.

It has been doubted, indeed, whether the word *consignant* refers to ordination at all. It is conceded by several eminent Episcopal divines that the reference is to that rite; but whether it be so or not, the passage undoubtedly teaches that there was something which the bishops in his day claimed as their prerogative, which had not been always appropriated to them, and which even *then*, in the bishop's absence, the presbyters considered themselves as empowered to perform. This is quite sufficient for my purpose. It shows that in the days of Hilary there had been a change from the original state of things, and that the bishops had *encroached*.

The testimony of Chrysostom, who wrote about the year 398, is also strongly in our favour. "The apostle," says he, "having discoursed concerning the bishops, and described them, declaring what they ought to be, and from what they ought to abstain, omitting the order of presbyters, descends to the deacons; and why so, but because between bishop and presbyter there is scarcely any difference; and to them are committed both the instructions and the presidency of the Church; and whatever he said of bishops agrees also to presbyters. In ordination alone they have gone beyond the presbyters, and of this they seem to have defrauded them."\* 1 *Epist. ad Tim.*

\* This perfectly agrees with the representation of Jerome, (with whom Chrysostom was nearly contemporary) who says that the only right which bishops had gained over presbyters, in his day, was that of ordination.

*Hom. 11.* The slightest inspection of Chrysostom's original here will add peculiar strength to this passage. The word here rendered *defrauded*, is *πλεονεκτείν*, which implies a dishonest overreaching; and distinctly conveys the idea, not only that ordination was the only point, in his day, concerning which bishops had gained the precedence over presbyters; but that they had gained this by *fraudulent means*. This is the evident meaning of the word *πλεονεκτείν*. See 1 Thessalonians iv. 6. "That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter," &c. See also 2 Cor. vii. 2; and again, xii. 17, 18, where the same word is used. Such a declaration from the pen of Chrysostom, who was himself a prelate, settles the matter that in the estimation of this father, (and it was impossible he should be mistaken about it,) the superiority of bishops was a contrivance of unhallowed ambition.

Theodoret, who flourished about the year 430, in his Commentary on 1 Tim. iii., makes the following declaration: "The apostles call a presbyter a bishop, as we showed when we expounded the epistle to the Philippians, and which may be also learned from this place, for after the precepts proper to bishops, he describes the things which belong to deacons. But, as I said, of old they called the same men both bishops and presbyters."

Primasius, who was contemporary with Theodoret, and is said to have been Augustine's disciple, in explaining 1 Tim. iii. asks, "Why the apostle leaps from the duties of bishops to the duties of deacons, without any mention of presbyters?" and answers, "because bishops and presbyters are the same degree."

Sedulius, also, who wrote about the year 470, in his

Commentary on Titus i., expressly asserts the identity of bishop and presbyter. He declares, not only that the titles are interchangeably applied to the same men, but also that *the office is the same*; many of them being found in the primitive Church, in one city; which could not be true of diocesan bishops. In proof of this, he adduces the case of the elders of Ephesus, Acts xx., who all dwelt in one city, and who, though called elders or presbyters in the 17th verse of that chapter, are yet, in the 28th verse, called bishops.

And, finally, Acrius, a presbyter of Sebastia, and contemporary with Jerome, maintained the same doctrine with that father, on the subject before us. He not only opposed prayers for the dead, the superstitious observance of fasts and festivals, and other uncommanded rites; but he insisted, with zeal, that bishop and presbyter were the same in the apostolic Church, and that there ought to be no distinction of orders in the holy ministry.

We are told, indeed, by the friends of prelacy, that Acrius was reputed an heretic for holding that there was no difference between bishops and presbyters. And as an authority on this subject, they refer us to Epiphanius, who, towards the close of the fourth century, undertook to give a list of heresies, and included Acrius in the number. But when this alleged fact is impartially examined, it will be found to weigh nothing in this controversy. For, in the first place, Epiphanius is a writer of no credit. The learned Mosheim speaks of him in the following terms. "His book against all the heresies which had sprung up in the Church until his time, has little or no reputation; as it is full of inaccuracies and errors, and discovers



almost in every page the levity and ignorance of its author." But, secondly, by comparing the whole testimony of antiquity on this subject, it appears that Aerius was condemned, not so much for maintaining that bishop and presbyter were the same by the word of God, as for insisting that there ought not to be any difference made between them; in asserting which, he opposed that pre-eminence which the bishops had gradually gained, and set himself against the actual constitution of most of the churches in his day. For this he was hated and reviled by the friends of high-church doctrines, and stigmatized as a heretic and schismatic.\* This appears to have been the true reason why Aerius rendered himself so obnoxious, and was condemned by so many; while Jerome and Augustine, unquestionably the most learned divines of the age, though they held and avowed substantially the same doctrine, yet escaped similar treatment, by tolerating, and even approving the moderate prelacy which was established in their time, not as a divine appointment, but as a system founded on human prudence. Accordingly Bishop Stillingfleet observes, "I believe, upon the strictest inquiry, Medina's judgment will prove true, that Jerome, Augustine, Ambrose, Chrysostom, Theodoret, and Theophylact, were all of

\* The following passage from Dr. Hawies's (an Episcopal clergyman) *Ecclesiastical History*, i. p. 340, is worthy of notice. "Aerius made a fiercer resistance, and maintained more offensive doctrines; that bishops and presbyters in the Scripture are the same persons, and only different descriptions of age and office; that prayers for the dead were futile, and hopes from their intercession vain; that stated fasts and festivals had no prescription in the New Testament. These, with similar assertions, roused a host of enemies, and he was quickly silenced. So superstition stalked triumphant, and no man dared open his mouth against any abuses."

Aerius his judgment, as to the identity of both the name and the order of bishops and presbyters in the primitive Church. But here lay the difference : Aerius proceeded from hence to separate from bishops and their churches, because they were bishops. Whereas Jerome, while he held the same doctrine, did not think it necessary to cause a schism in the Church by separating from the bishops, for his opinion is clear, that the first institution of them was for preventing schism, and therefore for peace and unity he thought their institution very useful in the "Church of God." *Irenicum.* To the judgment of Stillingfleet may be added that of Professor Raignolds, Bishop Morton, and other eminent Episcopal writers, who frankly acknowledge that Aerius coincided in opinion on this subject with Jerome, and other distinguished fathers, who undeniably taught the same doctrine, without being stigmatized as heretics.

Another witness on whose testimony much stress is laid by Episcopalians, is Eusebius. They tell us that this historian, who lived early in the fourth century, frequently speaks of bishops as superior to common presbyters; that he gives catalogues of the bishops who presided over several of the most eminent churches; that he mentions their names in the order of succession, from the apostolic age down to his own time; and that all succeeding ecclesiastical writers speak the same language. But what does all this prove? Nothing more than we have before granted. No one disputes that before the time of Constantine, in whose reign Eusebius lived, a kind of prelacy prevailed, which was more fully organized and established by that emperor. But does Eusebius inform us what kind of difference there was between

the bishops and presbyters of his day? Does he say that the former were a different order from the latter? Does he declare that there was a superiority of order vested in bishops by divine appointment? Does he assert that bishops in the days of the apostles, and for a century afterwards, were the same kind of officers with those who were called by the same title in the fourth century? Does he tell us that this superior order of clergy were the only ecclesiastical officers who were allowed, in his day, to ordain and confirm? I have never met with a syllable of all this in Eusebius. All that can be gathered from him is, that there were persons called bishops in the days of the apostles; that there had been a succession of bishops in the Church from the apostles to the fourth century, when he lived; and that in his day, there was a distinction between bishops and other presbyters. But does any one deny this? To assert that, because Eusebius speaks of particular persons in the first and second centuries as bishops of particular churches, therefore they were so in the prelatical sense of the word, is really, imposing on the credulity of unwary readers; since Episcopalians themselves grant that the term bishop was applied, in the apostolic age, and for some time afterwards, differently from what it was in the age of Eusebius. We agree that there were bishops in the first century, and have proved from Scripture and the early fathers, that this title was then applied to the ordinary pastors of single congregations. We agree, also, that there was a succession of bishops in the second and third centuries. And, finally, we agree that in the time of Constantine, prelacy was established in the Church. All this is perfectly consistent with our doctrine, viz. that diocesan Episcopacy, or bishops,

as an order superior to presbyters, were unknown in the primitive Church. I have never read a sentence in Eusebius that touches this point; and I need not repeat that it is the grand point in dispute. On the other hand, we have seen that Jerome, who lived and wrote a little after Eusebius, not only touches this point, but formally discusses it, and unequivocally decides, that the bishops of Ephesus, Philippi, and Crete, in the days of Paul, were a very different kind of church officers from those bishops who lived in the fourth century.

But this is not all. When Eusebius gives us formal catalogues of bishops in succession, from the apostles' time until his own, he himself warns us against laying too much stress on his information; frankly confessing, "that he was obliged to rely much on tradition, and that he could trace no footsteps of other historians going before him only in a few narratives." This confession of Eusebius, I shall present in the words of the great Milton. "Eusebius, the ancientest writer of church history extant, confesses in the 4th chapter of his 3d book, that it was no easy matter to tell who were those that were left bishops of the churches by the apostles, more than what a man might gather from the Acts of the Apostles; and the Epistles of St. Paul, in which number he reckons Timothy for bishop of Ephesus. So as may plainly appear, that this tradition of bishopping Timothy over Ephesus, was but taken for granted out of that place in St. Paul, which was only an entreating him to tarry at Ephesus, to do something left him in charge. Now if Eusebius, a famous writer, thought it so difficult to tell who were appointed bishops by the apostles, much more may we think it difficult to

Leontius, an obscure bishop, speaking beyond his own diocese; and certainly much more hard was it for either of them to determine what kind of bishops these were, if they had so little means to know who they were; and much less reason have we to stand to their definite sentence, seeing they have been so rash as to raise up such lofty bishops and bishopricks, out of places of Scripture merely misunderstood. Thus while we leave the Bible to gad after these traditions of the ancients, we hear the ancients themselves confessing, that what knowledge they had in this point was such as they had gathered from the Bible.”

*Milton against Prelatical Episcopacy*, p. 3.

Besides the quotations above presented, which abundantly prove that the primitive bishop was the pastor of a single congregation, there are some facts, incidentally stated, by early writers, which serve remarkably to confirm the same truth.

The first fact is, that as the superiority of bishops was first embraced in populous and wealthy cities, so the pastors of the country churches maintained the primitive form of government considerably longer than those of the cities. The ministers of the congregations surrounding the cities were called *chorepiscopi*, or country bishops. They continued to exercise full episcopal powers a considerable time after the presbyters within and near the great cities had become subject to diocesans; until at length the influence of the Bishop of Rome, and of some other ambitious prelates, procured a decree of the Council of Sardis to suppress the *chorepiscopi* entirely. The reason given by the Council for this decree is remarkable. *Ne vilescat nomen Episcopi*; i. e. “lest the title of bishop should become *too cheap*.” This fact distinctly

marks the course of transition from plain rural pastors, to proud and wealthy prelates.

A second fact is equally decisive. It is the small number of souls committed to the care of some of the early bishops. We are informed that Gregory Thaumaturgus, when he was made bishop of Neo-cæsarea, in Pontus, about A. D. 250, had but seventeen professing Christians in his parish.\* And in many of the early writers we read of bishops being located in small obscure villages, within three or four miles of each other. This is surely descriptive of parochial, and not of diocesan Episcopacy. It would, manifestly, be the height of absurdity to suppose that pastors who could not possibly have more than a few hundred souls under their care, were any other than overseers of single congregations.

A third fact, which goes far towards proving that bishops, in early times, were the ordinary pastors of single congregations, is that it was then customary for the flock of which the bishop was to have the charge, to meet together for the purpose of electing him; and he was always ordained in their presence. Cyprian, in a passage quoted in a preceding page, expressly tells us, that these were standing rules in choosing and ordaining bishops; and Eusebius, (lib. 6. cap. 28, p. 229,) in giving an account of the election of Fabianus to the office of bishop, in Rome, confirms the statement of Cyprian. He tells us, that upon the death of Bishop Anterus, "All the people met together in the church to choose a successor, proposing several illustrious and eminent personages as fit for that office, whilst no one so much as thought upon Fabianus, then present, till a dove miraculously came

\* Gregor. Nyss. Oper. vol. ii. p. 979.

and sat upon his head, in the same manner as the Holy Ghost formerly descended on our Saviour; and then all the people, guided as it were with one divine spirit, cried out with one mind and soul, that Fabianus was worthy of the bishoprick; and so straightway taking him, they placed him on the episcopal throne.” The very existence of these rules in early times shows that bishops were then nothing more than the pastors of single churches; for in no other case is the application of such rules possible. And accordingly afterwards, when diocesan Episcopacy crept into the Church, this mode of choosing and ordaining bishops became impracticable, and was gradually laid aside.

A fourth fact, which shows that the primitive bishop was the pastor of a single church or congregation, is that in the first three centuries, the bishop’s charge was commonly called *παροικία*, a parish, signifying those who resided in the immediate vicinity of each other. But, in process of time, when the bishop’s power was enlarged, and his territorial limits extended, his charge began to be called *διοίκησις*, a diocese, a word notoriously taken from the secular language of the Roman empire, and expressive of a larger jurisdiction. This change of diction, evidently contemporary with the change of fact, is too significant to be overlooked.

A fifth fact, which shows that primitive Episcopacy was parochial and not diocesan, is, that for a considerable time after the days of the apostles, all the elders who were connected with a bishop, are represented as belonging to the same congregation with him, and sitting with him when the congregation was convened for public worship. Indeed, some of the early writers go so far as to inform us in what

manner they were seated, viz. that the bishop sat in the middle of a semi-circular bench; that the elders took their places on the same bench, on each side of their president or moderator; and that the deacons remained in a standing posture in the front of this seat, and in a lower place, ready to perform the services required of them. This representation perfectly accords with our doctrine of primitive Episcopacy, in which every congregation was furnished with a bishop, elders, and deacons; but cannot possibly be reconciled with the diocesan form.

A sixth fact, which shows that the primitive bishop was only the pastor of a single congregation, is, that the early writers represent the bishop as living in the same house with his presbyters or elders; a house near the place of worship to which they resorted, and capable of accommodating them all. They tell us, also, that the bishop, together with his elders, were supported by the same oblations; that these oblations were offered on one altar, or communion table; and that they were constantly divided, agreeably to certain established rules between the bishop and elders. It must be obvious to every impartial reader, that this account agrees only with the system of parochial Episcopacy, and that on any other principle such a plan of procedure would be at once impracticable and absurd.

The last circumstance relating to the primitive bishop which serves to fix his character, as the pastor of a single congregation, is the nature of that service which he was accustomed to perform. We have seen something of this in the foregoing quotations; but it will be proper to bring together into one view the duties incumbent on the bishop, in the apostolic and



immediately succeeding ages. The early writers, then, speak of the primitive bishop as performing, in general, all the baptisms in his flock; as the only person who, in ordinary cases, administered the Lord's Supper; as constantly present with his people, when convened; as the leader of their worship; as their stated public instructor; as visiting all the sick under his care; as catechising the young people several times in each week; as having the superintendency of the poor, none of whom were to be relieved by the deacons without, in each particular case, consulting the bishop; as celebrating all marriages; as attending all funerals; as under obligations to be personally acquainted with every individual of his flock, not overlooking even the servant-men and maids; as employed in healing differences among neighbours; and besides all these, attending to the discipline of his society, receiving and excluding members, &c. &c. Now is it not evident that no man could perform these duties for more than a single congregation? Can any impartial reader believe that the officers to whom all these details of parochial labours were allotted, were any other than the pastors of particular churches? To suppose that they were diocesan bishops, having a number of congregations, with subordinate pastors, under their control, is a supposition too absurd to be for a moment admitted.

Such is the testimony of the later fathers on the subject before us. We can find much evidence that, after the close of the third century, a difference of rank between bishops and ordinary presbyters began to be generally acknowledged; but we can find no evidence whatever, within the first four centuries, that the Christian Church considered diocesan Episcopacy as

the apostolic and primitive form. On the contrary, we have found several fathers of high reputation expressly declaring, that in the primitive Church, bishop and presbyter were the same; and that prelacy, as it existed in the fourth and following centuries, was a human invention, and gradually adopted in the Church, as a measure of prudence. We have found, in particular, one father, who stands at the pinnacle of honour, for learning as well as piety, maintaining both these positions with a clearness, a force of argument, and a detail of illustration, which one would imagine might satisfy incredulity itself. And we have seen in these early writers, a variety of facts incidentally stated; facts which, taken alone, would be considered by any court on earth as affording conclusive proof, that even after a moderate kind of prelacy arose, the bishops were still the pastors of single congregations.

I repeat, it is not true that any one of the fathers, within the first four centuries, does assert the apostolical institution of prelacy. Some writers produce Cyprian as saying, that "Jesus Christ and he alone has the power of setting bishops over the Church to govern it;" that "Christ constitutes as well as protects bishops;" and that "it is by divine appointment a bishop is set over the church." They produce Origen, as saying, "Shall I not be subject to the bishop, who is of God ordained to be my father? Shall not I be subject to the presbyter, who is, by divine vouchsafement, set over me?" They quote Hilary as declaring, "The bishop is the chief; though every bishop is a presbyter, yet every presbyter is not a bishop." And also as asserting, that James, and Timothy, and Titus, and the angels of the Asiatic churches were

bishops. They cite Athanasius as remonstrating with one who declined a bishopric, in the following terms—“If you think there is no reward allotted to the office of a bishop, you despise the Saviour who instituted that office.” They represent Chrysostom, as commenting on 1 Tim. iv. 4, in these words—“Paul does not speak of presbyters, but of bishops, for presbyters did not ordain Timothy a bishop.” And, finally, they produce the fathers of the Council of Antioch, in the year 265, as declaring, that “the office of a bishop is sacred and exemplary, both to the clergy and to the people.” Now, is it possible that such writers have yet to learn, that all these quotations, and ten thousand more like them, are nothing to their purpose? It is truly amazing! Have not I, who am a Presbyterian, repeatedly said, in the foregoing sheets, that “bishops were, by divine appointment, set over the Church?” Do not Presbyterians perpetually speak of the office of bishop in their Church as a “sacred office?” And would any Presbyterian on earth scruple to say, that bishops were and are ordained of God to be set over the Church; and also that every member of their flock, and even assistant preachers, within their parish, if not invested with a share in the pastoral charge, are bound to be “subject to them?” But no one, surely, could construe these expressions, on our part, as implying that we believed in the divine institution of such bishops as our Episcopal brethren contend for. The truth is, these quotations, so confidently made, only prove two points; First, that the fathers in question believed that there were pastors called bishops in the apostolic Church; which no man, in his senses, ever doubted: and, Secondly, that at the time when they wrote, bishops were considered as

having some kind of superiority over common presbyters; which is as little doubted as the former. In short, these writers are deceived by the bare occurrence of the word bishop. Whenever they find this word in the writings of the fathers, their imagination is instantly filled with prelates, and with all the peculiarities of the Episcopal system. But before the smallest touch of inquiry this hallucination vanishes. Though bishops in the third and fourth centuries had appropriated to themselves powers, which before had been enjoyed by others in common with them; yet their office itself was of divine appointment. Prelatists, indeed, say, and endeavour to persuade their readers, that the writers whom they quote, declare the bishops which existed in the days of the apostles to have been just such bishops as existed several centuries afterwards, in their own times—bishops in the prelatical sense of the word. But they have produced no passage which makes any such declaration, or which legitimately implies it; nor are they able to produce such a passage, from all the stores of antiquity, within the specified limits.

I will not exhaust the reader's patience, by pursuing further a chain of testimony so clear and indisputable. I have intentionally disguised nothing that seemed to favour the Episcopal cause; and, indeed, amidst such poverty of even plausible evidence in their behalf, there is little temptation to disguise any thing. It has truly filled me with surprise at every step of my progress, to observe, that, with all the confidence of assertion, and all the parade of testimony, exhibited by the friends of prelacy, they should be able to produce so little from the fathers, their strong hold, which can yield them any solid support. I can-

not, therefore, conclude this chapter in words more expressive of my fixed opinion, than those of a distinguished bishop of the Church of England, who, though he regarded prelacy as a wise human institution, steadfastly resisted the claim of divine right, which some high churchmen in his day were disposed to urge. After having stated some of their most plausible arguments, he declares, "I hope my reader will now see what weak proofs are brought for this distinction and superiority of order. No Scripture; no primitive general council; no general consent of primitive doctors and fathers; no, not *one* primitive father of note, speaking particularly and home to their purpose."\*

After this brief survey of the testimony of the Fathers, I cannot help repeating a remark which I made in reference to the testimony of Scripture. Those early writers say very little on the subject in question; and of that little a very small proportion is at all decisive or "home to the purpose." Now, I ask, could this possibly have been the case had those venerable men viewed the subject in the same light with modern high churchmen? Can it be imagined that if they had considered prelacy as a divine institution, and above all, as essential to regular ecclesiastical order, without which there could be no gospel ministry; no valid ordinances; in fact, no Church—can it be imagined, I say, that, if they had regarded the subject in this light, they would have said so little respecting it, and that that little should have been so remarkably wanting in explicitness and decision, as all must acknowledge it, at least for the most part, to be? No, I will venture to say it is impossible. Had I no other reason for the confident persuasion that they were

\* Bishop Croft's *Naked Truth*, p. 47.

entire strangers to the doctrine of Episcopacy, in the sense of our opponents, than the consideration of what they *omitted to say*, that alone would be sufficient to banish all remains of doubt. If they were honest men, and really believed prelacy to be so important a matter as modern high churchmen would persuade us, they could never have written on the subject as they have, nor left it under so questionable an aspect as the most sanguine and confident prelatists must acknowledge them to have done. To suppose that, under such circumstances, they could have done so, is one of the most incredible of all suppositions.

## CHAPTER VI.

## EARLY RISE OF PRELACY.

ONE of the most plausible arguments in favour of prelacy, is drawn by Episcopalians from *the early rise of the prelatical system*. The argument is thus stated—"Bishops, as an order superior to presbyters, are freely acknowledged by Presbyterians to have existed toward the close of the third, and, beyond all doubt, early in the fourth century. Now, in what manner shall we account for the introduction of such an order? Can any man believe that it was an innovation, brought in by human ambition within the first three hundred years? Is it supposable that men of such eminent piety, self-denial, and zeal as the ministers of the first two hundred and fifty, or three hundred years are represented to have been, could have been disposed to usurp unscriptural authority? But, even if they had been wicked enough to be so disposed, can we believe that any *temptation* to do so *then* existed, when it is known that, by gaining ecclesiastical pre-eminence, they only became more prominent objects to their pagan enemies, and, of course, more exposed to the fury of persecution? But, even supposing them to have been so ambitious and unprincipled as to attempt encroachment on the rights of others, and to have had ever so strong a temptation to do it, can we imagine that such an attempt could have been successful? would the rest of the

clergy have quietly submitted to such an usurpation? would the people have endured it? In a word; even supposing the clergy of that period to have been unprincipled enough to aspire to unauthorized honours, and to encroach on the rights of their brethren; and to have had the strongest inducements thus to act; is it credible that so great a *change* in the constitution of the Church could have taken place without opposition, without much conflict and noise? And if any such conflict and noise had occurred, should we not now find some record of it? Could such an encroachment possibly have taken place without convulsion; without leaving on the records of antiquity some traces of the steps by which it was accomplished? No, say the Episcopal advocates, it is not credible; nay, it is impossible. The unavoidable inference, then, is that no such alteration ever took place; that prelates, as an order superior to presbyters, have existed in the Church from the beginning; and, consequently, were of apostolical origin."

This is the substance of an argument which eminent Episcopal writers have ventured to call "demonstration," and on which great stress has been laid by them all. And, indeed, I am free to confess, that I think it is the most plausible argument they have. Their *Scriptural* testimony amounts to nothing—absolutely nothing. Their testimony from the *Fathers*, we have seen to be a failure. But the argument which I am about to examine, has, at first view, something like cogency. I am persuaded, however, that a very slight examination will suffice to show that this cogency is only apparent, and that it can boast of nothing more than mere plausibility.

And the first remark which I shall make on this



argument is, that it is the very same which the Papists have been accustomed, ever since the time of Bellarmine, to employ against the Protestants, and, among the rest, against Protestant Episcopalians. The Papists argue thus—"Every one grants," say they, "that the bishop of Rome claimed a certain pre-eminence over all other bishops, before the close of the *third century*; and in the *fourth century* some pre-eminence seems to have been extensively conceded to him." Now, they ask—"How could this happen? The bishops of that day were all too pious to be suspected of an attempt to encroach on the rights of their brethren. But if it were not so; if the prelate of Rome had been wicked enough to make the attempt, what *inducement* had he to desire such pre-eminence, since it would only expose him to more certain and severe persecution? Even supposing, however, that he was proud and selfish enough to attempt to gain such pre-eminence, and had had the strongest temptation to seek it, could he have accomplished any usurpation of that kind, without many struggles, and much opposition? What were the other bishops about? Is it credible that men of sense, with their eyes open, and 'of like passions with other men,' should be willing to surrender their rights to an ambitious individual? And even if an ambitious individual had attempted thus to usurp authority, and had succeeded in the attempt, would there not have been resistance—warm resistance—much conflict in the unhallowed struggle for pre-eminence? And among all the records of antiquity, should we not be able to find some traces of the conflict and noise occasioned by this ambitious and fraudulent encroachment? Now, since we find," say they, "no distinct

account of any such conflict and noise ; since we are wholly unable to trace the various steps by which the bishop of Rome is alleged to have gained the ecclesiastical throne on which he has been sitting for ages—we infer that he was never guilty of any such usurpation ; that his pre-eminence existed from the days of the apostles ; and, of course, is an institution of Christ.”

It is perfectly manifest that the argument of the Papists—and which they too call “demonstration”—is of the very same character with that of modern Episcopalians. It is, in fact, *mutatis mutandis*—the very same argument ; and every intelligent reader will see that it is quite as potent in Popish as in Protestant hands. But, as was pronounced in the former case, it is, in regard to both, plausible—simply plausible—and nothing more. A few plain statements, and especially a few indubitable *facts*, will be quite sufficient to destroy its force in the estimation of all intelligent and impartial readers.

The first assumption in this argument is, that the clergy, during the first three hundred years, had too much piety, zeal, gospel simplicity, and disinterestedness, to admit of their engaging in any scheme for usurping a power in the Church which Christ never gave them.

We are accustomed to look back to the early Church with a veneration nearly bordering on superstition. It is one of the common artifices of Popery to refer all their corruptions to primitive times, and, in concurrence with this, to represent those times as exhibiting the models of all excellence. But every representation of this kind ought to be received with much distrust. The Christian Church during the

apostolic age, and perhaps for half a century, and even a whole century afterwards, did indeed present a venerable aspect. Persecuted by the world on every side, she was favoured in an uncommon measure with the presence and Spirit of her divine Head and Lord; and perhaps exhibited a degree of simplicity and purity, which has never since been exceeded—possibly not equalled. But long before the close of the second century the scene began to change; and before the commencement of the fourth, a deplorable corruption of doctrine, discipline, and morals, had crept into the Church, and dreadfully disfigured the body of Christ. Hegesippus, an ecclesiastical historian, who wrote in the second century, declares that “the virgin purity of the Church was confined to the days of the apostles.” Nay, Jerome asserts that “the primitive churches were tainted with gross errors, while the apostles were still alive, and while the blood of Christ was still warm in Judea.” We know that in the very presence of the Saviour himself, the evening before he suffered, there was a contest among his disciples, “which of them should be the greatest.” The apostle Paul expressly cautions ministers of his day against attempting to be “lords over God’s heritage.” What a caution, you will say, at such a time, when they were in jeopardy of martyrdom every hour! Yet the undoubted fact is, that we read, in several of the epistles, strong indications of the ambition, the selfishness, and the encroaching spirit even of those who were set as leaders and guides of the people, and who ought to have been “ensamples to the flock.” We read of Diotrophes, who “loved to have the pre-eminence,” and who, on that account, troubled the Church. In short,

the apostle Paul informs us, 2 Thessalonians, ii. 7, that *the mystery of iniquity*, which afterwards wrought such an amount of corruption and mischief in the church, *had already begun to work*.

All this we find in the New Testament. But let us pursue the course of the Church a little further, and see whether the supposition of its entire freedom from corruption, and from the influence of ambition and conflict at this early period can be sustained.

Was there no spirit of domination manifested in the fierce dispute between Victor, Bishop of Rome, and Polycrates, of Ephesus, which took place in the second century, as related by Eusebius? Was no love of pre-eminence displayed by Cerinthus and Basilides, whose burning desire was “to be accounted great apostles?” Did Montanus, in the same century, exhibit no ambition in broaching his celebrated heresy? Was Samosatenus, in the third, wholly free from the same charge? Did Demetrius of Alexandria, discover nothing of an aspiring temper, when he sickened with envy at the fame and the success of Origen? Are there no accounts of Novatus having sought, ambitiously and fraudulently, to obtain the bishopric of Rome? Did not his contemporary, Felicissimus, make a vigorous attempt to supplant Cyprian, as Bishop of Carthage? Was not Cyprian brought in to be bishop in that city, by the influence of the people, in opposition to the majority of the presbyters, some of whom were anxious to obtain the place for themselves? And did there not hence arise frequent collisions between him and them, and at length an open rupture? I ask, are any of these things related in the early history of the Church? And can any man, with such records before him, lay his hand on his heart,

and assert that there were no symptoms of a spirit of ambition and domination in those times?

But I will not content myself with this general reference to the early conflicts of selfishness and ambition. The following specific quotations will be more than sufficient, if I do not mistake, to establish all that the opponents of prelacy can need to refute the plea before us.

Hermas, one of the earliest fathers whose writings are extant, says, in his Pastor, "As for those who had their rods green, but yet cleft; they are such as were always faithful and good; but they had some envy and strife among themselves, concerning dignity and pre-eminence. Now all such are vain and without understanding, as contend with one another about these things. Nevertheless, seeing they are otherwise good, if, when they shall hear these commands, they shall amend themselves, and shall, at my persuasion, suddenly repent; they shall, at last, dwell in the tower, as they who have truly and worthily repented. But if any one shall again return to his dissensions, he shall be shut out of the tower, and lose his life. For the life of those who keep the commandments of the Lord, consists in doing what they are commanded; not in principality, or in any other "dignity."\*

Hegesippus, who lived in the second century, and who was the first father who undertook to compose a regular ecclesiastical history, writes thus. "When James, the just, had been martyred for the same doctrine which our Lord preached, Simon, the son of Cleophas, was constituted bishop with universal preference, because he was the Lord's near kinsman. Wherefore they called that church a pure virgin, be-

\* Simil. 8. § 7.

cause it was not defiled with corrupt doctrine. But Thebuli, because he was not made bishop, endeavoured to corrupt the church; being one of the seven heretics among the people, whereof was Simon, of whom the Simonians.”\*

Some zealous Episcopalians represent the age of Cyprian as among the very purest periods of the Christian Church, and quote that father with a frequency and a confidence which evince the highest respect for his authority. The following passages will show how far the illustrious pastor of Carthage considered the bishops of his day as beyond the reach of selfishness and ambition.

“A long continuance of peace and security† had relaxed the rigour of that holy discipline which was delivered to us from above. All were set upon an immeasurable increase of gain; and, forgetting how the first converts to our religion had behaved under the personal direction and care of the Lord’s apostles, or how all ought in after times to conduct themselves; the love of money was their darling passion, and the master-spring of all their actions. The religion of the clergy slackened and decayed; the faith of priests and deacons grew languid and inactive; works of charity were discontinued; and an universal license and corruption prevailed. Divers bishops, who should have taught both by their example and persuasion, neglecting their high trust, and their commission from above, entered upon the management of secular affairs; and leaving their chair, and their charge with it, wandered about, from place to place in different provinces, upon

\* See fragments of this writer preserved in Eusebius, Lib. iv. Cap. 22.

† They had been free from persecution a very few years.

mercantile business, and in quest of disreputable gain. Thus the poor of the Church were miserably neglected, while the bishops, who should have taken care of them, were intent upon nothing but their own private profit, which they were forward to advance at any rate, and by any, even the foulest methods.”\*

Speaking of Cornelius, who had been made bishop, Cyprian says, “In the next place, he neither desired, nor canvassed for the dignity conferred upon him; much less did he invade it, as some others would, who were actuated by a great and lofty conceit of their own qualifications; but peaceably and modestly, like such as are called of God to this office.—Instead of using violence, as a certain person in this case hath done, to be made a bishop, he suffered violence, and was raised to his dignity by force and compulsion.”†

The same father, in the same epistle, has the following passage. “Unless you can think him a bishop, who, when another was ordained by sixteen of his brethren bishops, would obtrude upon the Church a spurious and foreign bishop, ordained by a parcel of renegadoes and deserters; and that by canvassing and intriguing for it.”‡

Cyprian speaks also of a certain deacon who had been deposed from his “sacred deaconship, on account of his fraudulent and sacrilegious misapplication of the church’s money to his own private use; and by his denial of the widows’ and orphans’ pledges deposited with him.”§

Origen, the contemporary of Cyprian, more than once lashes the clergy of his day for their vices. The following passage is surely strong enough, were there no other, to take away all doubt. “If Christ justly

\* De Lapsis, § 4.

† Epist. 55.

‡ Ibid.

§ Epist. 52.

wept over Jerusalem, he may now, on much better grounds, weep over the Church, which was built to the end that it might be an house of prayer; and yet, through the filthy usury of some, (and I wish these were not even the pastors of the people,) is made a den of thieves. But I think that that which is written concerning the sellers of doves, doth agree to those who commit the churches to greedy, tyrannical, unlearned, and irreligious bishops, presbyters, and deacons.”\* The same father elsewhere declares, “We are such as that we sometimes in pride go beyond even the wickedest of the princes of the gentiles; and are just at the point of procuring for ourselves splendid guards, as if we were kings, making it our study moreover to be a terror to others, and giving them, especially if they be poor, very uneasy access. We are to them, when they come and seek any thing from us, more cruel than are even tyrants, or the cruelest princes to their supplicants. And you may see, even in the greater part of lawfully constituted Churches, especially those of greater cities, how the pastors of God’s people, suffer none, though they were even the chiefest of Christ’s disciples, to be equal with themselves.”†

Eusebius, who lived in the next century, writes in the same strain concerning the age of Cyprian. “When, through too much liberty, we fell into sloth and negligence; when every one began to envy and backbite another; when we waged, as it were, an intestine war amongst ourselves, with words as with swords; pastors rushed against pastors, and people against people, and strife and tumult, deceit and guile advanced to the highest pitch of wickedness—Our

\* In Matt. p. 441.

† Ibid. p. 420.



pastors, despising the rule of religion, strove mutually with one another, studying nothing more than how to outdo each other in strife, emulations, hatred, and mutual enmity; proudly usurping principalities, as so many places of tyrannical domination. Then the Lord covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in his anger.”\*

Gregory Nazianzen, who flourished in the fourth century, at a time which many are disposed to assume as the very best model of the Christian Church, speaks, in a number of places in his writings, with bitter regret of the proud and ambitious contests among the clergy of his day. His language is the more remarkable because he was himself a bishop, and of course somewhat interested in maintaining the credit of his order. Speaking of one of the most famous councils of his time, he says, “These conveyers of the Holy Ghost, these preachers of peace to all men, grew bitterly outrageous and clamorous against one another, in the midst of the church, mutually accusing each other, leaping about as if they had been mad, under the furious impulse of a lust of power and dominion, as if they would have rent the whole world in pieces.” He afterwards adds, “This was not the effect of *piety*, but of a *contention for thrones*.”—*Tom.* ii. 25. 27.

On another occasion, in the bitterness of his spirit, he expresses himself in the following strong language, “Would to God there were no prelacy, no prerogative of place, no tyrannical privileges; that by virtue alone we might be distinguished. Now this right and left hand, and middle rank, these higher and lower dignities, and this state-like precedence, have caused many fruitless conflicts and bruises; have cast many

\* Hist. Eccles. Lib. viii. Cap. 1.

into the pit, and carried away multitudes to the place of the goats.”—*Orat.* 28.

Nay, Archbishop Whitgift, with all his Episcopal partialities, was constrained to acknowledge the ambitious and aspiring temper which disgraced many bishops even as early as the time of Cyprian. “There was great contention,” says he, “among the bishops in the Council of Nice, insomuch that even in the presence of the emperor, they ceased not to libel one against another. What bitterness and cursing was there between Epiphanius and Chrysostom! What jarring between Jerome and Augustine! Bishops shall not now need to live by pilling and polling, as it seems they did in Cyprian’s time; for he complaineth thereof in his sermon *De Lapsis*.”\*

With Whitgift agrees his contemporary Rigaltius, who was so much distinguished for his learned Annotations on the works of Cyprian. Speaking of Cyprian’s age, and of the deacon’s office, he says, “By little and little, and from small beginnings, a kingdom and a love of dominion entered into the Church. In the apostles’ time there were only deacons; Cyprian’s age admitted sub-deacons; the following age arch-deacons, and then arch-bishops and patriarchs.”

These extracts are produced, not to blacken the ministerial character; but to establish the fact, that clerical ambition, and clerical encroachments were familiarly known, even during that period which modern Episcopalians pronounce the purest that was ever enjoyed by the Christian Church. I certainly have no interest, and can take no pleasure in depicting the foibles, the strife, and the vices of the clergy

\* Defence of his Answer against Cartwright, p. 472, &c.

in any age. But when assertions are made respecting them as directly contradictory to all history, as they are contrary to the course of depraved human nature; and especially when these assertions are triumphantly employed as arguments to establish other assertions equally unfounded, it is time to vindicate the truth. To do this, in the present case, is an easy task. The man who, after perusing the foregoing extracts, can dare to say, that the clergy of the first three centuries, were all too pious and disinterested to admit the suspicion, that they aspired to titles and honours, and intrigued for the attainment of episcopal chairs, must have a hardihood of incredulity, or an obliquity of perception truly extraordinary. We have seen that Hermas plainly refers to certain ecclesiastics of his time, who had "envy and strife among themselves concerning dignity and pre-eminence." Hegesippus goes further, and points out the case of a particular individual, who ambitiously aspired to the office of bishop, and was exceedingly disappointed and mortified at not obtaining it. Cyprian expressly declares not only that a spirit of intrigue, of worldly gain, and of ecclesiastical domination, existed among the clergy of his day, but that such a spirit was awfully prevalent among them. Eusebius gives us similar information in still stronger terms. Archbishop Whitgift makes the same acknowledgment, more particularly with respect to the bishops of that period. And even Dr. Bowden acknowledges that a number of persons, as early as the days of Cyprian, and before his time, who aspired to the office of bishop, and who used every effort and artifice to attain it, on being disappointed, distinguished themselves as heretics or schismatics, and became the pests of the Church.

These extracts might be multiplied twenty-fold. If any intelligent reader will look through the pages of Clemens Alexandrinus, Tertullian, Cyprian, Origen, Chrysostom, and, above all, Basil, to name no more, he will find, within the first three hundred and fifty, or four hundred years, an amount of evidence of the depravity of ecclesiastics which will amaze and revolt him. He will find evidence, not only of selfishness, of pride, and of grasping ambition, but of voluptuous and licentious habits, with the description of which I cannot pollute my pages; and which would convince every impartial mind that not merely *some*, but *large numbers* of them were utterly unprincipled and profligate.

Now, I repeat, if any man, after reading such accounts, can lay his hand on his heart, and say, that there is no evidence that the ministers of the Christian Church, even for the first two hundred years after the apostolic age, were too pious, pure, and disinterested to make any ambitious attempts to usurp power; or to pursue their own aggrandizement at the expense of the rights and claims of others; I say, if any man, after reading the foregoing statements and citations can lay his hand on his heart, and say this—he must be blinded by a prejudice of the most extraordinary kind. Nay, I will venture to assert, that, so far from having reason to doubt the possibility of the clergy of those early times striving with unhallowed ambition to gain the upper hand of each other, and to obtain *titles* and *places*; if they were really such men as their most venerable and trust-worthy contemporaries describe—it would have been something bordering on miracle, if prelacy, or some such innovation on the simple and primitive model of church order had not arisen.

Still, however, the question recurs; What, in those days of persecution and peril, before Christianity was established, when the powers of the world were leagued against it, and when every Christian pastor especially held a station of much self-denial and danger, what could induce any selfish or ambitious man to desire the pastoral office, and to intrigue for the extension of the powers and honours of that office? When my opponents can tell me what induced Judas Iscariot to follow Christ, at the risk of his life; when they can tell me what impelled Diotrophes to desire the pre-eminence in the Church; or what were the objects of Demas, Hymenæus, and Alexander, in their restless and ambitious conduct, while Calvary was yet smoking with the blood of their crucified Lord, and while their own lives were every moment exposed to the rage of persecution;—when my opponents can tell me what actuated these men, I shall be equally ready to assign a reason for the early rise and progress of prelacy.

But there is no need of retreating into the obscurity of conjecture, when causes enough to satisfy every mind may easily be assigned. If the advocates of Episcopacy do not know that there are multitudes of men, in all ages, in the Church, and out of it, who are ready to court distinction merely for distinction's sake, and at the evident hazard of their lives, they have yet much to learn from the instructions both of human nature and of history. But this is not all. It is a notorious fact, that the office of bishop, even in those early times, had much to attract the *cupidity*, as well as the *ambition* of selfish and aspiring men. The revenues of the primitive Church were large and alluring. It is granted that, during the first three

centuries, the Church held little or no *real* property ; as the Roman laws did not allow any person to give or bequeath real estates to ecclesiastical bodies, without the consent of the Senate or the Emperor. The *contributions*, however, which were made to the Church, for the support of the clergy, the poor, &c. were immense. During the apostolic age, the proceeds of the sale of real estates were devoted to ecclesiastical and charitable purposes, and laid at the apostles' feet. We find the gentile churches contributing liberally to the relief of the churches of Judea, in Acts xi. 29. Rom. xv. 26. 1 Cor. xvi. 1, and 2 Cor. viii. The same liberality manifested itself in subsequent times.\* So ample were the funds of the Church of Rome, about the middle of the second century, that they were adequate not only to the support of her own clergy and poor members, but also to the relief of other churches, and of a great number of Christian captives in the several provinces, and of such as were condemned to the mines.† Such was the wealth of the same church, in the third century, that it was considered as an object not unworthy of imperial rapacity. By order of the Emperor Decius, the Roman deacon Laurentius was seized, under the expectation of finding in his possession the treasures of the

\* One cause of the liberality of the primitive Christians in their contributions to the Church, was the notion which generally prevailed, that the *end of the world* was at hand. This notion was adopted by some of the early fathers, and propagated among the people with great diligence. Cyprian taught, in his day, with great confidence, that the dissolution of the world was but a few years distant. *Epist. ad Thibart.* The tendency of this opinion to diminish the self-denial of parting with temporal wealth is obvious. See Father *Paul's Hist. of Benefices and Revenues.* Chap. II.

† Father Paul's *Hist. of Ecclesiastical Benefices and Revenues,* Chap. iii.

Church, and of transferring them to the coffers of the Emperor: but the vigilant deacon, fearing the avarice of the tyrant, had distributed them, as usual, when a persecution was expected. Prudentius introduces an officer of the Emperor, thus addressing the deacon, *Quod Cæsaris scis, Cæsari da, nempe justum postulo; ni fallor, haud ullam tuus signat Deus pecuniam. i. e.* Give to Cæsar what you know to be his, I ask what is just; for if I mistake not, your God coins no money.\*

Now the revenues of the churches, whether great or small, were at the disposal of the bishops. The deacons executed their orders. Of course they had every opportunity of enriching themselves at the expense of the Church. And that they not unfrequently embraced this opportunity, is attested by Cyprian, who laments the fact, and is of opinion that the persecution which took place in the reign of Decius, was intended by God to punish a guilty people, and to purge this corruption from his Church.† And yet, in the face of all this testimony, the advocates of Episcopacy permit themselves to maintain that there was *no temptation*, either *before* or *during* the age of Cyprian, to induce any man to desire the office of bishop. Nay, they tell us, that to suppose there *was* any such temptation, is, in fact, to yield the argument, because it is to concede that the office then included such a superiority and pre-eminence of rank as we utterly deny. Nothing will be more easy than to show that this whole plea is false, and every thing founded upon it worthless.

\* Prudent. in Lib. de Coronis. Father Paul's History of Ecclesiastical Benefices and Revenues, Chap. iii.

† See his discourse De Lapsis, before quoted.

The love of pre-eminence and of power is natural to man. It is one of the most early, powerful, and universal principles of our nature. It reigns without control in wicked men; and it has more influence than it ought to have in the minds of the most pure and pious. It shows itself in the beggar's cottage, as well as on the imperial throne; in the starving and gloomy dungeon, no less than in the luxurious palace. Nay, it has been known to show itself with the rack, the gibbet, and the flames of martyrdom in the immediate prospect. This is wonderful; but so it is. And to attempt to set up our imaginary reasonings against the *fact*, is in the highest degree presumptuous and irrational.

Now, though the bishop, for the first two centuries after Christ, was, as we have seen, nothing more than a mere parochial "overseer," in other words, the pastor of a single church; yet his office was not without its attractions. It was a place of honour and of trust. He was looked up to as a leader and guide. The ruling elders and deacons of the parish by whom he was surrounded, regarded him as their superior, and treated him with reverence. And, as the bounty distributed by the deacons was, to a considerable extent, directed by his pleasure—the poor, of course, considered and revered him both as their spiritual and temporal benefactor; and gave him much of the incense of respect, gratitude, and praise. Here was abundantly enough to tempt an humble ecclesiastic in those days, or in any days. There are thousands of men—thousands of honest, good men, quite capable of being attracted by such fascinations as these. Many an humble rectory; many a plain, and even poor pastoral charge has been sought, from that time



to the present, with zeal and earnestness, for one half the temptation which has been described. But this was not all. While such were the attractions connected with the bishop's office, in its primitive parochial form, these attractions were not a little increased in the third century, when ambition sought and obtained some extension of the bishop's prerogative; and still more augmented in the fourth, when worldly pride and splendour in that office began to be openly enthroned in the Church.

But still it may be asked—Even supposing the clergy of the first three centuries to have been *capable* of aspiring, ambitious conduct; and supposing that there were *temptations* to induce them thus to aspire; can we suppose that their unjust claims would have been calmly yielded, and their usurpations submitted to without a struggle on the part of the other clergy, and the great body of the people? If, then, such claims were made, and such usurpations effected, why do we not find, in the early history of the Church, some account of a change so notable, and of conflicts so severe and memorable as must have attended its introduction?

In answer to this question, let it be remembered, that the nations over which the Christian religion was spread with so much rapidity during the first three centuries, were sunk in deplorable ignorance. Grossly illiterate, very few were able to read; and even to these few, manuscripts were of difficult access. At that period, popular eloquence was the great engine of persuasion; and where the character of the mind is not fixed by reading, and a consequent habit of attention and accurate thinking, it is impossible to say how deeply and suddenly it may be operated upon

by such an engine. A people of this description, wholly unaccustomed to speculations on government; universally subjected to despotic rule in the state; having no just ideas of religious liberty; altogether unfurnished with the means of communicating and uniting with each other, which the art of printing has since afforded; torn with dissensions among themselves, and liable to be *turned about with every wind of doctrine*; such a people could offer little resistance to those who were ambitious of ecclesiastical power. A fairer opportunity for the few to take the advantage of the ignorance, the credulity, the divisions, and the weakness of the many, can scarcely be imagined. In truth, under these circumstances, ecclesiastical usurpation is so far from being improbable, that, to suppose it not to have taken place, would be to suppose a continued miracle.

Nor is there more difficulty in supposing that these encroachments were submitted to by the clergy, than by the people. Some yielded through fear of the bold and domineering spirits who contended for seats of honour; some with the hope of obtaining preferment themselves in their turn; and some from that lethargy and sloth which ever prevent a large portion of mankind from engaging in any thing which requires enterprise and exertion. To these circumstances it may be added, that, while some of the presbyters, under the name of *bishops*, assumed unscriptural authority over the rest of that order; the increasing power of the latter over the deacons, and other subordinate grades of church officers, offered something like a recompense for their submission to those who claimed a power over themselves.

In addition to all these circumstances, it is to be

recollected, that the encroachments and the change in question took place *gradually*. The advocates of Episcopacy sometimes represent us as teaching that the change in question was adopted *at once*, or by a *single step*. We believe no such thing. As we have seen, Jerome expressly tells us that prelacy was brought in *paulatim*—by little and little. It was three hundred years in coming to maturity. When great strides in the assumption of power are *suddenly* made, they seldom fail to rouse resentment, and excite opposition. But when made artfully, and by slow degrees, nothing is more common than to see them pass without opposition, and almost without notice. Instances of this kind among nations sunk in ignorance, and long accustomed to despotic government, are numberless; and they are by no means rare even among the more enlightened. The British nation, in the seventeenth century, saw a monarch restored with enthusiasm, and almost without opposition, to the throne, by those very persons, who, a few years before, had dethroned and beheaded his father, and declared the bitterest hatred to royalty. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, one of the most enlightened nations of Europe, in a little more than twelve years after dethroning and decapitating a mild and gentle king, and after denouncing kingly government, with almost every possible expression of abhorrence, yielded, without a struggle, to the will of a despotic usurper. And, still more recently, we have seen a people enlightened and free, who had for more than two centuries maintained and boasted of their republican character, submit ignobly and at once, to the yoke of a monarch imposed on

them by a powerful neighbour. In short, the most limited knowledge of human nature, and of history, shows not only the possibility, but the actual and frequent occurrence of changes from free government to tyranny and despotism, in a much shorter period than a century; and all this in periods when information was more equally diffused, and the principles of social order much better understood, than in the second and third centuries of the Christian era.

Nor is it wonderful that we find so little said concerning these usurpations in the early records of antiquity. There was probably but little written on the subject; since those who were most ambitious to shine as writers, were most likely to be forward in making unscriptural claims themselves; and, of course, would be little disposed to record their own shame. It is likewise probable, that the little that was written on such a subject, would be lost; because the art of printing being unknown, and the trouble and expense of multiplying copies being only incurred for the sake of possessing interesting and popular works, it was not to be expected, that writings so hostile to the ambition and vices of the clergy, would be much read, if it were possible to suppress them. And when to these circumstances we add, that literature after the fourth century, was chiefly in the hands of ecclesiastics; that many important works written within the first three centuries are known to be lost; and that of the few which remain, some are acknowledged on all hands, to have been grossly corrupted, and radically mutilated, we cannot wonder that so little in explanation of the various steps of clerical usurpation has reached our times.

In confirmation of this reasoning, a variety of facts,

acknowledged as such by the advocates of Episcopacy themselves, may be adduced.

The first is, the rise of arch-bishops and metropolitans in the Church. All Protestant Episcopalians, with one voice, grant that all bishops were originally equal; that arch-bishops, metropolitans, and patriarchs were offices of human invention, and had no other than human authority. Yet it is certain that they arose very nearly as soon as diocesan bishops. In fact they arose so early, became in a little while so general, and were introduced with so little opposition and noise, that some have undertaken, on this very ground, to prove that they were of apostolical origin. How did this come about? How did it happen that any of the bishops were proud or ambitious enough to usurp titles and powers which the Master never gave them? How came their fellow-bishops to submit so quietly to the encroachment? And why is it that we have quite as little on the records of antiquity to point out the arts and steps by which this usurped pre-eminence was reached, as we have to show the methods by which diocesan Episcopacy was established?

Closely connected with the introduction of arch-bishops, and other grades in the Episcopal office, is the rise and progress of the Papacy. It is certain that the anti-christian claims of the Bishop of Rome were begun before the close of the second century. The writings of Irenæus and Tertullian, both furnish abundant evidence of this fact. Yet the records of antiquity give so little information respecting the various steps by which this "man of sin" rose to the possession of his power; they contain so little evidence of any efficient opposition to his claims; and represent the sub-

mission of the other bishops as being so early and general, that the Papists attempt, from these circumstances, to prove the divine origin of their system. Yet what Protestant is there who does not reject this reasoning as totally fallacious, and conclude that the supremacy of the Bishop of Rome is an unscriptural usurpation? And although the most impartial and learned divines may and do differ among themselves in fixing the several dates of the rise, progress, and establishment of this great spiritual usurper; yet the fact that he did thus rise, and advance, and erect a tyrannical throne in the Church, contrary to all that might have been expected both from the piety and the selfishness of the early Christians, is doubted by none.

Accordingly, this view of the gradual and insidious rise of prelacy is presented by a number of the most learned and impartial ecclesiastical historians. Of these a specimen will be given.

The first whom I shall quote is the learned Dr. Mosheim, a Lutheran divine, whose Ecclesiastical History has been for a century the theme of praise, for the general impartiality as well as erudition manifested by its author. In his account of the first century, he has the following remarks: "The rulers of the Church at this time, were called either presbyters or bishops, which two titles are in the New Testament, undoubtedly applied to the same order of men. These were persons of eminent gravity, and such as had distinguished themselves by their superior sanctity and merit. Their particular functions were not always the same; for while some of them confined their labours to the instruction of the people, others contributed in different ways to the edification of the

Church. Such was the constitution of the Christian Church in its infancy, when its assemblies were neither numerous nor splendid. Three or four presbyters, men of remarkable piety and wisdom, ruled these small congregations in perfect harmony, nor did they stand in need of any president or superior to maintain concord and order, where no dissensions were known. But the number of the presbyters and deacons increasing with that of the churches, and the sacred work of the ministry growing more painful and weighty by a number of additional duties, these new circumstances required new regulations. It was then judged necessary that one man of distinguished gravity and wisdom should preside in the council of presbyters, in order to distribute among his colleagues their several tasks, and to be a centre of union to the whole society. This person was at first styled the angel of the church to which he belonged ; but was afterwards distinguished by the name of bishop or inspector ; a name borrowed from the Greek language, and expressing the principal part of the Episcopal function, which was to inspect into, and superintend the affairs of the Church. Let none, however, confound the bishops of this primitive and golden period of the Church with those of whom we read in the following ages. For though they were both distinguished by the same name, yet they differed extremely, and that in many respects. A bishop, during the first and second centuries, was a person who had the care of one Christian assembly, which, at that time, was, generally speaking, small enough to be contained in a private house. In this assembly he acted, not so much with the authority of a master, as with the zeal and diligence of a faithful servant. He instructed the peo-

ple, performed the several parts of divine worship, attended the sick, and inspected into the circumstances and supplies of the poor.”—*Eccles. Hist.* I. 101. 104—106. Such is the representation which this learned historian gives of the government of the Christian Church during the first, and the greater part of the second century.

Of the third century he speaks in the following manner: “The face of things began now to change in the Christian Church. The ancient method of ecclesiastical government seemed, in general, still to subsist, while, at the same time, by imperceptible steps, it varied from the primitive rule, and degenerated towards the form of a religious monarchy. For the bishops aspired to higher degrees of power and authority than they had formerly possessed, and not only violated the rights of the people, but also made gradual encroachments upon the privileges of the presbyters. And that they might cover these usurpations with an air of justice, and an appearance of reason, they published new doctrines concerning the nature of the Church, and of the Episcopal dignity. One of the principal authors of this change in the government of the Church, was Cyprian, who pleaded for the power of the bishops with more zeal and vehemence than had ever been hitherto employed in that cause. This change in the form of ecclesiastical government was soon followed by a train of vices, which dishonoured the character and authority of those to whom the administration of the Church was committed. For though several yet continued to exhibit to the world illustrious examples of primitive piety and Christian virtue, yet many were sunk in luxury and voluptuousness; puffed up with vanity,



arrogance, and ambition; possessed with a spirit of contention and discord; and addicted to many other vices, that cast an undeserved reproach upon the holy religion of which they were the unworthy professors and ministers. This is testified in such an ample manner, by the repeated complaints of many of the most respectable writers of this age, that truth will not permit us to spread the veil which we should otherwise be desirous to cast over such enormities among an order so sacred. The bishops assumed, in many places, a princely authority. They appropriated to their evangelical function, the splendid ensigns of temporal majesty. A throne surrounded with ministers, exalted above his equals the servant of the meek and humble Jesus; and sumptuous garments dazzled the eyes and the minds of the multitude into an ignorant veneration for their arrogated authority. The example of the bishops was ambitiously imitated by the presbyters, who, neglecting the sacred duties of their station, abandoned themselves to the indolence and delicacy of an effeminate and luxurious life. The deacons, beholding the presbyters deserting thus their functions, boldly usurped their rights and privileges; and the effects of a corrupt ambition were spread through every rank of the sacred order.”—I. 265—267.

I shall only add a short extract from the same writer’s account of the fourth century. “The bishops, whose opulence and authority were considerably increased since the reign of Constantine, began to introduce gradually innovations into the form of ecclesiastical discipline, and to change the ancient government of the Church. Their first step was an entire exclusion of the people from all part in the adminis-

tration of ecclesiastical affairs; and afterwards, they, by degrees, divested even the presbyters of their ancient privileges, and their primitive authority, that they might have no importunate protesters to control their ambition, or oppose their proceedings; and principally that they might either engross to themselves, or distribute as they thought proper, the possessions and revenues of the Church. Hence it came to pass that at the conclusion of the fourth century, there remained no more than a mere shadow of the ancient government of the Church. Many of the privileges which had formerly belonged to the presbyters and people, were usurped by the bishops; and many of the rights which had been formerly vested in the Universal Church, were transferred to the emperors, and to subordinate officers and magistrates.”—I. 348.

Such is the representation of Mosheim, one of the most learned men of the eighteenth century; and who had probably investigated the early history of the Church with as much diligence and penetration as any man that ever lived.

The next citation shall be taken from Gibbon’s “Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.” The hostility of this writer to the Christian religion is well known. Of course, on any subject involving the divine origin of Christianity, I should feel little disposition either to respect his judgment, or to rely on his assertions. But on the subject before us, which is a question of fact, and which he treats historically, he had no temptation to deviate from impartiality; or, if such temptation had existed, it would have been likely to draw him to the side of ecclesiastical aristocracy and splendour, rather than to that of primitive simplicity. In fact, his leaning to the external show of

Romanism is well known. His deep and extensive learning, no competent judge ever questioned: and, indeed, his representations on this subject, are fortified by so many references to the most approved writers, that they cannot be considered as resting on his candour or veracity alone.\*

Mr. Gibbon thus describes the character and duties of Christian bishops in the first and second centuries: "The public functions of religion were solely entrusted to the established ministers of the Church, the bishops and the presbyters; two appellations which, in their first origin, appear to have distinguished the same office, and the same order of persons. The name of presbyter was expressive of their age, or rather of their gravity and wisdom. The title of bishop denoted their inspection over the faith and manners of the Christians who were committed to their pastoral care. In proportion to the respective numbers of the faithful, a larger or smaller number of these episcopal presbyters guided each infant congregation, with equal authority, and with united counsels. But the most perfect equality of freedom requires the directing hand of a superior magistrate; and the order of public deliberations soon introduces the office of a president, invested at least with the authority of collecting the sentiments, and of executing the resolutions of the assembly. A regard for the public tranquillity, which would so

\* The pious Episcopal divine, Dr. Haweis, speaking of Mr. Gibbon's mode of representing this subject, expresses himself in the following manner: "Where no immediate bias to distort the truth leaves him an impartial witness, I will quote Gibbon with pleasure. I am conscious his authority is more likely to weigh with the world in general, than mine. I will, therefore, simply report his account of the government and nature of the primitive Church. I think we shall not in this point greatly differ."—*Eccles. Hist.* I. 416.

frequently have been interrupted by annual, or by occasional elections, induced the primitive Christians to constitute an honourable and perpetual magistracy, and to choose one of the wisest and most holy among their presbyters, to execute, during his life, the duties of their ecclesiastical governor. It was under these circumstances that the lofty title of bishop began to raise itself above the humble appellation of presbyter; and while the latter remained the most natural distinction for the members of every Christian senate, the former was appropriated to the dignity of its new president. The pious and humble presbyters who were first dignified with the Episcopal title, could not possess, and would probably have rejected the power and pomp which now encircle the tiara of the Roman pontiff, or the mitre of a German prelate. The primitive bishops were considered only as the first of their equals, and the honourable servants of a free people. Whenever the Episcopal chair became vacant by death, a new president was chosen among the presbyters, by the suffrage of the whole congregation. Such was the mild and equal constitution by which the Christians were governed more than an hundred years after the death of the apostles.”\*—*Decline and Fall*, Vol. II. 272—275.

Concerning the state of Episcopacy in the third century, Mr. Gibbon thus speaks: “As the legislative authority of the particular churches was insensibly superseded by the use of councils, the bishops obtained, by their alliance, a much larger share of

\* Here is an explicit declaration, that the presidency or standing moderatorship of one of the presbyters, among his colleagues, without any claim to superiority of order, was the only kind of Episcopacy that existed in the Church, until near the close of the second century.

executive and arbitrary power; and, as soon as they were connected by a sense of their common interest, they were enabled to attack with united vigour the original rights of the clergy and people. The prelates of the third century imperceptibly changed the language of exhortation into that of command, scattered the seeds of future usurpations; and supplied by Scripture allegories, and declamatory rhetoric, their deficiency of force and of reason. They exalted the unity and power of the Church, as it was represented in the Episcopal office, of which every bishop enjoyed an equal and undivided portion. Princes and magistrates, it was often repeated, might boast an earthly claim to a transitory dominion. It was the Episcopal authority alone, which was derived from the Deity, and extended itself over this, and over another world. The bishops were the vicegerents of Christ, the successors of the apostles, and the mystic substitutes of the high priest of the Mosaic law. Their exclusive privilege of conferring the sacerdotal character, invaded the freedom both of clerical and of popular elections; and if, in the administration of the Church, they sometimes consulted the judgment of the presbyters, or the inclination of the people, they most carefully inculcated the merit of such a voluntary condescension." I. p. 276, 277.

Dr. Haweis, an Episcopal divine, in his *Ecclesiastical History*, a late and popular work, before quoted, substantially agrees with Dr. Mosheim and Mr. Gibbon, in their representations on this subject. He explicitly pronounces with them, that primitive Episcopacy was parochial, and not diocesan; that clerical pride and ambition gradually introduced prelacy; that there was no material innovation, however, on the

primitive model, until the middle of the second century; and that after this, the system of imparity made rapid progress, until there arose, in succession, diocesan bishops, archbishops, metropolitans, patriarchs, and, finally, the Pope himself.

I shall only add one more to this class of testimonies. It is that of the celebrated Professor Neander, of Prussia, probably the most deeply learned ecclesiastical antiquary now living. And his connexion with the Lutheran Church, as before observed, exempts him from all suspicion of strong prejudice in favour of either Prelacy or Presbyterianism. His statement on the subject is so extended and circuitous, that it is necessary to present an abridgment rather than the whole, in this place. He expresses a decisive opinion, then, that prelacy was not established by the apostles; that nothing more than a moderator of each parochial presbytery existed for nearly two hundred years after Christ; that these parochial moderators or "presiding elders," had no higher office than their colleagues in the eldership, being only *primi inter pares*, i. e. the first among equals; and that as the first Christian spirit declined, the spirit of ambition and encroachment gained ground against the "Presbyterian system," as he emphatically styles the apostolical model. And, accordingly, in speaking of the struggle of Cyprian against his opponents, in the third century, he styles the success of the former against the latter, as the triumph of the Episcopal system over "Presbyterianism."\*

The fact being thus established, that diocesan Episcopacy was not sanctioned by the apostles; that it

\* History of the Christian Church, vol. i. p. 194, 238. London edition. Rose's translation.

was the offspring of human ambition; and that it was gradually introduced into the Church; I shall not dwell long on the precise gradations by which it was introduced, or the precise date to be assigned to each step in its progress. Such an inquiry is as unnecessary and unimportant as it is difficult. But as it may gratify some readers to know how those who have most deeply and successfully explored antiquity, have considered the subject, I shall attempt a sketch of what appears to have been the rise and progress of this remarkable usurpation.

The Christian religion spread itself during the apostolic age, over a large part of the Roman empire. It was first received in the principal cities, Jerusalem, Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth, and Rome. Here congregations appear to have been first formed, and church officers first appointed. As the places of worship were usually private houses, it follows of course that each congregation was comparatively small. And as we read of great multitudes having believed in several of the larger cities, we may infer that there were a number of these congregations, or small house-churches in each of those cities; without, however, being so distinctly divided into separate societies as is common at the present day.

Each primitive congregation was probably furnished with one or more elders, and also with deacons. The elders were of two kinds: the first class were ministers of the gospel, and therefore taught and led the devotions of the people, as well as ruled in the church. The other class assisted as rulers only. It is not certain that both these classes of elders were found in every church. We only know that they both existed in the apostolic age; and that all the elders of

each congregation, when convened, formed a kind of parochial presbytery, or church session. The teaching elders were also called bishops. Of these each congregation was always furnished with one, and sometimes with several, according to the number of its members, and other circumstances. We are expressly told in the sacred history, that in the days of the apostles there were a number of bishops in each of the cities of Ephesus and Philippi; and it is most probable that these were the pastors of different congregations in those cities respectively.

In those cases in which there were several pastors or bishops in the same church, they were at first perfectly and in all respects equal. "They ruled the church," as Jerome expresses it, "in common;" and the alternate titles of bishop and elder belonged and were equally applied to all. It does not appear, that in the beginning, even a temporary chairman was found necessary. There was probably little formality in their mode of transacting business. A large portion of the spirit of their Master supplied the place of specific rules, and of energetic government. But towards the close of the first century, when both churches and ministers had greatly multiplied; when it was common to have a number of teaching as well as ruling elders in the same congregation; when, with the increasing number, it is most probable that some unworthy characters had crept into the ministry; and when, of course, the preservation of order in their parochial presbyteries was more difficult, the expedient of appointing a president or moderator would naturally and almost unavoidably be adopted. This presiding presbyter was generally, at first, the oldest and gravest of the number; but soon afterwards, as we



are told, the rule of seniority was laid aside, and the most able, enterprising, and decisive presbyter, was chosen to fill the chair. After a while, the choice of a president was not made at every meeting of the parochial presbytery, or church session, but was made for an indefinite time, and sometimes for life; in which case the choice usually fell upon the person who had the most influence, and was supposed to possess the greatest weight of character. This chairman or moderator, who presided during the debates, collected the voices, and pronounced the sentences of the bench of presbyters, was, of course, the most conspicuous and dignified of the number. He had no pre-eminence of order over his brethren; but (to employ the illustration of a respectable Episcopal divine, before quoted,) as the chairman of a committee has a more honourable place than the rest of the members, while the committee is sitting; so a chairman for life, in a dignified ecclesiastical court, was generally regarded with peculiar respect and veneration. In conducting public worship, this chairman always took the lead; as the organ of the body, he called the other presbyters to the performance of the several parts assigned to them; and usually himself prayed and preached. When the bench of presbyters was called to perform an ordination, the chairman, of course, presided in this transaction; and in general, in all acts of the church session or consistory, he took the lead, and was the principal medium of communication.

This practice of choosing a president in the consistorial courts appears to have begun in a short time after the death of the apostles, and to have been the only kind of pre-eminence that was enjoyed by any of the bishops, over their brethren, until the close of

the second century. Indeed Jerome declares, that this was the only kind of Episcopal pre-eminence that existed in the church of Alexandria, one of the most conspicuous then in the world, until the middle of the third century. That such was the only superiority which the principal pastor of each church enjoyed in primitive times, and that such was the origin of this superiority, is evident, not only from the direct testimony of antiquity, but also, indirectly, from the names by which this officer is generally distinguished by the early writers. He is not only called emphatically the bishop of the church, but, as all his colleagues also had the title of bishop, he is, perhaps, more frequently styled, by way of distinction, the president, (Προεστως,) the chairman, (Προεδρος,) and the person who filled the first seat, (Πρωτοκαθεδρια,) in the presbytery. Had we no other evidence in the case, these titles alone would go far towards establishing the origin and nature of his pre-eminence.

The powers of this chairman were gradually increased. In some cases his own ambition, and, in others, the exigencies of particular times and places, at once multiplied his duties, enlarged his authority, and augmented his honours. Not only the ruling elders, but also his colleagues in the ministry were led insensibly to look upon him with peculiar reverence. His presence began to be deemed necessary, at first to the regularity, and afterwards to the validity of all the proceedings of the bench of presbyters. And as his office, in those times, was a post of danger as well as of honour, the rest of the presbyters would more readily submit to the claims of a man who put his life in his hand to serve the Church. This may be called the *first step* in the rise of prelacy. The ex-

ample once set in some of the principal cities, was probably soon adopted in the less populous towns, and in the country churches.

This measure led to another equally natural. The pastors or bishops who resided in the same city, or neighbourhood, were led on different occasions to meet together, to consult and to transact various kinds of business. Their meetings were probably at first attended with very little formality. In a short time, however, as Christianity gained ground, they came together more frequently; had more business to transact; and found it expedient to be more formal in their proceedings. A president or chairman became necessary, as in the smaller presbytery or church session. Such an officer was accordingly chosen, sometimes at each meeting, but more frequently for an indefinite period, or for life. Whatever number of congregations and of ministers were thus united under a presbytery, they were styled, (upon a principle of ecclesiastical unity which was then common,) one church. The standing moderator or president of this larger presbytery, was styled the bishop of the city in which he presided. This was a *second step* towards prelacy. At what precise time it was taken, is difficult to be ascertained. But before the middle of the third century, so greatly increased were the affluence and pride of ecclesiastics, that the claims of this presiding presbyter began to be large and confident. As he officially superintended the execution of the decrees of the assembly, his power gradually increased; and it was a short transition from the exercise of power in the name of others, to the exercise of it without consulting them.

In the towns where there was but one congregation,

and that a small one, there was generally but one teaching presbyter associated with a number of ruling presbyters. This was the pastor or bishop. When the congregation increased, and the introduction of other teachers was found necessary, the first retained his place as sole pastor, and the others came in as his assistants; and although of the same order with himself, yet he alone was the responsible pastor. In short, the rest of the teaching presbyters in this case, bore precisely the same relation to the bishop, on the score of rank, as curates bear to the rector in a large Episcopal congregation. They bore the same office. They were clothed with the same official power of preaching and administering ordinances with the pastor, and were capable, without any further ordination, of becoming pastors in their turn; but while they remained in this situation, their labours were chiefly directed by him. As a congregation under these circumstances increased still more, and included a number of members from the neighbouring villages, some of these members, finding it inconvenient to attend the church in which the bishop officiated every Lord's day, began to lay plans for forming separate congregations nearer home. To this the bishop consented, on condition that the little worshipping societies thus formed, should consider themselves as still under his pastoral care, as amenable to the parent church, and as bound to obey him as their spiritual guide. When the pastor agreed to this arrangement, it was generally understood, that there should be but one communion table, and one baptistery in the parish; and, of course, that when the members of these neighbouring societies wished to enjoy either of the sealing ordinances, they were to attend at the parent church, and receive

them from the hands of the pastor or bishop himself. At ordinary seasons they were supplied by his curates or assistants, who, in labouring in these little oratories or chapels of ease, were subject to his control. There was, however, but "one altar"—one communion table—one baptistery allowed in his parish. This was laying a foundation for the authority of one bishop or pastor over several congregations, which was not long afterwards claimed and generally yielded. This proved a *third step* in the rise of prelacy.

The progress of the Church towards prelacy was further aided by the practice of convening synods and councils. This practice began at an early period, and soon became general. The Latins styled these larger meetings of the clergy Councils, the Greeks Synods; and the laws which were enacted by these bodies, were denominated Canons, i. e. Rules. "These councils," says Dr. Mosheim, "changed the whole face of the Church, and gave it a new form." The order and decorum of their business required that a president should be appointed. The power lodged in this officer scarcely ever failed to be extended and abused. These synods were accustomed to meet in the capital cities of the district or province to which the members belonged, and to confer the presidency upon the most conspicuous pastor, for the time being, of the city in which they met. And thus, by the gradual operation of habit, it came to be considered as the right of those persons, and of their successors in office. "Hence," says the learned historian just quoted, "the rights of metropolitans derive their origin." The order of the Church required, at first, the presence of the presiding bishops, to give regularity to the acts of synods and councils. In a little while

their presence was deemed necessary to the validity of these acts; and, in the third century, it began to be believed that without them nothing could be done. Such is the ordinary progress of human affairs. The increase of wealth, the decay of piety, the corruption of morals, and the prevalence of heresy and contention, were all circumstances highly favourable to the progress of this change, and concurring with Jewish prejudices, pagan habits, and clerical ambition, hurried on the growing usurpation.

That the synods and councils which early began to be convened, were, in fact, thus employed by the ambitious clergy, to extend and confirm their power, might be proved by witnesses almost numberless. The testimony of one shall suffice. It is that of the eminent Bishop Gregory Nazianzen, who lived in the fourth century, and who, on being summoned by the Emperor to the general Council of Constantinople, which met in 381, addressed a letter to Procopius, to excuse himself from attending. In this letter he declares, "that he was desirous of avoiding all synods, because he had never seen a good effect, or happy conclusion of any one of them; that they rather increased than lessened the evils they were designed to prevent; and that the love of contention, and the lust of power, were there manifested in instances innumerable."—*Greg. Naz. Oper.* Tom. I. p. 814. Epistle 55.

Toward the close of the third century, the title of bishop was seldom applied to any other of the presbyters, than the different classes of presidents before mentioned. The only shadow which now remained of its former use was in the case of the pastors of country parishes, who still maintained the parochial

Episcopacy, under the name of *Chorepiscopi*. The ordaining power, originally vested in all presbyters alike, was in the third century seldom exercised by presbyters, unless the presiding presbyter, or bishop, was present. About this time, the name of presbyter was changed into that of priest, in consequence of the unscriptural and irrational doctrine coming into vogue, that the Christian ministry was modelled after the Jewish priesthood. About this time also the office of ruling elder appears to have been chiefly laid aside, because discipline became unfashionable, and was put down, and a part of the ministry of the word bestowed upon deacons, contrary to the original design of their office, which was to superintend the maintenance of the poor. The presbytery sunk into the bishop's council. The synod subserved the pretensions of the metropolitan; and there was only wanting a general council, and a chief bishop, to complete the hierarchy: both of which were not long afterwards compliantly furnished. In the mean time, the few humble admirers of primitive parity and simplicity, who dared to remonstrate against these usurpations, were reviled as promoters of faction and schism, and either thrust out of the Church, or awed into silence.

When Constantine came to the imperial throne, in the fourth century, he confirmed the usurpation of the bishops by his authority, and bestowed upon them a degree of wealth and power to which they had before been strangers. He conferred new splendour on every part of the ecclesiastical system. He fostered every thing which had a tendency to convert religion from a spiritual service into a gaudy, ostentatious, dazzling ritual; and its ministers into lords over God's heritage, instead of examples to the flock. Old Tes-

tament rites, heathen ceremonies, and institutions of worldly policy, which had long before begun to enter the Church, now rushed in like a flood. And, what was worse, the great mass of the people, as well as of the clergy, were gratified with the change. The Jewish proselyte was pleased to see the resemblance which the economy of the Christian Church began to bear to the ancient temple-service. The Pagan convert was daily more reconciled to a system, which he saw approximating to that which he had been long accustomed to behold in the house of his idols. And the artful politician could not but admire a hierarchy, so far subservient to the interests, and conformed to the model of the empire. Constantine assumed to himself the right of calling general councils, of presiding in them, of determining controversies, and of fixing the bounds of ecclesiastical provinces. He formed the prelatical government after the imperial model, into great prefectures; in which arrangement, a certain pre-eminence was conferred on the bishops of Rome, Antioch, Alexandria, and Constantinople; the first rank being always reserved for the Bishop of Rome, who succeeded in gradually extending his usurpation, until he was finally confirmed in it by an imperial decree.

Though an attempt has been made to trace some of the gradations by which ministerial imparity arose from small beginnings to a settled diocesan Episcopacy; yet, from the very nature of the case, the dates of the several steps cannot be precisely ascertained. To definite transactions which take place in a single day, or year, or which are accomplished in a few years, it is commonly an easy task to assign dates. But, in this gradual change, which was more than



three centuries in accomplishing, no reasonable man could expect to find the limits of the several steps precisely defined; because each step was slowly, and almost insensibly, taken; and more especially, because the practice of all the churches was not uniform. There was no particular time when the transition from a state of perfect parity, to a fixed and acknowledged superiority of order took place at once, and therefore no such time can be assigned. It is evident from the records of antiquity that the titles of bishop and presbyter were, as in the beginning, indiscriminately applied to the same order in some churches, long after a distinction had begun to arise in others. It is equally evident, that the ordaining power of presbyters was longer retained in the more pure and primitive districts of the Church, than where wealth, ambition, and a worldly spirit, bore greater sway. In some churches there were several bishops at the same time; in others, but one. In some parts of the Christian world, it was the practice to consider and treat all the preaching presbyters in each church as colleagues and equals; in others, one of the presbyters was regarded as the pastor or bishop, and the rest his assistants. Further, when the practice of choosing one of the presbyters to be president or moderator commenced, it appeared in different forms in different churches. In one church, at least, according to Jerome, the presiding presbyter was *elected*, as well as *set apart*, by his colleagues; in other churches, according to Hilary, the president came to the chair agreeably to a settled principle of rotation. In some cases the presiding presbyter was vested with greater dignity and authority; in others with less. In short, it is evident, that, in some portions of the Church, a differ-

ence of order between bishops and presbyters was recognized in the third century; in others, and perhaps generally, in the fourth; but in some others, not until the fifth century. No wonder, then, that we find a different language used by different fathers on this subject, for the practice was different; and this fact directs us to the only rational and adequate method of interpreting their different representations.

Such being the case, what reasonable man would expect to find in the records of antiquity, any definite or satisfactory account of the rise and progress of prelacy? If changes equally early and important are covered with still greater darkness; if the history of the first general council that ever met, and which agitated to its centre the whole Christian Church, is so obscure that many of the circumstances of its meeting are disputed, and no distinct record of its acts has ever reached our times; what might be expected concerning an ecclesiastical innovation, so remote in its origin, so gradual in its progress, so indefinitely diversified in the shapes in which it appeared in different places at the same time, and so unsusceptible of precise and lucid exhibition? To this question, no discerning and candid mind will be at a loss for an answer. No; the whole of that reasoning, which confidently deduces the apostolical origin of prelacy, from its acknowledged and general prevalence in the fourth century, is mere empty declamation, as contradictory to every principle of human nature, as it is to the whole current of early history.

## CHAPTER VII.

## TESTIMONY OF THE REFORMERS, AND OTHER WITNESSES FOR THE TRUTH, IN DIFFERENT AGES AND NATIONS.

THE reader has been already reminded, that neither the question before us, nor any other which relates to the faith or the order of the Church, is to be decided by human authority. We have a higher and more unerring standard. But still, when there is a remarkable concurrence of opinion among learned and holy men, in favour of any doctrine or practice, it affords a strong presumptive argument that such doctrine or practice is conformable to Scripture. Thus the fact, that the great body of the reformers concurred in embracing and supporting that system of evangelical truth, which has been since very improperly styled Calvinism,\* is justly viewed by the friends of that system as a powerful argument in its favour. Let us apply this principle to the case under consideration.

It has been common for the zealous friends of prelacy to insinuate, that the Presbyterian doctrine of parity was unknown till the time of Calvin; that he was the first distinguished and successful advocate for this doctrine; and that the great body of the reformers totally differed from him on this subject, and em-

\* I say improperly styled Calvinism, because, to say nothing of its much greater antiquity, the same system had been distinctly taught by several eminent reformers, and among others, by Luther himself, before Calvin appeared.

braced Episcopacy. How persons even tolerably versed in the history of the reformed churches, could ever allow themselves to make such a representation, I am altogether at a loss to conceive. Nothing certainly can be more remote from fact. The smallest attention to the subject will convince every impartial inquirer, that the most distinguished witnesses for evangelical truth, through the dark ages, long before Calvin lived, maintained the doctrine of ministerial parity; that the earliest reformers, both in Great Britain and on the continent of Europe, admitted the same principle; that all the reformed churches, excepting that of England, were organized on this principle; that the Church of England stands alone in the whole Protestant world, in making diocesan bishops an order of clergy, superior to presbyters; and that even those venerable men who finally settled her government and worship, did not consider this superiority as resting on the ground of divine appointment, but of ecclesiastical usage and human expediency.

If I mistake not, it will be easy to satisfy you, by a very brief induction of facts, that these assertions are not lightly made.

In the honourable catalogue of witnesses for the truth, amidst the corruption and darkness of papal error, the Waldenses hold the first place. They began to appear as soon as the "man of sin" arose, when they resided chiefly in the valleys of Piedmont. But they afterwards greatly multiplied, spread themselves extensively in France, Switzerland, and Italy, and, under different names in different districts, continued their testimony in favour of evangelical truth, for a number of centuries. All Protestant historians concur in representing them as constituting the purest

part of the Christian Church for several ages; and Reinerius, who had once lived among them, and who was their bitter persecutor, says, "They are more pernicious to the Church of Rome than any other sect of heretics, for three reasons: 1. Because they are older than any other sect; for some say that they have been ever since the time of Sylvester; and others say, from the time of the Apostles. 2. Because they are more extensively spread than any other sect; there being scarcely a country into which they have not crept. 3. Because other sects are abominable to God for their blasphemies; but the Waldenses are more pious than any other heretics; they believe truly of God, live justly before men, and receive all the articles of the creed; only they hate the Church of Rome."

Among the numerous points in which these witnesses for the truth rejected the errors of the Romish Church, and contended for the doctrine of Scripture, and of the apostolic age, one was that there ought to be no diversity of rank among ministers of the gospel; that bishops and presbyters, according to the word of God, and primitive practice, were the same order. Nor did they merely embrace this doctrine in theory. Their ecclesiastical organization was Presbyterian in its form. I know that this fact concerning the Waldenses has been denied; but it is established beyond all reasonable question by authentic historians.

Æneas Sylvius declares concerning the Waldenses, "They deny the hierarchy; maintaining that there is no difference among priests by reason of dignity of office."—*Hist. Bohem.* Cap. 35.

In one of their public documents, dated in 1395, those pious witnesses of the truth declared, "that the Romish priests were grossly immoral; while theirs

were humble, generous, chaste, sober, full of love, peaceable, &c., and therefore gave greater evidence than the Papists of being ministers of Christ, though not ordained by ecclesiastical bishops.”—*Blair’s History of the Waldenses*, Vol. I. 435.

John Paul Perrin, who was himself a pastor among them, in his history of that people, delivers at length, “the discipline under which the Waldenses and Albigenses lived; extracted out of divers authentic manuscripts, written in their own language, *several hundreds of years before Luther or Calvin.*” From this work the following extracts are made. Art. 2. “*Of Pastors.*” “All they that are to be received as pastors amongst us, whilst they are yet with their own people, are to entreat ours, that they would be pleased to receive them to the ministry; and to pray to God that they may be made worthy of so great an office. We also appoint them their lectures, and set them their task, causing them to learn by memory all the chapters of St. Matthew and St. John, and all the Epistles that are canonical, and a good part of the writings of Solomon, David, and the prophets. Afterwards, having produced good testimonials, and being well approved for their sufficiency, they are received with imposition of hands into the office of teachers. He that is admitted in the last place, shall not do any thing without the leave or allowance of him that was admitted before him. As also he that was admitted first, shall do nothing without the leave of his associates, to the end that all things, with us, may be done in order. Diet and apparel are given unto us freely, and by way of alms, and that with sufficiency, by those good people whom we teach. Amongst other powers and abilities which God hath given to his

servants, he hath given authority to choose leaders, to rule the people, and to ordain elders in their charges. When any of us, the aforesaid pastors, falls into any gross sins, he is both excommunicated, and prohibited to preach.” Art. 4. “Our pastors do call assemblies once every year, to determine of all affairs in a general synod.”\*

In another Confession of Faith, drawn up about the year 1220, they declare that the functions of ministers consist in “preaching the word and administering sacraments,” and that “all other ministerial things may be reduced to the aforesaid.” Speaking of the rite of confirmation, and of the Popish claims that it must be administered by a bishop, they assert, that “it has no ground at all in Scripture; that it was introduced by the devil’s instigation, to seduce the people; that by such means they might be induced the more to believe the ceremonies, and the necessity of the bishops.”†

In the same work, (chap. 4,) it is expressly and repeatedly asserted, that the synods of the Waldenses were composed of ministers and elders. This mode of speaking is surely not Episcopal.

In perfect coincidence with all this, is the testimony of Gillis, in his *History of the Waldenses*. This writer, like Perrin, was one of the pastors of that people, and therefore perfectly qualified to give an account of their peculiar doctrines and practices. He speaks familiarly of the pastors of their churches, in the Presbyterian style. He says, “These pastors, in their ordinary assemblies, came together and held a synod once a year, and most generally in the month of Septem-

\* Perrin’s *History of the Old Waldenses*, Part II. Book v. Chap. 7.

† *Ibid.* Chap. 8.

ber, at which they examined the students, and admitted them to the ministry." Chap. ii. p. 12.

In their Confession of Faith, which Gillis inserts at length, in the "Addition" to his work, p. 490, and which he expressly informs us was the confession of the ancient as well as the modern Waldenses; in Art. 31, they declare, "It is necessary for the Church to have pastors esteemed sufficiently learned, and exemplary in their conduct, as well to preach God's word, as to administer the sacraments, and watch over the sheep of Jesus Christ, together with the elders and deacons, according to the rules of good and holy church discipline, and the practice of the primitive Church."

Here are the declarations of the Waldenses themselves. And I will venture to say that there is not a syllable in the above extracts which has the most distant appearance of prelacy. On the contrary, they all bear the most decisive indications of Presbyterian parity. But besides this, Bellarmine acknowledges that the Waldenses denied the divine right of prelacy. Medina, in the Council of Trent, declared that the Waldenses were of the same mind with Acrius on this subject. And the learned Episcopalian, Professor Raiginolds, in his famous Letter to Sir Francis Knollys, asserts, that the Waldenses, and all others who had distinguished themselves as opposers of Popery, and as reformers of the Church, for five hundred years, prior to the seventeenth century, had uniformly taught that "all pastors, whether styled bishops or priests, have one and the same authority by the word of God."

But what places this matter beyond all doubt, is, that in the year 1530, these pious witnesses of the



truth addressed a long letter to Oecolampadius, the famous German reformer, giving a particular account of their situation, their trials, and their opinions. In this letter they state in the most explicit manner, that they had *not* the different orders of ministers such as bishops, presbyters, and deacons, in their churches. Those who wish to see this interesting letter, will find it preserved in full by Gerdes in his *Historia Reformationis* II. See also a reference to it in Scott's continuation of Milner's Ecclesiastical History, Vol. I. p. 134—139.

In confirmation of these views, it is a notorious fact, that after the commencement, and in the progress of the Reformation, these pious witnesses for the truth freely held communion with the Presbyterian churches of France and Geneva; received ministers from them; and, of course, recognised them as sister churches, and acknowledged their ordinations to be valid. This, it is manifest, could never have been done had the Waldenses maintained the divine right of prelacy.

Accordingly, the Rev. Mr. Gilly, a clergyman of the Church of England, one of the latest and most intelligent visitants of that interesting people, tells us that, at present, they most resemble Presbyterians; each church being governed by its own consistory, or church session, consisting of the minister, elders, and deacons. (See his *Researches*, p. 383.) He expresses an opinion, indeed, that they were once Episcopal in their form of government; and that as late as the latter end of the sixteenth, or the beginning of the seventeenth century. But this supposition is completely disproved by their own recorded testimony, addressed to Oecolampadius, in 1530, in which, as before stated, they declare that, at that time, they had *no bishops*,

and evidently had no recollection of ever having had any; for the express design of their communication to that venerated reformer was to consult him, among other things, as to the propriety or necessity of having such a class of officers.

The Bohemian Brethren, who were but a branch of the Waldenses, also maintained the doctrine of ministerial parity by divine right. In their Confession there is not only a profound silence as to any distinction or difference of degrees among pastors; but, what is more decisive, they place ordination, and excommunication, as well as preaching the gospel, not in the power of one, but in the hands of presbyters and brethren of the ministry. And in their Book of Order, or Discipline, p. 20, we have the following express words. "It is true, the Bohemians have certain bishops, or superintendents, who are conspicuous for age and gifts; and chosen by the suffrages of all the ministers, for the keeping of order, and to see that all the rest do their office. Four, or five, or six such have they, as need requires; and each of these has his diocese. But the dignity of these above other ministers, is not founded in the prerogative of honours or revenues, but of labours and cares for others. And, according to the apostles' rules, a presbyter and bishop are one and the same thing." This statement is amply confirmed by Dr. Heylin, the zealous high church Episcopal historian. He explicitly grants that the Bohemian churches were not Episcopal, either in principle or practice. In his *History of the Presbyterians*, p. 409, 410, there is the following decisive passage. "About the year 1400, we find a strong party to be raised amongst the Bohemians, against some superstitions and corruptions in the Church of

Rome; occasioned, as some say, by reading the works of Wickliffe, and by the diligence of Picardus, a Fleming, as is affirmed by some others, from whom they had the name of Picards. Cruelly persecuted by their own kings, and publicly condemned in the Council of Constance, they continued constant, notwithstanding, to their own persuasions. In this condition they remained till the preaching of Luther, and the receiving of the Augsburg Confession in most parts of the empire, which gave them so much confidence as to purge themselves from all former calumnies, by publishing a declaration of their faith and doctrine; which they presented at Vienna to the Archduke Ferdinand, about ten years before chosen king of Bohemia; together with a large apology prefixed before it. By which Confession it appears that they ascribe no power to the civil magistrate in the concernments of the Church; that they had fallen upon a way of ordaining ministers amongst themselves, without recourse unto the bishop, or any such superior officer as a superintendent; and finally that they retained the use of excommunication, and other ecclesiastical censures, for the chastising of irregular and scandalous persons.”

The noble stand in defence of evangelical truth, made by the celebrated Dr. John Wickliffe,\* is well known. This illustrious English divine was professor of divinity in the university of Oxford, and has been frequently called “the morning star of the Reformation.” He protested with great boldness and zeal

\* “Wickliffe,” says Bishop Newcome, “was not only a good divine, and scripturist, but well skilled in the civil, canon, and English law. To great learning and abilities, he added the ornament of a grave, unblemished, and pious conduct.”

against the superstitions of the Church of Rome, and taught a system, both of doctrine and order, remarkably similar to that which Luther, Calvin, and the great body of the reformers, two hundred years afterwards, united in recommending to the Christian world.\* “He was for rejecting all mere human rites, and new shadows or traditions in religion; and with regard to the identity of the order of bishops and priests in the apostolic age, he is very positive: *Unum audacter assero*, &c. One thing I boldly assert, that in the primitive Church, or in the time of the apostle Paul, two orders of clergy were thought sufficient, viz. *priest* and *deacon*; and I do also say, that in the time of Paul, *fuit idem presbyter atque episcopus*, i. e. a priest and a bishop were one and the same; for, in those times, the distinct orders of Pope, Cardinals, Patriarchs, Archbishops, Bishops, arch-deacons, officials, and deans, were not invented.† The followers of Wickliffe imbibed this as well as the other opinions of their master; and, accordingly, it is well known that they held and practised ordination by presbyters, not for want of diocesan bishops, but on the avowed principle, that they considered all ministers who “laboured in the word and doctrine,” and administered sacraments, as having equal power.‡

\* He renounced the supremacy of the Pope; rejected the heresy of transubstantiation; and taught, that the Bible is a perfect rule of life and manners, and ought to be read by the people; that human traditions are superfluous and sinful; that we must practise and teach only the laws of Christ; that mystical and significant ceremonies in religious worship are unlawful; and that to restrain men to a prescribed form of prayer, is contrary to the liberty granted them by God.

† See Lewis’s *Life of Wickliffe*, 8vo. 1720.

‡ See Walsingham’s *Hist. Brevis A. D.* 1389, 339—340.

The renowned martyrs, John Huss and Jerome, of Prague, who laid down their lives for the truth, a little after the time of Wickliffe, embraced the greater part, if not all the opinions of the English reformer, and especially his doctrine concerning the parity of Christian ministers. Their disciples acted in conformity with this doctrine. Æneas Sylvius, (afterwards Pius II.) speaking of the Hussites, says, "One of the dogmas of this pestiferous sect, is, that there is no difference of order among those who bear the priestly office." This account is confirmed by the historian Thuanus, who expressly speaks of their opinions as resembling those of the English dissenters. These churches distinctly held and taught, as their book of discipline proves, that there is but one order of ministers of divine right, and, of course, that all difference of grades in the ministry, is a matter of human prudence. They had, indeed, among them persons who were styled *bishops*; but they expressly disavowed the divine institution of this order; and what is more, they derived their ministerial succession from the Waldenses, who had no other, strictly speaking, than Presbyterian bishops. Even Comenius, their celebrated historian, who says most about their bishops, distinctly acknowledges that bishop and presbyter are the same by divine right. It is also an undoubted and remarkable fact, that the Bohemian brethren retained the office of ruling elder in their churches; an office which, toward the latter part of the fourth century, had been, in the greater part of the Christian world, discontinued. The following representation by the learned Bucer, will be deemed, by those who are acquainted with his character, conclusive as to this fact. "The Bohemian brethren, who

almost alone preserved in the world the purity of the doctrine, and the vigour of the discipline of Christ, observed an excellent rule, for which we are compelled to give them credit, and especially to praise that God who thus wrought by them; notwithstanding those brethren are preposterously despised by some learned men. The rule which they observed was this: besides ministers of the word and sacraments, they had, in each church, a bench or college of men excelling in gravity and prudence, who performed the duties of admonishing and correcting offenders, composing differences, and judicially deciding in cases of dispute. Of this kind of elders, Hilary wrote, when he said, *Unde et Synagoga,*” &c.—*Script. Advers. Latom.* p. 77.

The celebrated Mr. Tindal, a canon of Oxford, who gave the first translation of the Bible into English, and who suffered martyrdom in the reign of Henry VIII. for his zeal and his distinguished labours in the cause of truth, has the following explicit declaration, in his “Practice of Popish Prelates.” “The apostles following and obeying the rule, doctrine, and commandment of our Saviour, ordained in his kingdom and congregation, two officers, one called after the Greek word bishop, in English an overseer; which same was called priest, after the Greek. Another officer they chose, and called him deacon, after the Greek; a minister, in English, to minister alms to the poor. All that were called elders (or priests, if they so will) were called bishops also, though they have now divided the names.”

The famous John Lambert, another martyr in the same reign, who is represented even by Episcopal historians, as a man of great learning, as well as

meekness and piety, expressed himself on the subject under consideration in the following manner: "As touching priesthood in the primitive Church, when virtue bare the most room, there were no more officers in the Church than bishops and deacons, as witnesseth, besides Scripture, full apertly Jerome, in his Commentary upon St. Paul's Epistles, where he saith, that those we call priests, were all one, and no other but bishops, and the bishops none but priests."\*

The fathers of the reformation in England were Presbyterians in *principle*; that is, a majority of the most pious and learned among them considered bishop and presbyter as the same, by divine right. But as the influence of the crown was exerted in favour of prelacy; as many of the bishops were opposed to the reformation altogether; and as the right of the civil magistrate to direct the outward organization of the Church at pleasure, was acknowledged by most of the reformers, they yielded to the establishment of diocesan Episcopacy, as the most suitable form of government in the circumstances then existing. But it does not appear that any one of them thought of placing Episcopacy on the footing of Divine right, and far less of representing it as of such indispensable and unalterable necessity, as many of their less learned sons have thought proper to maintain since that time. I know that this fact, concerning those venerable reformers, has been denied. But I know, at the same time, that it rests on proof the most complete and satisfactory, and which will ever resist all the ingenious arts which have been used to set it aside.

\* It is truly remarkable that we find such a striking concurrence among all learned men, at and shortly after the time of the reformation, in interpreting Jerome precisely as I have done in a preceding chapter.

In the year 1537, in the reign of Henry VIII. there was a book published for the purpose of promoting the reformation, entitled, "The Institution of a Christian Man." It was called the Bishop's Book, because it was composed by Archbishop Cranmer, and several other prelates. It was recommended and subscribed by the two archbishops, by nineteen bishops, and by the lower house of convocation; published under the authority of the king, and its contents ordered to be preached to the whole kingdom. In this book it is expressly said, that, "although the fathers of the succeeding Church, after the apostles, instituted certain inferior degrees of ministry; yet the truth is, that in the New Testament there is no mention made of any other degree or distinction in orders, but only of deacons or ministers, and of presbyters or bishops." \*

About six years after the publication of this book, another appeared, which was designed to promote the same laudable purpose. This was entitled, "The Necessary Erudition of a Christian Man." It was drawn up by a committee of bishops and other divines; was afterwards read and approved by the lords spiritual and temporal, and the lower house of parliament; was prefaced by the king and published by his command. This book certainly proves that those who drew it up, had obtained much more just and clear views of several important doctrines, than they possessed at the date of the former publication. But with regard to ministerial parity, their sentiments remained unchanged. They still asserted the same doctrine. They say, "St. Paul consecrated and ordained

\* "In Novo Testamento, nulla mentio facta est aliorum Graduum, aut distinctionum in Ordinibus, sed Diaconorum (vel ministrorum) et Presbyterorum (vel Episcoporum.)"



bishops by the imposition of hands; but that there is no certain rule prescribed in Scripture for the nomination, election, or presentation of them; that this is left to the positive laws of every community. The office of the said ministers is, to preach the word, to minister the sacraments, to bind and loose, to excommunicate those that will not be reformed, and to pray for the universal Church.” Having afterwards mentioned the order of deacons, they go on to say, “Of these two orders only, that is to say, priests and deacons, Scripture maketh express mention; and how they were conferred of the apostles by prayer and imposition of hands.”

About five years after the last named publication, viz. about the year 1548, Edward VI. called a “select assembly of divines, for the resolution of several questions, relative to the settlement of religion.” Of this assembly Archbishop Cranmer was a leading member, and to the tenth question, which respected the office of bishops and presbyters, that venerable prelate replied, “bishops and priests were at one time, and were not two things, but one office, in the beginning of Christ’s religion.”\* “Thus we see,” says Dr. Still

\* Time was when the dignitaries and other leading clergy of the Church of England, and of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States, thought and spoke with profound reverence of Archbishop Cranmer, and his brother reformers, as men entitled to the grateful respect of every Protestant Episcopalian, from whom it was unsafe and presumptuous to differ. See Bishop White’s *Memoirs of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America*, p. 319. But now the authors and friends of the Oxford Tracts can, without ceremony, speak of those venerable men and martyrs with disrespect and severity; as chargeable with carrying the reformation by much too far; as having lopped off from Popery many things which ought to have been retained; and as deserving the reprobation rather than the gratitude of the Church of England and all her chil-

lingfleet, "by the testimony of him who was chiefly instrumental in our reformation, that he owned not Episcopacy as a distinct order from Presbytery by divine right, but only as a prudent constitution of the civil magistrate for the better government of the Church."—*Irenicum*, part I. chapter VIII. Two other bishops, together with Dr. Redmayn and Dr. Cox delivered a similar opinion, in still stronger terms; and several of them adduced Jerome as a decided authority in support of their opinion. An attempt has been made to place this transaction a number of years further back than it really stood, in order to show that it was at a period when the views of the reformers, with respect to the order of the Church, were crude and immature. But if Bishop Stillingfleet and Bishop Burnet are to be believed, such were the language and the views of Cranmer and other prelates, in the reign of Edward VI. and a very short time before the forms of ordination and other public service in the Church of England were published; in compiling which, it is acknowledged, on all hands, that the archbishop had a principal share; and which were given to the public in the third year of the reign of that prince.

Accordingly, Mr. Le Bas, the recent high-church biographer of Cranmer, acknowledges that in answering the interrogatories referred to, "He maintains that the appointment to spiritual offices belongs indifferently to bishops, to princes, or to the people, according to the pressure of existing circumstances. He

dren. In short the spirit of their doctrine seems to lead to the conclusion, that there ought never to have been a separation from the Church of Rome; but a reformation of some abuses within her bosom!

affirms the original identity of bishops and presbyters; and contends that nothing more than mere election, or appointment, is essential to the sacerdotal office, without consecration or any other solemnity." See *Life of Cranmer*, Vol. I. p. 197. And although Mr. Le Bas seems to think that Cranmer afterwards altered his mind in regard to these points; yet I have seen no evidence of this, and must beg to be excused for disbelieving it until such evidence appears.

Another circumstance, which serves to show that Archbishop Cranmer considered the Episcopal system in which he shared, as founded rather in human prudence and the will of the magistrates than the word of God, is, that he viewed the exercise of all Episcopal jurisdiction as depending on the pleasure of the king; and that as he gave it, so he might take it away at pleasure. Agreeably to this, when Henry VIII. died, the worthy primate regarded his own Episcopal power as expiring with him; and therefore would not act as archbishop till he had received a new commission from King Edward.

Accordingly, when these great reformers went further than to compile temporary and fugitive manuals; when they undertook to frame the fundamental and permanent articles of their church, we find them carefully guarding against any exclusive claim in behalf of diocesan Episcopacy. If they had deemed an order of bishops superior to presbyters indispensably necessary to the regular organization of the church, and the validity of Christian ordinances, can we suppose that men, who showed themselves so faithful and zealous in the cause of Christ, would have been wholly silent on the subject? And, above all, if they entertained such an opinion, would they have forborne

to express it in that article in which they undertook formally to state the doctrine of their church with respect to the Christian ministry? That article (the 23d) is couched in the following terms. "It is not lawful for any man to take upon him the office of public preaching, or ministering the sacraments in the congregation, before he be lawfully called and sent to execute the same. And those we ought to judge lawfully called and sent, which be chosen and called to this work by men, who have public authority given unto them in the congregation, to call and send ministers into the Lord's vineyard." Here is not a syllable said of diocesan bishops, or of the necessity of Episcopal ordination; on the contrary there is most evidently displayed a studious care to employ such language as would embrace the other reformed churches; and recognise as valid their ministry and ordinances. Is it conceivable that modern high-churchmen would have expressed themselves in this manner?

And that such was really the design of those who drew up the articles of the Church of England, is expressly asserted by Bishop Burnet, who will be pronounced by all a competent judge, both of the import and history of these articles. This article, he observes, "is put in very general words, far from that magisterial stiffness in which some have taken upon them to dictate in this matter. They who drew it up, had the state of the several churches before their eyes, that had been differently reformed; and although their own had been less forced to go out of the beaten path than any other, yet they knew that all things among themselves had not gone according to those rules, that ought to be sacred in regular times." And, in a subsequent passage, he explicitly declares, that neither

the reformers of the Church of England, nor their successors, for nearly eighty years after the articles were published, did ever call in question the validity of the ordination practised in the foreign reformed churches, by presbyters alone. And again, he declares—"Whatever some hotter spirits have thought of this, since that time, yet we are very sure, that not only those who penned the articles, but the body of this church for above half an age after, did, notwithstanding these irregularities, acknowledge the foreign churches, so constituted, to be true churches, as to all the essentials of a church." \*

The fact is, the leading reformers who survived the sanguinary reign of Mary, and were called to act under the despotic sway of Queen Elizabeth, and who, under her dictation, organized the reformed Church of England, did not profess to take the Scriptures for their guide in framing the government of the church. It is notorious that, in their contest with the Puritans, soon after Elizabeth acceded to the crown, they openly assumed, in relation to that subject, a different standard. While the puritans contended that the Scriptures ought to be regarded as the only test of ecclesiastical government and discipline, as well as of doctrine; the court bishops and clergy zealously maintained, that the Saviour and his apostles left it to the discretion of the civil magistrate, in those places in which Christianity should obtain, to accommodate the government of the Church to the polity of the state. Nay, they went so far as to maintain, that the primitive and apostolical order of the Church, was accommodated only to its infant state, while under persecution; whereas the model of the third, and especially of

\* Exposition of the XXIII. Article.

the fourth century, when Christianity became the established religion of the empire, was a much better standard for a mature ecclesiastical establishment, than the age of the apostles. And this, by the way, evinces a kind of consistency between the language and conduct of Archbishop Cranmer, to whom we have before referred, as well as his immediate successor. Cranmer, as we have seen, said that "bishop and priest were not two offices, but one thing in the beginning of Christ's religion." And yet he consented to take the office of archbishop in the established church of his country, because he entertained the opinion that prelacy was a convenient and wise human institution, and that the Church had a right, in all ages, to order her government according to her own discretion, and in conformity with the government of the state. And, therefore, he and his brethren did not hesitate to assume and avow as their model the Church as it stood in the days of Constantine, rather than as it was left by the inspired apostles. These venerable men, then, did not so much as profess to make the truly primitive and apostolic Church the pattern of their organization, but openly preferred a much later one. They virtually acknowledged that the primitive model rather made in favour of Presbyterians.\* And, therefore, when they undertook to frame the office for conferring orders, they selected those Scriptures as proper to be read which they considered as best adapted in their general diction and

\* The fact here stated is an unquestionable one. It is stated at large in Neal's History of the Puritans; and the author of the "Natural History of Enthusiasm," in his late able work, entitled "Ancient Christianity," in opposition to the "Oxford Tracts," recognises the fact, as confirmed by the highest Episcopal authority.

scope to make the intended popular impression. It is evident that they considered the term bishop, in the New Testament, as the highest title intended to be applied to any permanent officer.

Those who wish to persuade us that the venerable reformers of the Church of England held the divine right of diocesan Episcopacy, refer us to the preface of the Ordination Service drawn up by them, the language of which, it is contended, cannot be interpreted, and far less justified on any other principle. The language referred to is this—"It is evident unto all men diligently reading Holy Scripture and ancient authors, that from the apostles' time there have been three orders of ministers in Christ's Church, bishops, priests, and deacons," &c. There is not a syllable here inconsistent with the foregoing statement. There is not a Presbyterian in the land who would not most readily say, that there have been in every scripturally organized church, since the apostles' days, three orders of officers (or ministers—the word minister having been often used, in earlier as well as later times, for all classes of church officers) bishops, presbyters, (or elders,) and deacons. Cranmer and his associates avowed their belief that bishop and presbyter were titles applied interchangeably to the same men—the bishop being a presbyter invested with a pastoral charge. If, as Presbyterians believe, there were in every single church in the apostolic age, a bishop, or pastor, a bench of ruling elders and deacons, it is manifest that they might adopt the language of the preface to the Ordinal without scruple. And if Cranmer believed in the divine origin of ruling elders, as he probably did,\* all difficulty in reconciling the lan-

\* For proof of this, see, among other testimonies, *Reformatio Le-*

guage in question with his belief, vanishes. Episcopalians either do not inform themselves, or perpetually forget, that Presbyterians are as firm contenders for three orders of church officers as themselves; that they apply to them the same titles as themselves; and that they only differ as to the respective powers and functions of each. As to the latter part of the preface in question, it only implies, that none but those who were ordained according to the ecclesiastical rule of England, could be considered as regularly introduced into the ministry in the established church.

In conformity with this principle, an act of Parliament was passed, in the thirteenth year of the reign of Queen Elizabeth, to reform certain disorders touching ministers of the church. This act, as Dr. Strype, an Episcopal historian, informs us, was framed with an express view to admitting into the Church of England, those who had received Presbyterian ordination in the foreign reformed churches, on their subscribing the articles of faith. But can we suppose that both houses of parliament, one of them including the bench of bishops, would have consented to pass such an act, unless the principle of it had been approved by the most influential divines of that church?

Nor was this all. The conduct of the English reformers corresponded with their laws and public standards. They invited several eminent divines from the foreign reformed churches, who had received no other than Presbyterian ordination, to come over to England; and on their arrival, in consequence of this formal invitation, actually bestowed upon them important benefices in the church and in the univer-

*gum Ecclesiasticarum, ex autoritate Regis Hen. VIII. et Edv. VI. 4 to. 1640.*



sities. A more decisive testimony could scarcely be given, that those great and venerable divines had no scruple respecting the validity of ordination by presbyters. Had they held the opinion of some modern Episcopalians, and at the same time acted thus, they would have been chargeable with high treason against the Redeemer's kingdom, and have merited the reprobation of all honest men.

But further; besides inviting these distinguished divines into England, and giving them a place in the bosom of their church, without requiring them to be re-ordained, Archbishop Cranmer and his associates corresponded with Calvin; solicited his opinion respecting many points in the reformation of the church; transmitted to him a draft of the proposed liturgy; requested his remarks and corrections thereon; adopted several of his corrections; and not only acknowledged him in the most explicit manner to be a minister of Christ, and the Church of Geneva, to be a sister church; but also addressed him in terms of the most exalted reverence, and heaped upon him every epithet of honour. Could they have done all this, if they had considered him as subverting the very foundation of the Church, by setting aside prelacy. The simplest narrative of the extent to which Cranmer and the other English reformers consulted and honoured Calvin, is sufficient to demonstrate that they did not by any means agree in opinion with modern high-churchmen. When I look at the language of those reformers to this venerable servant of Christ; when I hear them, not only celebrating his learning and his piety in the strongest terms, but also acknowledging, in terms equally strong, his noble services in the cause of evangelical truth, and of the reformation; and when I find

the greatest divines that England ever bred, for nearly a century afterwards, adopting and repeating the same language, I am tempted to ask—are some modern calumniators of Calvin really ignorant of what these great divines of their own church have thought and said respecting him; or have they apostatised as much from the principles of their own reformers, as they differ from Calvin?

Another testimony as to the light in which ordination by presbyters was viewed by the most distinguished reformers of the Church of England, is found in a license granted by Archbishop Grindal to the Rev. John Morison, a Presbyterian minister, dated April 6, 1582: “Since you, the said John Morison, were admitted and ordained to sacred orders, and the holy ministry by the imposition of hands, according to the laudable form and rite of the reformed Church of Scotland:—We, therefore, as much as lies in us, and as by right we may, approving and ratifying the form of your ordination and preferment, done in such manner aforesaid, grant unto you a license and faculty, that in such orders, by you taken, you may, and have power, in any convenient places, in and throughout the whole province of Canterbury, to celebrate divine offices, and to minister the sacraments,” &c. Here is not only an explicit acknowledgment that ordination by presbyters is valid, but an eulogium on it as laudable, and this not by an obscure character, but by the primate of the Church of England.

An acknowledgment, still more solemn and decisive, is made in one of the canons of the Church of England, in which all her clergy are commanded “to pray for the churches of England, Scotland, and Ireland, as parts of Christ’s holy catholic Church, which

is dispersed throughout the world." This canon, (the fifty-fifth) among others, was enacted in 1604, when the Church of Scotland was, as it now is, Presbyterian; and although the persons who were chiefly instrumental in forming and adopting these canons, had high Episcopal notions; yet the idea that those churches which were not Episcopal in their form, were not to be considered as true churches of Christ, seems at this time to have been entertained by no person of any influence in the Church of England. This extravagance was reserved for after times, and the invention of it for persons of a very different spirit from that of the Cranmers, the Grindals, and the Abbots of the preceding age.

Dr. Warner, a learned Episcopal historian, declares, that "Archbishop Bancroft was the first man in the Church of England who preached up the divine right of Episcopacy." The same is asserted by many other Episcopal writers; and this passage from Warner is quoted with approbation by Bishop White of Pennsylvania, in his *Case of the Episcopal Churches*, in showing that the doctrine which founds Episcopacy on divine right, has never been embraced by the great body of the most esteemed divines in the Church of England.

Another fact which corroborates the foregoing statement is, that Dr. Laud, afterwards Archbishop, in a public disputation before the University of Oxford, venturing to assert the superiority of bishops, by divine right, was publicly checked by Dr. Holland, professor of divinity in that university, who told him that "he was a schismatic, and went about to make a division between the English and other reformed churches."

In short, for a number of years after the commencement of the reformation, the ecclesiastical intercourse between the Church of England and the reformed churches on the continent was so constant, respectful, and affectionate, as to show plainly that the high-church notions so prevalent among many modern Episcopalians, were not thought of, and far less enforced by the reformers of England. The examples which illustrate this fact are so many and striking, that no one even tolerably versed in the ecclesiastical history of England can deny or doubt the truth of my statement.

With respect to John Knox, the great reformer of Scotland, no one is ignorant that he was a warm advocate of Presbyterianism, and that he took a leading part in establishing that form of church government in his native country. It has been sometimes indeed rashly asserted that the Church of Scotland was not originally reformed upon principles strictly Presbyterian. This, however, is a groundless assertion. The model of the reformed Church of Scotland, as established in 1560, appears in the First Book of Discipline, drawn up by Knox and others. In that book, in chapter fourth, the ministry is spoken of, as consisting of a single order, in the same language which has been common among Presbyterians ever since; nor is there the least hint given of different ranks or grades of ministers, much less of such an hierarchy as was then established in England. In the seventh chapter ruling elders and deacons are described, and their duties pointed out; the former to assist the minister in the government of his flock, and the latter to take care of the poor. And in other parts of the work, the government of the church by kirk sessions, presbyte-

ries, and synods, is expressly laid down. This is the essence of Presbyterianism. It is true, in that book, the appointment of ten or twelve ministers, under the name of superintendents, is recognised and directed. But it is as true, that the same book declares, that this appointment was made, not because superintendents were considered as of divine institution, or an order to be observed perpetually in the kirk; but because they were compelled to resort to some such expedient, *at that time*, when the deficiency of well qualified Protestant ministers was so great, that if some of the more able and pious had not been entrusted with much larger districts than single parishes, in which to preach the gospel, to plant churches, and to superintend the general interests of religion, the greater part of the country must have been given up, either to Popish teachers, or to total ignorance. And it is as true, that the powers with which those superintendents were invested, were, in all respects, essentially different from those of prelates. They did not confirm; they did not exclusively ordain; they had no Episcopal consecration; they had none of the prerogatives of prelates; they were entirely subject to the synodical assemblies, consisting of ministers and elders; they were appointed by men who were known to be Presbyterians in principle; who, in the very act of appointing them, disclaimed prelacy as an institution of Christ; and who gave the strongest evidence that they viewed the subject in this light, by refusing to make the former bishops, superintendents, lest their office should be abused, and afterwards degenerate into the "old power of the prelates." In short, the superintendents were only the agents of the synods, for managing the affairs of the Church, in times of

peculiar difficulty and peril; and whenever these times ceased, or rather before, their office was abolished.

It may be supposed by some, however, that Knox opposed prelacy because a participation in its honour was not within his reach. But, the truth is, a bishopric was offered him, which he refused, because he considered prelacy as unlawful. Accordingly when John Douglass was made tulchan (or nominal) bishop of St. Andrews, Knox utterly refused to induct or instal him. And when this refusal was imputed to unworthy motives, he publicly declared from the pulpit, on the next sabbath, "I have refused a greater bishopric than ever it was; and might have had it with the favour of greater men than he hath this: but I did and do repine for the discharge of my conscience, that the Church of Scotland be not subject to that order."\*

It were easy to fill a volume with testimony to the same amount. But it is not necessary. If there be any fact in the history of the British churches capable of being demonstrated, it is, that their venerable reformers uniformly acknowledged the other Protestant churches formed on the Presbyterian plan, to be sound members of the Universal Church, and maintained a constant and affectionate intercourse with them as such. This is so evident, from their writings and their conduct, and has been so fully conceded by the ablest and most impartial judges among Episcopalians themselves, that it would be a waste of time further to pursue the proof.

From the British reformers let us pass on to those distinguished worthies who were made the instruments of reformation on the continent of Europe.

\* Bezae Icones. Melchior Adam, p. 137. M'Crie. Calderwood.

Luther began this glorious work in Germany, in the year 1517. About the same time the standard of truth was raised by Zuingle, in Switzerland; and soon afterwards these great men were joined by Carlostadt, Melancthon, Oecolampadius, Calvin, Beza, and others. The pious exertions of these witnesses for the truth were as eminently blessed as they were active and unwearied. Princes, and a multitude of less celebrated divines, came to their help. Insomuch that before the close of that century, numerous and flourishing Protestant churches were planted throughout Germany, France, Switzerland, the Low Countries, Sweden, Denmark, and various other parts of Europe, from the Mediterranean to the confines of Russia.

Now it is well known that all these Protestants on the continent of Europe, when they threw off the fetters of papal authority, and were left free to follow the word of God, without any exception, recognised the doctrine of ministerial parity, and embraced it, not only in theory, but also in practice. They established all their churches on the basis of that principle; and to the present hour bear testimony in its favour. This may be abundantly proved, by recurring to their original confessions of faith; to their best writers; and to their uniform proceedings.

When the churches began to assume a systematic and organized form, they were all arranged by ecclesiastical writers under two grand divisions—the Reformed and the Lutheran. The reformed churches, which were established in France, Holland, Switzerland, Geneva, and in some parts of Germany, from the beginning, as is universally known, laid aside diocesan bishops; and have never, at any period, had an Episcopal government, either in name or in fact.

That these churches might have had Episcopal ordination, and the whole system of prelacy continued among them, if they had chosen to retain them, no one can doubt who is acquainted with their history. Several Roman Catholic bishops joined the reformers on the continent, by whom Episcopal ordination might have been had, if it had been desired. But they early embraced the doctrine of ministerial parity, which had been so generally adopted by preceding witnesses for the truth; and erected an ecclesiastical organization in conformity with this doctrine. Accordingly, the venerable founders of those churches, having been themselves ordained presbyters by Romish bishops; believing that the difference between these two classes of ministers was not appointed by Jesus Christ or his apostles, but invented by the church; and persuaded that, according to the practice of the primitive Church, presbyters were fully invested with the ordaining power, they proceeded to ordain others, and thus transmitted the ministerial succession to those who came after them.

But it is said, that, although the reformers of France, Holland, Geneva, Scotland, &c. thought proper to organize their churches on the Presbyterian principle of parity; yet that Calvin, Beza, and other eminent divines of great authority in those churches, frequently expressed sentiments very favourable to diocesan Episcopacy, and spoke with great respect of the English hierarchy. It is not denied that those illustrious reformers, on a variety of occasions, expressed themselves in very respectful terms of the Church of England, as it stood in their day. But whether we consider the sentiments which they expressed, or the circumstances under which they delivered them, no



use can be made of this fact favourable to the cause of our opponents. The truth is, the English reformers, prevented, on the one hand, by the crown and the papists, from carrying the reformation so far as they wished; and on the other, urged by the Puritans, to remove at once, all abuses out of the church, wrote to the reformers at Geneva, whom they knew to have much influence in England, soliciting their aid, in quieting the minds of the Puritans, and in persuading them to remain in the bosom of the church, in the hope of a more complete reformation afterwards. Is it wonderful, that, at a crisis of this kind, Calvin and Beza, considering the Church of England as struggling with difficulties; viewing Cranmer and his associates as eminently pious men, who were doing the best they could in existing circumstances; hoping for more favourable times; and not regarding the form of church government as an essential, should write to the English reformers in a manner calculated to quiet the minds of the Puritans, and induce them to remain in connexion with the national church? This they did. But in all their communications they never went further than to say, that they considered the hierarchy of England as a judicious and respectable human institution; and that they could without any violation of the dictates of conscience, remain in communion with such a church, if their lot had been cast within her bosom. And what is the inference from this? Could not thousands of the firmest Presbyterians on earth, under similar circumstances, say the same? But did Calvin or Beza ever say, even in their most unguarded moments, that they considered prelacy as an institution of Christ, or his apostles? Did they ever express a preference of this form of government to the

Presbyterian form? Did they, in short, ever do more than acknowledge that Episcopacy might, in some cases, be useful and lawful? But, on the other hand, how much these same reformers have said against prelacy, and in favour of ministerial parity; how strongly they have asserted, and how clearly they have proved, the former to be a human invention, and the latter to have the sanction of apostolic example; and how decidedly they speak in favour of Presbyterian principles, even in some of their most complaisant letters to the English reformers, our opponents take care not to state.\* Their caution is politic. For no human ingenuity will ever be able to refute the reasonings which those excellent men have left on record against the Episcopal cause.

The doctrine held by Luther on this subject will be made evident by the following quotations from his works.

In his treatise, *De Abroganda Missa Privata*, contained in the second volume of his works,† remarking on Titus i. 5. he makes the following explicit declaration. “Here, if we believe that the Spirit of Christ spake and directed by Paul, we must acknowledge that it is a divine appointment, that in every city there be a plurality of bishops, or at least one. It is manifest also, that, by the same divine authority, he makes

\* It is almost incredible how far the declarations of Calvin on this subject have been misunderstood and misrepresented. Who would imagine, when that venerable reformer, in his *Institutes*, represents the Scriptures as affording a warrant for three classes of church officers, viz. teaching elders, ruling elders, and deacons, that any could interpret the passage as favouring the doctrine of three orders of clergy?

† My edition of Luther's works is in seven volumes, folio, printed at Wittemberg, 1546—1552.

presbyters and bishops to be one and the same thing; for he says that presbyters are to be ordained in every city, if any can be found who are blameless, because a bishop ought to be blameless.”

In his treatise *Adversus Falso Nominatum Ordinem Episcoporum*,\* *Oper. Tom. Ibid. p. 342.* remarking on the same passage of Scripture, he speaks as follows—“ Paul writes to Titus that he should ordain elders in every city. Here, I think, no one can deny that the apostle represents bishop and elder as signifying the same thing. Since he commands Titus to ordain elders in every city; and because a bishop ought to be blameless, he calls an elder by the same title. It is, therefore, plain what Paul means by the term bishop, viz. a man eminently good and upright, of proper age, who hath a virtuous wife, and children in subjection in the fear of God. He wills such an one to preside over the congregation, in the ministry of the word, and the administration of the sacraments. Is there any one who attends to these words of the apostle, together with those which precede and follow, so hardened as to deny this sense of them, or to pervert them to another meaning?”

In the same work, page 344, 345, he thus speaks—“ But let us hear Paul concerning this divine ordination. For Luke, in the twentieth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, writes concerning him in this manner. ‘From Miletus, having sent messengers to Ephesus, he collected the elders of the church, to whom, when

\* Whoever will take the trouble to look into this treatise, which is expressly written against bishops, as a separate and pre-eminent order, will find Luther decidedly maintaining that a scriptural bishop was nothing more than a pastor of a single congregation; and strongly inveighing against the doctrine that bishops are an order above pastors, as a Popish error.

they had come to him, he thus said—Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers,' &c. But what new thing is this? Is Paul insane? Ephesus was but a single city, and yet Paul openly calls all the presbyters or elders, by the common style of bishops. But perhaps Paul had never read the legends, the miserably patched up fables, and the sacred decretals of the Papists; for how otherwise would he have dared to place a plurality of bishops over one city, and to denominate all the presbyters of that one city, bishops; when they were not all prelates, nor supported a train of dependents, and pack horses, but were poor and humble men. But, to be serious, you see plainly that the Apostle Paul calls those alone bishops who preach the gospel to the people, and administer the sacraments, as, in our times, parish ministers and preachers are wont to do. These, therefore, though they preach the gospel in small villages and hamlets, yet, as faithful ministers of the word, I believe, beyond all doubt, possess, of right, the title and name of bishop."

A little after, commenting on Philip i. 1. he says—"Behold Paul, speaking of Philippi, which was a single city, salutes all the believers, together with the bishops. These were, beyond all doubt, the presbyters, whom he had been wont to appoint in every city. This now is the third instance in the writings of Paul, in which we see what God and the Holy Spirit hath appointed, viz. that those alone, truly and of right, are to be called bishops who have the care of a flock in the ministry of the word, the care of the poor, and the administration of the sacraments, as is the case with parish ministers in our age."

In the same work, p. 346. commenting on 1 Peter

v. 1. he says—"Here you see that Peter, in the same manner as Paul had done, uses the terms presbyter and bishop to signify the same thing. He represents those as bishops who teach the people, and preach the word of God; and he makes them all of equal power, and forbids them to conduct themselves as if they were lords, or to indulge a spirit of domination over their flocks. He calls himself a fellow presbyter, plainly teaching, by this expression, that all parish ministers, and bishops of cities, were of equal authority among themselves; that in what pertained to the office of bishop, no one could claim any superiority over another; and that he was their fellow presbyter, having no more power in his own city than others had in theirs, or than every one of them had in his own congregation."

In his Commentary on 1 Peter v. 1. *Oper. Tom. v.* p. 481, he thus speaks—"The word presbyter signifies an elder. It has the same meaning as the term senators, that is, men, who on account of their age, prudence, and experience, bear sway in society. In the same manner Christ calls his ministers, and his senate, whose duty it is to administer spiritual government, to preach the word, and to watch over the Church, elders. Wherefore let it not surprise you, if this name is now very differently applied; for of those who are at present called by this name, the Scriptures say nothing. Therefore banish the present order of things from your eyes, and you will be able to conceive of the fact as it was. When Peter, or either of the other apostles, came to any city where there were Christians, out of the number he chose one or more aged men, of blameless lives, who had wives and children, and were well acquainted

with the Scriptures, to be set over the rest. These were called presbyters, that is elders, whom both Peter and Paul also style bishops, that we may know that bishops and presbyters were the same.”

But this is not all. Luther declared his principles on this subject by his practice, as well as by his writings. He was ordained a presbyter in the Romish church, in the year 1507, in the twenty-fourth year of his age.\* As a presbyter, he considered himself as authorized to ordain others to the gospel ministry; and accordingly, soon after assuming the character of a reformer, he actually did ordain.† Nay, he went a step further. Though a firm believer in the doctrine of the primitive parity of ministers, he seems to have considered it as not unlawful to have diocesan bishops or superintendents in the Church, when either the form of the civil government, or the habits or wishes of the people rendered it desirable; always, however, placing their appointment on the ground of human expediency alone. Accordingly, in the year 1542, when an Episcopal seat within the electorate of Saxony became vacant, Luther, at the request of the Elector, though himself nothing more than a presbyter, consecrated Amsdorff bishop of that diocese.‡ But if Luther had believed in “the apostolic institution of diocesan Episcopacy,” as Dr. Bowden tells us he did, could he have acted thus? It is not possible. It would have been a grossness of inconsistency and dishonesty with which that pious reformer was never charged.

\* Vid. Gerhard, *De Ministerio*, p. 147, 148. The same fact is also attested by Zanchius. In *iv. Præcep.* p. 774. Gerhard, who lived not long after Luther, expressly asserts that he was ordained a presbyter, with the imposition of hands, in the year above mentioned.

† Melchior Adam, 129.

‡ Ibid. 150.

Nor did Luther abandon either his principles or his practice, on this subject, to his last hour. This appears from the following testimony of his biographer, concerning what occurred a few days before his death. "From the 29th day of January till the 17th day of February, he was continually occupied about the matters of concord and agreement of the aforesaid noble princes, bringing it unto a most godly conclusion. And besides his great labour in so necessary a cause, he preached in the mean time, four worthy sermons, and two times communicated with the Christian church there, in the holy Supper of the Lord; and in the latter communion, which was on Sunday, he ordained two ministers of the word of God, after the apostles' manner." \* This great reformer, then, in the solemn anticipation of death, and when he expected, in a few days, to appear before his eternal Judge, still claimed and exercised the right of ordaining ministers, as he had done for nearly thirty years; and what is more, his biographers, who were eminent divines of the Lutheran denomination, and Luther's most intimate friends, declare, that, in their judgment, as well as that of their illustrious chief, ordination by a presbyter was in conformity with "the apostles' manner."

It is true, Luther and the leading divines of his denomination, differed from Calvin and his associates, with respect to one point in church government. The latter totally rejected all ministerial imparity. The former supposed that a system embracing some degree of imparity, was, in general expedient; and ac-

\* "The True History of the Christian Departing of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther; collected by Justus Jonas, Michael Celius, and Joannes Aurifaber, which were present thereat."

cordingly, in proceeding to organize their churches, appointed superintendents, who enjoyed a kind of pre-eminence, and were vested with peculiar powers. But they explicitly acknowledged this office to be a human, and not a divine institution. The superintendents in question were mere presbyters, and received no new ordination in consequence of their appointment to this office. The opinion of their being a distinct and superior order of clergy was formally rejected. And all regular Presbyterian ordinations were recognised by the church in which they presided as valid. Nor have modern Lutherans apostatized in any of these points from the principles of their fathers. In all the Lutheran churches in America, and in Europe, to the south of Sweden, there are no bishops. Their superintendents, or seniors, have no other ordination than that of presbyters. When they are not present, other presbyters ordain without a scruple. And the ordinations practised in Presbyterian churches they acknowledge to be as valid as their own; and accordingly receive into full ministerial standing those who have been ordained in this manner.

The testimony of Dr. Mosheim, the celebrated ecclesiastical historian, who was himself a zealous and distinguished Lutheran, will doubtless be considered as conclusive on this subject. He remarks, (Vol. IV. p. 287,) that “the internal government of the Lutheran church is equally removed from Episcopacy on the one hand, and from Presbyterianism on the other; if we except the kingdoms of Sweden and Denmark, who retain the form of ecclesiastical government that preceded the reformation, purged, indeed, from the superstition and abuses that rendered it so odious.



This constitution of the Lutheran hierarchy will not seem surprising, when the sentiments of that people with regard to ecclesiastical polity are duly considered. On the one hand, they are persuaded that there is no law of divine authority, which points out a distinction between the ministers of the gospel, with respect to rank, dignity, or prerogatives; and therefore they recede from Episcopacy. But, on the other hand, they are of opinion, that a certain subordination, a diversity in point of rank and privileges among the clergy, are not only highly useful, but also necessary to the perfection of church communion, by connecting, in consequence of a mutual dependence, more closely together the members of the same body; and thus they avoid the uniformity of the Presbyterian government. They are not, however, agreed with respect to the extent of this subordination and the degrees of superiority and precedence that ought to distinguish their doctors; for in some places this is regulated with much more regard to the ancient rules of church government, than is discovered in others. As the divine law is silent on this head, different opinions may be entertained, and different forms of ecclesiastical polity adopted, without a breach of Christian charity and fraternal union."

But although the Lutherans in America, and in the south of Europe, are not Episcopal; perhaps it will be contended, that this form obtains among the Lutherans of Sweden and Denmark. This plea, however, like the former, is altogether destitute of solidity. It is readily granted that the Lutheran churches in those kingdoms have officers whom they style bishops; but when we examine the history and the principles of those churches with respect to their clergy, these

bishops will be found to have no other character, according to the doctrine of the Church of England, than that of mere presbyters. For, in the first place, all ecclesiastical historians agree, that when the reformation was introduced into Sweden, the first ministers who undertook to ordain were only presbyters. Their ministerial succession, of course, flowing through such a channel, cannot include any ecclesiastical dignity higher than that of presbyter. Further; in Swedish churches it is not only certain that presbyters, in the absence of those who are styled bishops, ordain common ministers, without a scruple; but it is equally certain, that in the ordination of a bishop, if the other bishops happen to be absent, the more grave and aged of the ordinary pastors supply their place, and are considered as fully invested with the ordaining power. Finally; the Swedish churches explicitly renounce all claim of divine right for their ecclesiastical government. They acknowledge that the Scriptures contain no warrant for more than one order of gospel ministers;\* that their system rests on no other ground than human expediency; and that an adherence to it is by no means necessary either to the validity or regularity of Christian ordinances.

If I mistake not, I have now demonstrated that the whole body of the reformers, with scarcely any exceptions, agreed in maintaining that ministerial parity was the doctrine of Scripture, and of the primitive Church: That all the reformed churches, excepting that of England, were organized on this principle; and that even those great men who finally settled her government and worship, did not consider prelacy as

\* The Swedish churches wholly discard deacons as an order of clergy.

founded on divine appointment, but only as resting on the basis of expediency. In short, there is complete evidence, that the Church of England stands alone in making bishops an order of clergy superior to presbyters; nay, that every other Protestant church on earth, has formally disclaimed the divine right of diocesan Episcopacy, and pronounced it to be a mere human invention.

Now is it credible, I ask, that a body of such men as the early reformers; men who to great learning, added the most exalted piety, zeal, and devotedness to the truth; men who counted not their lives dear to them that they might maintain what appeared to them the purity of faith and order in the Church; is it credible that such men, living in different countries, influenced by different prejudices, all educated under the system of diocesan bishops, and all surrounded with ministers and people still warmly attached to this system: Is it credible, I say, that such men, thus situated, should, when left free to examine the Scriptures and the early fathers on this subject, with almost perfect unanimity, agree in pronouncing prelacy to be a human invention, and ministerial parity to be the doctrine of Scripture, if the testimony in favour of this opinion had not been perfectly clear and conclusive? It is not credible. We may suppose Calvin and Beza to have embraced their opinions on this subject from prejudice, arising out of their situation; but that Luther, Melancthon, Oecolampadius, Bullinger, Bucer, Peter Martyr, and all the leading reformers on the continent of Europe, differently situated, and with different views on other points, should embrace the same opinion; that Cranmer, Grindal, and other prelates in Britain, though partaking in the highest

honours of an Episcopal system, should entirely concur in that opinion; that all this illustrious body of men, scattered through the whole Protestant world, should agree in declaring ministerial parity to be the doctrine of Scripture and of the primitive Church; and all this from mere prejudice, in direct opposition to Scripture and early history, is one of the most incredible suppositions that can be formed by the human mind.

I repeat again, the question before us is not to be decided by human opinion, or by the number or respectability of the advocates which appear on either side. We are not to be governed by the judgment of reformers, or by the practice of the churches which they planted. But so far as these considerations have any weight, they are unquestionably and strongly on the side of Presbyterian parity.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## CONCESSIONS OF EMINENT EPISCOPALIANS.

THE concessions of opponents always carry with them peculiar weight. The opinions of Presbyterians, in this controversy, like the testimony of all men in their own favour, will of course be received with suspicion and allowance. But when decided and zealous Episcopalians; men who stand high as the defenders and the ornaments of Episcopacy; men whose prejudice and interest were all enlisted in the support of the Episcopal system; when these are found to have conceded the main points in this controversy, they give us advantages of the most decisive kind. Some instances of this sort, I shall now proceed to state.

When I exhibit Episcopal divines as making concessions in favour of our doctrine, none certainly will understand me as meaning to assert, that they were Presbyterians in principle. So far from this, the chief value of their concessions consists in being made by decided friends of Episcopacy. Neither will you understand me to assert, that none of these writers say any thing, in other parts of their works, inconsistent with these concessions. Few men who write and publish much are at all times so guarded as never to be inconsistent with themselves. It is enough for me to know what language they employed, when they undertook professedly to state their opinions on the subject before us, and when they were called upon

by every motive to write with caution and precision. The reader will find most of these writers, differing among themselves; some taking higher ground, and others lower. For this he is doubtless prepared, after being informed that there are three classes of Episcopalians, as stated in a former chapter.

Some of the concessions which might with propriety be here introduced, have been already exhibited in various parts of the foregoing chapters. It has been stated, that Mr. Dodwell frankly acknowledges that bishops, as an order superior to presbyters, are not to be found in the New Testament; that such an order had no existence till the beginning of the second century; that presbyters were the highest ecclesiastical officers left in commission by the apostles. On the other hand, Dr. Hammond, perhaps the ablest advocate of prelacy that ever lived, warmly contends, that in the days of the apostles there were none but bishops; the second grade of ministers, now styled presbyters, not having been appointed till after the close of the canon of Scripture. Now, if neither of these great men could find both bishops and presbyters, as different orders, in the New Testament; however ingeniously they endeavour to extricate themselves from the difficulty, it will amount, in the opinion of all the impartial, to a fundamental concession. In like manner you have seen, that the arguments drawn from the Episcopal character of Timothy and Titus; from the model of the Jewish priesthood; and from the angels of the Asiatic churches, have been formally abandoned, and pronounced to be of no value, by some of the ablest champions of Episcopacy. The same might be proved with respect to all the arguments which are derived from Scripture in support of the Episcopal cause.

They have almost all of them been given up in turn by distinguished prelatists. But let us pass on to some more general concessions.

The Papists, before as well as since the reformation, have been the warmest advocates for prelacy that the church ever knew. Yet it would be easy to show, by a series of quotations, that many of the most learned men of that denomination, of different periods and nations, have held, and explicitly taught, that bishops and presbyters were the same in the primitive Church; and that the difference between them, though deemed both useful and necessary, is only a human institution. But instead of a long list of authorities to establish this point, I shall content myself with producing four, the first two from Great Britain, and the others from the continent of Europe.

The judgment of the Church of England on this subject, in the times of popery, we have in the canons of Elfrick, in the year 990, to Bishop Wolfin, in which bishops and presbyters are declared to be of the same order. To the same amount is the judgment of Anselme, archbishop of Canterbury, who died about the year 1109, and who was perhaps the most learned man of the age in which he lived. He explicitly tells us, that, "by the apostolic institution, all presbyters are bishops." See his Commentary on Titus and Philippians.

In the canon law we find the following decisive declaration: "Bishop and presbyter were the same in the primitive Church; presbyter being the name of the person's age, and bishop of his office. But there being many of these in every church, they determined among themselves, for the preventing of schism, that one should be elected by themselves to be set over

the rest; and the person so elected was called bishop, for distinction sake. The rest were called presbyters; and in process of time, their reverence for these titular bishops so increased, that they began to obey them as children do a father.”—*Just. Leg. Can.* I. 21.

Cassander, a learned Catholic divine, who flourished in the sixteenth century, in his book of Consultations, Art. 14, has the following passage: “Whether Episcopacy is to be accounted an ecclesiastical order, distinct from presbytery, is a question much debated between theologues and canonists. But in this one particular all parties agree. That in the apostles’ days there was no difference between a bishop and a presbyter; but afterwards, for the avoiding of schism, the bishop was placed before the presbyter, to whom the power of ordination was granted, that so peace might be continued in the Church.”

It has been observed, that all the first reformers of the Church of England, freely acknowledged bishops and presbyters to have been the same in the apostolic age; and only defended diocesan Episcopacy as a wise human appointment. It was asserted on high Episcopal authority, in the preceding chapter, that Dr. Bancroft, then chaplain to Archbishop Whitgift, was the first Protestant divine in England, who attempted to place Episcopacy on the foundation of divine right. In 1588, in a sermon delivered on a public occasion, he undertook to maintain, “that the bishops of England were a distinct order from priests, and had superiority over them by divine right, and directly from God; and that the denial of it was heresy.” This sermon gave great offence to many of the clergy and laity. Among others, Sir Francis Knollys, much dissatisfied with the doctrine which it contained,



wrote to Dr. Raignolds, Regius professor of divinity in the University of Oxford, for his opinion on the subject. That learned professor, who is said to have been the "oracle of the university in his day,"\* returned an answer, which, among other things contains the following passages.

"Of the two opinions which your honour mentions in the sermon of Dr. Bancroft, the first is that which asserts the superiority which the prelates among us have over the clergy, to be a divine institution. He does not, indeed, assert this in express terms, but he does it by necessary consequence, in which he affirms the opinion of those that oppose that superiority to be an heresy; in which, in my judgment, he has committed an oversight; and I believe he himself will acknowledge it, if duly admonished concerning it. All that have laboured in reforming the Church, for five hundred years past, have taught that all pastors, be they entitled bishops or priests, have equal authority and power by God's word; as first the Waldenses, next Marsilius Petavinus, then Wickliffe and his disciples; afterwards Huss and the Hussites; and last of all Luther, Calvin, Brentius, Bullinger, and Musculus. Among ourselves we have bishops, the Queen's professors of divinity in our universities; and other learned men, as Bradford, Lambert, Jewel, Pilkington, Humphreys, Fulke, who all agree in this matter; and so do all divines beyond sea that I ever read, and

\* Professor Raignolds was acknowledged by all his contemporaries to be a prodigy of learning. Bishop Hall used to say, that his memory and reading were near a miracle. He was particularly conversant with the fathers and early historians; was a critic in the languages; was celebrated for his wit; and so eminent for piety and sanctity of life, that Crakenthorp said of him, that 'to name Raignolds was to commend virtue itself.'

doubtless many more whom I never read. But what do I speak of particular persons? It is the common judgment of the Reformed Churches of Helvetia, Savoy, France, Scotland, Germany, Hungary, Poland, the Low Countries, and our own, (the Church of England.) Wherefore, since Dr. Bancroft will certainly never pretend that an heresy, condemned by the consent of the whole Church in its most flourishing times, was yet accounted sound and Christian doctrine by all these I have mentioned, I hope he will acknowledge that he was mistaken when he asserted the superiority which bishops have among us over the clergy, to be God's own ordinance."\* Archbishop Whitgift, referring to the great attention which Bancroft's sermon had excited, observed, that it "had done good;" but added, that with respect to the offensive doctrine which it contained, he "rather wished, than believed it to be true."

The same Archbishop Whitgift, in his book against Cartwright, has the following full and explicit declarations: Having distinguished between those things which are so necessary, that without them we cannot be saved; and such as are so necessary, that without them we cannot so well and conveniently be saved, he adds, "I confess, that in a church collected together in one place, and at liberty, government is necessary with the second kind of necessity; but that any kind of government is so necessary that without it the Church cannot be saved, or that it may not be altered into some other kind, thought to be more expedient, I utterly deny, and the reasons that move me so to do, be these: the first is, because I find no one certain and perfect kind of government prescribed or com-

\* See the letter at large in Boyse on Episcopacy, p. 13—19.

manded in the Scriptures, to the Church of Christ; which, no doubt, should have been done, if it had been a matter necessary to the salvation of the Church. There is no certain kind of government or discipline prescribed to the Church; but the same may be altered, as the profit of the churches requires. I do deny that the Scriptures do set down any one certain kind of government in the Church to be perpetual for all times, places, and persons, without alteration. It is well known that the manner and form of government used in the apostles' time, and expressed in the Scriptures, neither is now, nor can, nor ought to be observed, either touching the persons or the functions.\* We see manifestly, that, in sundry points, the government of the Church used in the apostles' time, is, and hath been of necessity, altered; and that it neither may nor can be revoked. Whereby it is plain, that any one kind of external government perpetually to be observed, is no where in the Scripture prescribed to the Church, but the charge thereof is left to the magistrate, so that nothing be done contrary to the word of God. This is the opinion of the best writers; neither do I know any learned man of a contrary judgment."

Dr. Willet, a distinguished divine of the Church of England, in the reign of Elizabeth, in his *Synopsis Papismi*, a large and learned work, dedicated to that

\* It has been said that Archbishop Whitgift, in this passage, merely meant to say that all the details of ecclesiastical discipline are not laid down in Scripture, nor to be considered as of divine right. But he utterly precludes this construction, by declaring that he considers no form of government as of unalterable divine appointment, either with respect to persons or functions. He could scarcely have employed language to express the opinion which we ascribe to him, more perspicuously or decisively.

Queen, undertakes professedly to deliver the opinion of his church on the subject before us. Out of much which might be quoted, the following passages are sufficient for our purpose: "Every godly and faithful bishop is a successor of the apostles. We deny it not; and so are all faithful and godly pastors and ministers. For in respect of their extraordinary calling, miraculous gifts, and apostleship, the apostles have properly no successors; as Mr. Bembridge, the martyr saith, that he believed not bishops to be the successors of the apostles, for that they be not called as they were, nor have that grace. That, therefore, which the apostles were especially appointed unto, is the thing wherein the apostles were properly succeeded; but that was the preaching of the gospel: as St. Paul saith, he was sent to preach, not to baptize. The promise of succession, we see, is in the preaching of the word, which appertaineth as well to other pastors and ministers as to bishops." Again; "Seeing in the apostles' time episcopus and presbyter, a bishop and a priest, were neither in name nor office distinguished; it followeth, then, that either the apostles assigned no succession while they lived, neither appointed their successors; or that indifferently, all faithful pastors and preachers of the apostolic faith are the apostles' successors."—*Controv. v. Quest. 3. p. 232.* "Of the difference between bishops and priests, there are three opinions: the first, of Aerius, who did hold that all ministers should be equal; and that a bishop was not, neither ought to be superior to a priest. The second opinion is the other extreme of the Papists, who would have not only a difference, but a princely pre-eminence of their bishops over the clergy, and that by the word of God. And they urge

it to be so necessary, that they are no true churches which receive not their pontifical hierarchy. The third opinion is between both, that although this distinction of bishops and priests, as it is now received, cannot be proved out of Scripture, yet it is very necessary, for the policy of the Church, to avoid schisms, and to preserve it in unity. Of this judgment, Bishop Jewel against Harding, sheweth both Chrysostom, Ambrose, and Jerome, to have been. Jerome thus writeth, ‘The apostle teaches evidently that bishops and priests were the same; but that one was afterwards chosen to be set over the rest as a remedy against schism.’ To this opinion of St. Jerome, subscribeth Bishop Jewel, and another most reverend prelate of our church, Archbishop Whitgift,” p. 273. Dr. Willet also expressly renounces the argument drawn by many Episcopalians from the Jewish priesthood. In answer to a celebrated popish writer, who had, with great confidence, adduced this argument, to support the authority of bishops, as an order superior to presbyters, he observes: First, “the high priest under the law was a figure of Christ, who is the High Priest and chief Shepherd of the New Testament: and therefore this type, being fulfilled in Christ, cannot properly be applied to the external hierarchy of the Church. Secondly, if every bishop be this high priest, then have you lost one of your best arguments for the Pope, whom you would have to be the high priest in the Church.”\* This champion of the Church of England further concedes: “That it may be doubted

\* It will be observed, that this zealous Episcopalian not only rejects the argument in favour of prelacy, drawn from the model of the Jewish priesthood, but also declares it to be a popish argument, and of no value excepting on popish principles.

whether Timothy were so ordained by the apostle bishop of Ephesus, as a bishop is now set over his diocese; for then the apostle would never have called him so often from his charge, sending him to the Corinthians, to the Thessalonians, and to other churches beside. It is most likely that Timothy had the place and calling of an evangelist.” Again; “Seeing that Timothy was ordained by the authority of the eldership, how could he be a bishop strictly and precisely taken, being ordained by presbyters?” p. 273. Dr. Willet also formally gives up the claim that diocesan bishops are peculiarly the successors of the apostles; explicitly conceding that all who preach the gospel, and administer sacraments, are equally entitled to this honour. And, to place his opinion beyond all doubt, he observes, “Although it cannot be denied but that the government of bishops is very profitable for the preserving of unity; yet we dare not condemn the churches of Geneva, Helvetia, Germany, Scotland, that have received another form of ecclesiastical government; as the Papists proudly affirm all churches which have not such bishops as theirs are, to be no true churches. But so do not our bishops and archbishops, which is a notable difference between the bishops of the popish church, and of the reformed churches. Wherefore, as we condemn not those reformed churches which have retained another form of ecclesiastical government; so neither are they to censure our church for holding still the ancient regimen of bishops, purged from the ambitious and superstitious inventions of the popish prelacy,” p. 276.

Bishop Bilson, in his work against Seminaries, lib. I. p. 318, delivers it as his opinion, and confirms it by quotations from Jerome, that “the Church was at

first governed by the common council of presbyters; that therefore bishops must understand that they are greater than presbyters, rather by custom than the Lord's appointment; and that bishop's came in after the apostles' time."

Dr. Holland, the King's professor of divinity in the University of Oxford, at a public academical exercise, in the year 1608, in answer to a question formally and solemnly proposed—*An episcopatus sit ordo distinctus a presbyteratu, coque superior jure divino?* i. e. Whether the office of bishop be different from that of presbyter, and superior to it, by divine right, declared that "to affirm that there is such a difference and superiority, by divine right, is most false, contrary to Scripture, to the fathers, to the doctrine of the Church of England, yea to the very schoolmen themselves."

Bishop Morton, in his *Catholic Apology*, addressed to the Papists, lib. I. tells them "that the powers of order and jurisdiction, which they ascribe to bishops, doth by divine right belong to all other presbyters; and that to ordain is their ancient right." He further asserts, that Jerome does not represent the difference between bishop and presbyter as of divine institution. He assents to the opinion of Medina, the Jesuit, and declares that there was no substantial difference on the subject of Episcopacy between Jerome and Aerius. He avers, further, that not only all the Protestants, but also all the primitive doctors were of Jerome's mind. And, finally, he concludes, that according to the harmonious consent of all men in the apostolic age, there was no difference between bishop and presbyter; but that this difference was afterwards introduced for the removal of schism.

Bishop Jewel, one of the most illustrious advocates for diocesan Episcopacy, in the Defence of his Apology for the Church of England against Harding, p. 248, has the following remarkable passage. "But what meant M. Harding to come in here with the difference between priests and bishops? Thinketh he that priests and bishops hold only by tradition? Or is it so horrible an heresy as he maketh it, to say, that, by the Scriptures of God, a bishop and a priest are all one? Or knoweth he how far, and to whom he reacheth the name of an heretic? Verily Chrysostom saith, *Inter episcopum, et presbyterum interest fere nihil*: i. e. 'between a bishop and a priest there is, in a manner, no difference.' St. Jerome saith, somewhat in rougher sort, *Audio, quendam in tantam eripuisse vecordiam, ut diaconos presbyteris, id est episcopis, ante ferret: cum Apostolus perspicue doceat, eosdem esse presbyteros, quos episcopos*, i. e. 'I hear say, there is one become so peevish, that he setteth deacons before priests, that is to say, bishops; whereas the apostle plainly teacheth us, that priests and bishops be all one.' St. Augustine also saith, *Quid est episcopus nisi primus presbyter, hoc est summus sacerdos?* i. e. 'What is a bishop, but the first priest, that is to say, the highest priest?' So saith St. Ambrose, *episcopi et presbyteri una ordinatio est; uterque, enim, sacerdos est, sed episcopus primus est*, i. e. There is but one consecration of priest and bishop; for both of them are priests, but the bishop is the first. All these, and other more holy fathers, together with St. Paul, the apostle, for thus saying, by M. Harding's advice, must be holden for heretics."\*

\* It ought to be kept in mind, that Bishop Jewel's Apology for the Church of England was laid before the public on the avowed princi-



Dr. Whitaker, a learned divine of the Church of England, and professor of divinity in the University of Cambridge, in his treatise against Campion, the Jesuit, affirms that bishop and presbyter are, by divine right, all one. And, in answer to Dury, a zealous hierarchist of Scotland, he tells him "that, whereas he asserts, with many words, that bishop and presbyter are divers, if he will retain the character of a modest divine, he must not so confidently affirm, that which all men see to be so evidently false. For what is so well known, says he, as this which you acknowledge not? Jerome plainly writeth that elders and bishops are the same, and confirmeth it by many places of Scripture." The same celebrated Episcopalian, in writing against Bellarmine, says, "From 2 Tim. i. 6, we understand that Timothy had hands laid on him by presbyters, who, at that time governed the church in common council;" and then proceeds to speak severely of Bellarmine and the Romish church for confining the power of ordination to bishops exclusively of presbyters.

The authority of few men stands higher among the friends of prelacy than that of Bishop Hall, who wrote, and otherwise exerted himself, in favour of the divine right of diocesan Episcopacy, with as much zeal and ability as any man of his day. Yet this eminently learned and pious divine, acknowledged the reformed church of Holland, where there never had been any diocesan bishops, to be a true church of Christ; accepted of a seat in the Synod of Dort, in which the

ple, that it contained the doctrine of that church: and that the work from which the above quotation is made, was ordered to be suspended by a chain, in all the churches in the kingdom, and to be publicly read as a standard of theological instruction.—*Strype's Annals*, II. 100.

articles of faith, and form of government of that church were settled; recognised the deputies from all the reformed churches on the continent, none of whom had received Episcopal ordination, as regular ministers of Christ; and, when he took leave of the Synod, declared that "there was no place upon earth so like heaven as the Synod of Dort, and where he should be more willing to dwell."—*Brandt's Hist.* Sess. 62. The following extract of a sermon which he delivered in Latin before that venerable Synod, contains a direct and unequivocal acknowledgment of the Church of Holland as a true church of Christ. It was delivered November 29, 1618; and founded on Eccles. vii. 16. "His serene majesty, our King James, in his excellent letter, admonishes the States General, and in his instructions to us hath expressly commanded us to urge this with our whole might, to inculcate this one thing, that you all continue to adhere to the common faith, and the confession of your own and the other churches: which if you do, O happy Holland! O chaste Spouse of Christ! O prosperous republic! this your afflicted church tossed with the billows of differing opinions, will yet reach the harbour, and safely smile at all the storms excited by her cruel adversaries. That this may at length be obtained, let us seek for the things which make for peace. We are brethren; let us also be colleagues! What have we to do with the infamous titles of party names? We are Christians; let us also be of the same mind. We are one body; let us also be unanimous. By the tremendous name of the omnipotent God; by the pious and loving bosom of our common Mother; by your own souls; by the holy bowels of Jesus Christ our Saviour, my brethren, seek peace; pursue peace."

See the whole in the *Acta Synodi Nat. Dord.* 38. But this excellent prelate went further. A little more than twenty years after his mission to Holland, and when he had been advanced to the bishoprick of Norwich, he published his *Irenicum*, (or Peacemaker,) in which we find the following passage, Sect. VI. "Blessed be God, there is no difference, in any essential point, between the Church of England and her sister reformed churches. We unite in every article of Christian doctrine, without the least variation, as the full and absolute agreement between their public confessions and ours testifies.\* The only difference between us consists in our mode of constituting the external ministry; and even with respect to this point we are of one mind, because we all profess to believe that it is not an essential of the Church, (though in the opinion of many it is a matter of importance to her well being;) and we all retain a respectful and friendly opinion of each other, not seeing any reason why so small a disagreement should produce any alienation of affection among us." And after proposing some common principles on which they might draw more closely together, he adds, "But if a difference of opinion with regard to these points of external order must continue, why may we not be of one heart and of one mind? or why should this disagreement break the bonds of good brotherhood?" How different the language and

\* It has long been maintained by well informed persons, that the fathers, or the most distinguished reformers of the Church of England were doctrinal Calvinists; and that the thirty-nine articles of that church drawn up by them are Calvinistic. If there were any remaining doubt with respect to the accuracy of this representation, the opinion of Bishop Hall, here so strongly expressed, would be decisive in its support.

the spirit of some modern advocates for the divine right of diocesan Episcopacy.

The same practical concession was made by the eminently learned and pious Bishop Davenant, while professor of divinity in the University of Cambridge. He accepted of a seat in the Synod of Dort, and gave the sanction of his presence and aid in organizing the Presbyterian Church of Holland. We are informed, indeed, that Bishop Carleton, and the other English delegates, expressed their opinions very fully in the Synod, in favour of the Episcopal form of government; but their sitting in that body and assisting in its deliberations; their preaching in the pulpits of the Presbyterian ministers of Dort, and attending on all the public religious services of the Synod, were among the strongest acknowledgments they could make, that they considered the ministrations of non-episcopal ministers as valid. But Bishop Davenant went further. After his advancement to the bishoprick of Salisbury, he published a work in which he urged with much earnestness and force, a fraternal union among all the reformed churches.\* A plan which, it is obvious, involved in it an explicit acknowledgment that the foreign reformed churches, most of which were Presbyterian, were true churches of Christ; and which, indeed, contained in its very title, a declaration that those churches "did not differ from the Church of England in any fundamental article of Christian faith."

Bishop Croft's concessions on this subject are equally candid and decisive. I had occasion in a for-

\* *Ad Fraternal Communionem inter Evangelicas Ecclesias restaurandam Adhortatio; in eo fundata, Quod non dissentiant in ullo Fundamentali Catholicæ Fidei Articulo.*—*Cantab.* 1640.

mer chapter to take notice of an acknowledgment of the most pointed sort, in his work entitled *Naked Truth*, a work written and published while the author was bishop of Hereford, and powerfully defended by some of the most learned men of his day. The following additional passages from the same work deserve our notice. "The Scripture no where expresses any distinction of order among the elders. We find there but two orders mentioned, bishops and deacons. The Scripture distinguisheth not the order of bishops and priests; for there we find but one kind of ordination, then certainly but one order; for two distinct orders cannot be conferred in the same instant, by the same words, by the same actions." With respect to the office of deacon, this bishop entirely coincides with Scripture and the Presbyterian Church. In the work above mentioned, p. 49, he remarks that he will not dispute, "Whether this of deaconship be properly to be called an order or an office, but certainly no spiritual order; for their office was to serve tables, as the Scripture phrases it, which, in plain English, is nothing else but overseers of the poor, to distribute justly and discreetly the alms of the faithful, which the apostles would not trouble themselves withal lest it should hinder them in the ministration of the word and prayer. But as most matters of this world, in process of time, deflect much from the original constitution, so it fell out in this business; for the bishops who pretended to be successors to the apostles, by little and little, took to themselves the dispensation of alms, first by way of inspection over the deacons, but at length the total management: and the deacons, who were mere lay-officers, by degrees crept into the church ministration, and became a reputed spiritual order,

and a necessary degree and step to the priesthood, of which I can find nothing in Scripture, and the original institution, nor a word relating to any thing but the ordering of alms for the poor.”

Lord George Digby, an eminent English nobleman, who flourished in the reigns of Charles I. and Charles II. and who wrote largely on the questions which agitated the Church in his day, in a letter to Sir Kenelme Digby, on the subject before us, expresses himself in the following terms:—“He that would reduce the Church now to the form of government in the most primitive times, would not take, in my opinion, the best nor wisest course; I am sure not the safest: for he would be found pecking towards the Presbytery of Scotland, which, for my part, I believe, in point of government, hath a greater resemblance than either yours or ours to the first age, and yet it is never a whit the better for it; since it was a form not chosen for the best, but imposed by adversity under oppression, which, in the beginning, forced the Church from what it wished, to what it might; not suffering that dignity and state ecclesiastical which rightly belonged unto it, to manifest itself to the world: and which, soon afterwards, upon the least lucid intervals, shone forth so gloriously in the happier as well as more monarchical condition of Episcopacy: of which way of government I am so well persuaded that I think it pity it was not made betimes an article of the Scottish Catechism, that bishops are of divine right.” \*

The character of Archbishop Usher stands high with Episcopalians. He was one of the greatest and best of men. His plan for the reduction of Episco-

\* Jus Divinum Minis. Evang. II. p. 107.

pacy into the form of synodical government, received in the ancient Church, is well known to every one who is tolerably versed in the ecclesiastical history of England. The essential principle of that plan is, that bishop and presbyter were originally the same order; and that in the primitive Church, the bishop was only a standing president or moderator among his fellow presbyters. To guard against the possibility of mistake, the illustrious prelate declared he meant to restore that kind of Presbyterian government, which, in the Church of England, had long been disused." The archbishop, further, "being asked by Charles I. in the Isle of Wight, whether he found in antiquity that presbyters alone ordained any?" answered "Yes, and that he could show his Majesty more, even where presbyters alone successively ordained bishops, and brought as an instance of this, the presbyters of Alexandria choosing and making their own bishops, from the days of Mark till Heraclas and Dionysius." The following declaration of the same learned dignitary, is also full to our purpose. It having been reported of him, that he had expressed an uncharitable opinion concerning the Church of Holland, as no true church, because she was without diocesan bishops, when they were within her reach, if she had chosen to accept them, he thus repels the calumny: "I have ever declared my opinion to be that bishop and presbyter differ only in degree, and not in order; and, consequently, that in places where bishops cannot be had, the ordination by presbyters standeth valid. Yet, on the other side, holding, as I do, that a bishop hath superiority in degree over a presbyter, you may easily judge, that the ordination made by such presbyters, as have severed themselves from those bishops unto

whom they had sworn canonical obedience, cannot possibly by me be excused from being schismatical. And howsoever, I must needs think, that the churches which have no bishops are thereby become very much defective in their government, and that the churches in France, who, living under a popish power, cannot do what they would, are more excusable in this defect than the Low Countries, who live under a free state; yet, for the testifying of my communion with these churches, (which I do love and honour as true members of the Church universal,) I do profess, that with like affection I should receive the blessed sacrament at the hands of the Dutch ministers, if I were in Holland, as I should do at the hands of the French ministers, if I were in Charenton.”\*

When such divines as Bishop Hall, Archbishop Usher, &c., men of colossal weight and strength, as pillars, in their day, of the church to which they belonged, could declare, as the latter at least did, that he could, with all readiness and affection, receive the sacraments from the hands of Presbyterian ministers; and, of course, considered their ministrations as entirely valid; and when the former could consent to sit for several months as a member of the Presbyterian Synod of Dort, and commune with that body in prayer, preaching, and the holy Eucharist; it is perfectly impossible that they should have maintained the opinion concerning prelacy, which it is the object of this volume to oppose. But on this point I shall not dwell. It is well known that in the day of the great and good men whose names have been just mentioned, their monarch, Charles I., was involved in conflicts with the parliament which, in a few years

\* See the judgment of the late Archbishop of Armagh, 110—123.



afterwards terminated in his decapitation. In the course of these conflicts the king was urged to consent to a proposed act of the parliament for abolishing Episcopacy. This he utterly refused, alleging among other things, that Episcopacy was more friendly to monarchy than Presbytery was, and pleading "conscience" against a consent to the proposed measure. Writing on this subject to his devoted Episcopal friends and counsellors, Lord Jermyn, Lord Culpepper, and Mr. Ashburnham, he expresses himself thus:—

"Show me any precedent wherever Presbyterian government and regal was together without perpetual rebellions; which was the cause that necessitated the king, my father, to change that government in Scotland. And even in France, where they are but upon tolerance, (which in likelihood should cause moderation,) did they ever sit still so long as they had power to rebel? And it cannot be otherwise, for the ground of their doctrine is anti-monarchical. Indeed to prove that clearly, would require more time and a better pen than I have. I will say, without hyperbole, that there was not a wiser man since Solomon, than he who said—no bishop, no king." To this the enlightened and cordial friends of the monarch, and of the Church of England, just named, made the following reply: "If by conscience your meaning is, that you are obliged to do all that is in your power to support and maintain that function of bishops, as that which is the most ancient, reverend, and pious government of the Church—we fully and heartily concur with you therein. But if by conscience is intended to assert, that Episcopacy is *jure divino* exclusive, whereby no Protestant (or rather Christian) church can be acknow-

ledged for such without a bishop, we must therein crave leave wholly to differ. And if we be in error we are in good company; there *not being* (as we have cause to believe) *six persons of the Protestant religion of the other opinion*. Thus much we can add, that, at the treaty of Uxbridge, *none of your divines then present* (though much provoked thereunto) *would maintain that* (we might say *uncharitable*) *opinion*; no, not privately among your commissioners.” \*

The men who wrote thus, were intelligent, well informed men, true sons of the Church, and intimately conversant with the leading ecclesiastics as well as civilians, in the kingdom. And yet they could say, with confidence, that they did not believe there were “six persons of the Protestant religion” who entertained the exclusive opinion which they reprobate.

Bishop Forbes, a zealous Episcopalian, in his *Irenicum*, Lib. II. cap. xi. Prop. 13, expresses himself thus: “Presbyters have, by divine right, the power of ordaining, as well as of preaching and baptizing. They ought, indeed, to exercise this function under the inspection and government of a bishop, in places where there are bishops. But in other places, where the government of the Church is administered by the common council of presbyters alone, that ordination is valid and effectual which is performed by the imposition of the hands of presbyters alone.” In confirmation of this doctrine, Bishop Forbes quotes two passages from the fathers. The first is from Hilary, (Ambrose,) who, he says, tells us, in his Commentary on the Ephesians, that in Egypt, presbyters ordain if a bishop be not present; which passage in Hilary he

\* Clarendon's State Papers, Vol. II. p. 202. 260. 274.

interprets precisely as I have done, in a preceding chapter. The second is from Augustine, who, he informs us, declares that in Alexandria, and through the whole of Egypt, if a bishop be not present, presbyters ordain. Again, he says, "From all these things, it is manifest that, in the ancient Church, it was lawful for presbyters alone, if bishops were not present, to ordain presbyters and deacons; and such ordinations were held to be valid, although it was prudently appointed, for the preservation of discipline, that this should not be done without the consent of a bishop. That is to say, in those places in which there were bishops, it was held to be criminal to despise their authority. But in those places in which presbyters only governed the Church, it was sufficient to stamp validity upon an ordination that it be performed under the authority of an assembly, or bench of presbyters."

The concessions of Dr. Stillingfleet, (afterwards bishop of Worcester,) on this subject are well known. The avowed object of his *Irenicum*, one of the most learned works of the age in which it appeared, was to show, that no form of church government is prescribed in the word of God; that the Church is at liberty to modify the details of her external order, both with respect to officers and functions, as well as discipline, at pleasure; and of course, that ordinations and government by presbyters are equally valid with those administered by diocesan bishops. He seems to acknowledge, indeed, that Presbyterian parity is, on the whole, more agreeable to Scripture, and to the practice of the primitive Church, than prelacy; but, at the same time denies that this ought to be considered as establishing the divine right of Presbytery.

In the course of this work, the learned author exhibits a mass of evidence from Scripture and primitive antiquity against the Episcopal claims, and quotes declarations made by some of the most distinguished divines of different ages and denominations, which will doubtless be read with surprise by those who have been accustomed to believe that the whole Christian world, with very little exception, has always been Episcopal.

To destroy the force of Dr. Stillingfleet's concessions, it is urged, that he afterwards became dissatisfied with this work, and retracted the leading opinion which it maintains.\* To this suggestion I will reply, by a quotation from Bishop White, of Pennsylvania, who, in a pamphlet published a number of years since, having occasion to quote the *Irenicum* as an

\* The *Irenicum* has been stigmatized by some high-toned Episcopalians, as an hasty indigested work, written at an early period of the author's life, and soon repented of. The following facts will show how far this representation is correct. After having been several years engaged in the composition of this work, the author published it in 1659, at the age of twenty-four. Three years afterwards, viz. in 1662, he published a second edition; and the same year he gave to the world his *Origines Sacræ*. Soon after these publications, he met his diocesan, the celebrated Bishop Saunderson, at a visitation. The bishop seeing so young a man could hardly believe it was Stillingfleet, whom he had hitherto only known by his writings; and, after having embraced him, said, he much rather expected to have seen one as considerable for his age as he had already shown himself for his learning. See the *Life of Bishop Stillingfleet*, p. 12—16. When a divine of acknowledged talents and learning, (whatever may be his age,) after spending several years in a composition of moderate length, deliberately commits it to the press; when, after reflecting on the subject, and hearing the remarks of his friends for three years longer, he publishes it a second time; and when, after this second publication, he is complimented for his great erudition, by one of the most able and learned dignitaries of the age, there seems little room for a charge of haste or want of digestion.

authority against high-church notions, speaks of the performance and its author in the following terms: "As that learned prelate was afterwards dissatisfied with his work, (though most probably not with that part of it which would have been to our purpose,) it might seem uncandid to cite the authority of his opinion. Bishop Burnet, his cotemporary and friend, says, (*History of his own Times*, anno 1661,) To avoid the imputation that book brought on him, he went into the humours of an high sort of people, beyond what became him, perhaps beyond his own sense of things." "The book, however," Bishop White adds, "was, it seems, easier retracted than refuted; for, though offensive to many of both parties, it was managed, (says the same author,) with so much learning and skill, that none of either side ever undertook to answer it."

The truth seems to be, that Dr. Stillingfleet, finding that the opinions of a number of influential men in the church were different from those which he had advanced in this work; and finding also that a fixed adherence to them might be adverse to the interests of the established church, in which he sought preferment, he made a kind of vague and feeble recantation; and wrote in favour of the apostolic origin of Episcopacy. It is remarkable, however, that this prelate, in answer to an accusation of inconsistency between his early and his latter writings on this subject, assigned another reason besides a change of opinion, viz. that the former were written "before the laws were established." But in whatever degree his opinion may have been altered, his reasonings and authorities have undergone no change. They remain

in all their force, and have never been refuted, either by himself, or by others.

The concessions of Bishop Burnet on this subject are numerous and unequivocal. Several have been already mentioned. Out of many more which might be presented, I select the following declaration: "I acknowledge bishop and presbyter to be one and the same office, and so plead for no new office-bearer in the church. The first branch of their power is their authority to publish the gospel, to manage the worship, and dispense the sacraments; and this is all that is of divine right in the ministry, in which bishops and presbyters are equal sharers. But besides this, the church claimeth a power of jurisdiction, of making rules for discipline, and applying and executing the same; all which is, indeed, suitable to the common laws of society, and the general rules of Scripture, but hath no positive warrant from any Scripture precept. And all these constitutions of churches into synods, and the canons of discipline taking their rise from the divisions of the world into several provinces, and beginning in the second and beginning of the third century, do clearly show, that they can be derived from no divine original, and so were, as to their particular form, but of human institution." \*

The opinions held by Archbishop Tillotson, on this subject, substantially agree with those of Bishop Burnet; or, if they differ from them, are even more favourable to Presbyterian church government. He was decidedly in favour of admitting the dissenting clergy into the Church of England, without re-ordaining them; and did not scruple to avow that he con-

\* Vindication of the Church and State of Scotland, p. 331.

sidered their ordination as equally valid with that which was received from Episcopal bishops. And, in conformity with this opinion, he advised the Episcopal clergy of Scotland to unite with the Presbyterian church in that country, and submit to its government.\*

Archbishop Wake, who was a warm friend to prelacy, and whose character stands high with its advocates, it is well known kept up a constant friendly correspondence with the most eminent pastors and professors in Geneva and Holland; manifested a fraternal regard to them; declared their churches, notwithstanding their difference in discipline and government from his own, to be true churches of Christ; and expressed a warm desire for their union with the Church of England, at the head of which he was then placed. In a letter which he wrote to the celebrated Le Clerc, of the Genevan school, then residing in Holland, in the year 1719, there is the following passage. "I freely embrace the reformed churches, notwithstanding they differ in some respects from that of England. I could wish, indeed, they had retained that moderate Episcopacy, freed from all unjust domination, which obtains among us, and which, if I have any skill in judging on this subject, was received in the Church from the apostolic age. Nor do I despair of its being restored. If I should not see it myself posterity will. In the mean time, I am so far from being so uncharitable as to believe that any of those churches, on account of this defect, (for so I must be

\* See Remarks upon the Life of the most Reverend Dr. John Tillotson, 8vo. 1754; in which the author, a most violent Episcopalian, acknowledges these facts, and loads him with much abuse on account of them.

allowed, without invidiousness, to call it,) ought to be cut off from our communion; nor can I by any means join with certain *mad* writers among us, in denying the validity of their sacraments, and in calling in question their right to the name of Christian churches.\* I could wish to bring about, at any price, a more close union between all the reformed churches." The same prelate, in a letter to Professor Turretin, of Geneva, in 1718, speaking of Bishop Davenant's conciliatory opinions, declares that they perfectly coincide with his own, and that he could earnestly wish that all Christians were of the same mind. Another letter, of a more public nature, which he afterwards addressed to the pastors and professors of Geneva, abounds with similar sentiments, and expresses the most fraternal affection for those Presbyterian worthies.† Nor were these letters written by him merely as a private man, or in the spirit of temporizing politeness; but manifestly with all the deliberation and solemnity of a man who felt his official responsibility.

The learned Joseph Bingham, who has written largely and ably in defence of the Episcopacy of the Church of England, frankly acknowledges, that "that church does by no means damn or cut off from her communion those who believe bishops and presbyters to be the same order. Some of our best Episcopal

\* The language employed by the good archbishop to express his disapprobation of this doctrine is remarkably strong and pointed. He calls those writers who attempt to maintain it, *furiosi*, i. e. madmen. If he spoke in this style of such writers in England, where diocesan Episcopacy was established by law, and when he was himself at the head of that establishment, what would he have said concerning writers of a similar stamp, at the present day in America, where all denominations, with respect to the state, stand on a level?

† See Appendix III. to Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History.



divines, and true sons of the Church of England, have said the same, distinguishing between order and jurisdiction, and made use of this doctrine and distinction to justify the ordinations of the reformed churches, against the Romanists.”\*—*French Church's Apol.* p. 262.

Dr. John Edwards, a learned and respectable divine of the Church of England, in a treatise on this subject, after having considered the testimonies of Clement, Ignatius, Cyprian, Chrysostom, Theodoret, Jerome, and others, makes the following declaration. “From all these we may gather that the Scripture bishop was the chief of the presbyters; but he was not of a distinct order from them. And as for the times after the apostles, none of these writers, nor any ecclesiastical historian, tells us, that a person of an order superior to presbyters was set over the presbyters. It is true, one single person is recorded to have presided over the college of presbyters, but this college had the same power with the single person, though not the particular dignity of presidentship. The short is, the bishops in these times were presbyters; only he that presided over the body of presbyters was called bishop, while the rest were generally known by the title of presbyters; and the bishop was still but a presbyter, as to order and function, though, for distinction sake, he was known by the name of bishop. He was superior to the other presbyters as long as he executed his office, as a chairman in a committee is above the rest of the justices whilst he holds that place. It was generally the most ancient

\* It will be distinctly remembered that all the reformed churches, excepting that of England, admitted and practised ordination by presbyters.

presbyter that was chosen to preside over the college of presbyters, but he had no superiority of power. All the priority or primacy he had was that of order. Here is the ancient pattern. Why is it not followed?\*

To single fathers we may add councils, who deliver the same sense. This, then, is the true account of the matter. Bishops were elders or presbyters, and therefore of the same order; but the bishops differed from the presbyters in this only, that they were chosen by the elders to preside over them at their ecclesiastical meetings or assemblies.† But in after ages, the presbyters of some churches parted with their liberty and right, and agreed among themselves that ecclesiastical matters should be managed by the bishop only.”—*Edwards' Remains*, p. 253.

The celebrated John Locke, it is well known, always professed to be a member of the Church of England. Yet on the subject before us he speaks in the following decisive manner: “A church I take to be a voluntary society of men, joining themselves together, of their own accord, in order to the public worshipping of God, in such a manner as they judge acceptable to him, and effectual to the salvation of their souls. Some, perhaps, may object, that no such society can be said to be a true church, unless it have in it a bishop, or presbyter, with ruling authority, derived from the very apostles, and continued down to

\* Here is an explicit acknowledgment, that the Episcopacy of the Church of England, and primitive Episcopacy, are very different things.

† The primitive bishop, in Dr. Edwards' judgment, therefore, corresponds exactly with the moderator or president of our presbyteries, who is a standing officer, elected at stated periods, who always presides at the meetings of the body to which he belongs, and until a successor is chosen.

the present time by an uninterrupted succession. To these I answer; Let them show me the edict by which Christ has imposed that law upon his Church. And let not any man think me impertinent, if, in a thing of this consequence, I require that the terms of that edict be very express and positive. I would ask, if it be not more agreeable to the Church of Christ to make the conditions of her communion consist in such things, and such things only, as the Holy Spirit has in the holy Scriptures declared, in express words, to be necessary to salvation? I ask, I say, whether this be not more agreeable to the Church of Christ, than for men to impose their own inventions and interpretations upon others, as if they were of divine authority; and to establish by ecclesiastical laws, as absolutely necessary to the profession of Christianity, such things as the Scriptures do either not mention, or at least not expressly command?"—*First Letter on Toleration.*

Sir Peter King, lord chancellor of England, about the beginning of the eighteenth century, published a very learned work, entitled, "An Inquiry into the Constitution, Discipline, Unity, and Worship, of the Primitive Church, that flourished within the first three hundred years after Christ." In this work his lordship undertakes to show, "That a presbyter, in the primitive Church, meant a person in holy orders, having thereby an inherent right to perform the whole office of a bishop, and differing from a bishop in nothing but in having no parish, or pastoral charge." He further shows, "That presbyters, in those times of primitive purity, were called by the same titles, and were of the same specific order with bishops; that they ruled in those churches to which they belonged;

that they presided in church consistories with the bishop; that they had the power of excommunication, and of restoring penitents; that they confirmed; and that there are clearer proofs of presbyters ordaining, than of their administering the Lord's Supper." The same learned author maintains that there were but two orders of church officers, instituted by the authority of Christ, viz. bishops and deacons: "and if they ordained but two," adds he, "I think no one had ever a commission to add a third, or to split one into two, as must be done, if we separate the order of presbyters from the order of bishops."

Dr. Haweis, an eminent clergyman of the Church of England, in the Introduction to his Ecclesiastical History, makes the following decided avowal: "Having, through divine mercy, obtained grace to be faithful—having in providence received my education, and been called to minister in the Church of England, I have embraced and subscribed her articles, *ex animo*, and have continued to prefer an Episcopal mode of government. But disclaiming all exclusive pretensions, and joined to the Lord in one spirit, with all the faithful of every denomination, I candidly avow my conviction, that the true church is catholic, or universal; not monopolized by any one body of professing Christians, but essentially a spiritual church; and consisting only and equally of those who, in every denomination, love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Respecting the administration of this church, I am not convinced that the Lord of life and glory left any precise regulations. His kingdom could alike subsist under any species of government; and having nothing to do with this world, was, in externals, to be regulated by existing circumstances. Whether Episco-

pacy, Presbytery, or the Congregational order be established as the dominant profession, it affects not the body of Christ. The living members, under each of these modes of administration, are alike bound to love one another out of a pure heart fervently; to indulge their brethren in the same liberty of private judgment which they exercise themselves; and ought never to suffer these regulations of outward order to destroy the unity of the spirit, or to break the bonds of peace.”

The Rev. Mr. Gisborne, a distinguished and popular writer of the Church of England, avows opinions nearly similar to those contained in the preceding quotation. In his *Survey of the Christian Religion*, (chapter xii.) he has the following passage. “If Christ, or his apostles, enjoined the uniform adoption of Episcopacy, the question is decided. Did Christ then, or his disciples, deliver, or indirectly convey, such an injunction? This topic has been greatly controverted. The fact appears to be this: that the Saviour did not pronounce upon the subject; that the apostles uniformly established a bishop in every district, as soon as the church in that district became numerous; and thus clearly evinced their judgment, as to the form of ecclesiastical government most advantageous, at least in those days, to Christianity; but that they left no command which rendered Episcopacy universally indispensable in future times, if other forms should evidently promise, through local opinions and circumstances greater benefit to religion. *Such is the general sentiment of the present Church of England on the subject.*”

The opinions and the declarations of the venerable Dr. White, the late bishop of the Episcopal churches

in Pennsylvania, will have weight with all Episcopalians. In a pamphlet published by him, some years ago, entitled, "The Case of the Episcopal Churches in the United States considered," the principal object of which was to recommend a temporary departure from the line of Episcopal succession, on the ground that bishops could not then be had, we find the following passage, p. 28. "Now if even those who hold Episcopacy to be of divine right, conceive the obligation to it not to be binding when that idea would be destructive of public worship; much more must they think so, who indeed venerate and prefer that form as the most ancient and eligible, but without any idea of divine right in the case. This the author believes to be the sentiment of the great body of Episcopalians in America; in which respect they have in their favour, unquestionably, the sense of the Church of England; and, as he believes, the opinions of her most distinguished prelates for piety, virtue, and abilities."

Another instance of concession from an eminent Episcopalian, is that of the late Bishop of Lincoln, who, in his *Elements of Christian Theology*, a work of great authority and popularity in the Church of England at this time, expresses himself in the following terms. "Though I flatter myself that I have proved Episcopacy to be an apostolical institution; yet I readily acknowledge, that there is no precept in the New Testament, which commands that every church should be governed by bishops. No church can exist without some government. But though there must be rules and orders for the proper discharge of the offices of public worship; though there must be fixed regulations concerning the appointment of ministers; and

though a subordination among them is expedient in the highest degree; yet it does not follow that all these things must be precisely the same in every Christian country. They may vary with the other varying circumstances of human society; with the extent of a country, the manners of its inhabitants, the nature of its civil government, and many other peculiarities which might be specified. As it hath not pleased our Almighty Father to prescribe any particular form of civil government, for the security of temporal comforts to his rational creatures; so neither has he prescribed any particular form of ecclesiastical polity, as absolutely necessary to the attainment of eternal happiness. The Scriptures do not prescribe any particular form of church government.” Vol. II. p. 383, &c.

Archdeacon Paley is universally known as a distinguished writer, and as an eminent dignitary of the Church of England. His concessions on the subject before us are quite as explicit and decisive as any of the foregoing. In his discourse on the Distinction of Orders in the Church, in the second volume of his works, he maintains that neither the usages nor directions of the apostles warrant any exclusive form of church government. He remarks as follows: “Whilst the precepts of Christian morality, and the fundamental articles of its faith, are, for the most part, precise and absolute, of perpetual, universal, and unalterable obligation; the laws which respect the discipline, instruction, and government of the community are delivered in terms so general and indefinite as to admit of an application adapted to the mutable condition, and varying exigencies of the Christian Church.”

To the foregoing quotations I shall only add, that a number of the most learned divines of the Church of England, when writing on other subjects, have indirectly made concessions quite as decisive as any that have been mentioned. Almost every divine of that church who has undertaken to explain the prophetic parts of the sacred writings, has represented the reformed churches as "the Lord's sealed ones;" as his "anointed ones;" as the "witnesses against the man of sin;" as the "saints of the Most High;" as having "the temple of God," and his "altar." Among many that might be named in confirmation of this remark, the ingenious and excellent Mr. Faber, in a work published a few years ago, and which has received the decided approbation of his diocesan, expressly applies to the German Protestants, those prophecies which represent the purest part of the Christian Church. He dates the death of the witnesses at the battle of Mulburg, in April, 1547, and their resurrection at Magdeburgh, in the year 1550. He does not claim for the Church of England even the first rank among the witnesses, and much less the exclusive title to that honour.

The preceding quotations are only a small specimen of what might have been produced, if our limits admitted of their being further multiplied. Nothing would be more easy than to fill a volume with concessions of similar import; concessions made, not by men of obscure name and small learning; but by divines of the most exalted character for talents, erudition, and piety, that ever adorned the Church of England; divines who shared her highest dignities, and who gave the most unquestionable evidence of attachment to her constitution. Those which we have de-



tailed, however, are abundantly sufficient. They prove that Presbyterians are not alone in considering the fathers as favourable to the doctrine of ministerial parity; that the great body of the reformers, and other witnesses for the truth, in different ages and nations, were, in the opinion of enlightened Episcopalians, friends and advocates of the same doctrine; that the notion of the exclusive and unalterable divine right of diocesan Episcopacy, has been not only rejected, but even reprobated, by some of the greatest divines of the Church of England, in more indignant and severe language than I have permitted myself to use in the preceding pages; and that the most competent judges have considered a large majority of the English clergy, at all periods since the reformation, as advocates of the constitution of their national church, not on the principle of divine right, but of human expediency.

## CHAPTER IX.

## UNINTERRUPTED SUCCESSION.

THE perpetuity of the Church is, undoubtedly, a doctrine taught in Scripture, and received by the great mass of serious Christians. By this is meant, that there always has been a visible Church (that is, a body of people professing the true religion) ever since its first institution in the family of Adam, and that there always will be one to the end of the world. This Church has not been always equally visible. For more than two thousand years it existed in the simple patriarchal form, without what we are accustomed to call a regular ministry, and without those external signs and seals by which its character has since been marked. For nearly two thousand more the Church was constituted under a new form, and confined to a single family, without, however, destroying the continuity of the body. Since the coming of the Saviour in the flesh, the Church, for more than eighteen centuries, has existed under a form still different from that of either of the former periods; and it is the common belief of Christians that she shall continue to exist under this form, without interruption, until her great Head shall come "to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe."

A large majority of Protestants, however, while they receive the doctrine, thus stated, of the uninterrupted continuance of the Church, both past and fu-

ture, do not pretend to be able historically to deduce the succession of its officers from the ministry of the apostles to this time. They think it enough to believe that, agreeably to the Saviour's promise, there never has been a time when there was not a Church, and that there never will be, to the end of the world, a time when there will not be a Church, maintaining, essentially, all the truth, ordinances, and officers necessary to constitute a Church such as the divine promise demands. They think it, however, wisest and best to rest their confidence in regard to this matter on the truth of an almighty and faithful God, who cannot lie, rather than on the deductions of human history, which are, in this case, so confessedly obscure, and in all cases so proverbially fallible.

Those who take this view of the subject are far from slighting ecclesiastical order. On the contrary, they maintain with exemplary zeal the duty and importance of a strict regard to regularity in all investitures with office in the Church. They would dread the disorders of a spurious and unauthorized ministry, as sincerely, and avoid them as carefully, as the most clamorous advocates of what is called apostolical succession. Presbyterians abhor the thought of knowingly breaking any link in the chain which connects the true Church of the present time with that of former days. But still they cannot see the wisdom of laying so much stress, as some others do, on being able to make out historically every link in the chain which stretches back from our day to the time of the apostles. They do not think that it is either possible to establish the several parts in detail of such an ecclesiastical genealogy, or that any substantial advan-

tage would result from such an establishment, even if it were possible.

Roman Catholics, however, and high-church Episcopalians are not satisfied with this view of the subject. They contend for much more. They each tell us, that, their ministry has been handed down in an uninterrupted succession from the apostles; that they can trace their ordinations back from man to man, without the absence or the rupture of a single link in the whole chain; that the validity of their ministry and their sacraments absolutely depends on this unbroken succession; and that none but those who can make it appear that they have a ministry transmitted from age to age, by a divinely protected succession of bishops from the time of the apostles, can be said to have a church or a ministry at all. To the doctrine of the uninterrupted succession, thus stated, Presbyterians can by no means accede, for the following reasons.

I. Because we find no authority in the Bible for such a doctrine. "The BIBLE is the religion of Protestants." It is the *only* infallible rule of faith and practice. This was regarded as a fundamental principle of the reformation. Whatever is not found in holy Scripture, or cannot by good and sufficient evidence be deduced from it, cannot be regarded as necessary either to the faith or the practice of Christians. The great question, then, in regard to the uninterrupted succession is, does the Bible teach it? Does the New Testament allege that the validity of the ministry and the ordinances of the Church of Christ depends upon being able to make out a regular ecclesiastical genealogy from the apostles, or from any par-

ticular point of time? Is there a syllable or hint in all the instructions of our Lord, or his inspired apostles, which so much as looks like this? Such an intimation has never yet been pointed out. The Apostle Paul does, indeed, say to Timothy, "The things which thou hast heard of me, among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." But in this injunction he evidently had a primary reference to the character of the persons who were to be successively set apart to the work of the gospel ministry, rather than to inquiries or scruples about ecclesiastical descent. We do not find him, in all his instructions respecting the Church, its officers, its order, and its rites, making the least reference to that unbroken succession which is now so much insisted on by some, as a matter requiring the attention of Christians. We should certainly never gather from the New Testament that such a thought had ever entered the minds of any of the inspired writers.

Now, can it be imagined, if the Saviour and his apostles had viewed this subject in the same light with modern high-churchmen, that they could thus have passed it over in entire silence? Would fidelity to the great interests of the Church, and of the souls of men, have allowed them absolutely to say nothing on a matter deemed fundamental, nay essential to the very existence of the Church and her ordinances? This can never be admitted by those who believe that the writers of the sacred Scriptures were honest men, and that they wrote "as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

It is to no purpose here to say, that no difficulty having arisen on this subject in the apostolic age,

there was no occasion to speak of it; and that in this way we may account for the entire silence of Scripture in regard to the whole subject. This is no valid answer. The principle in question, if our high-church neighbours are to be believed, is a great practical and fundamental one, essential to the very existence of the Church, and stretching to the end of time. Could inspired men, in regard to such a principle, have been either forgetful or reserved? Is it credible, that when they had so much occasion to speak often and much of the Church, its officers, its order, and all its radical interests, this point, notwithstanding its vital importance, should never have been touched or alluded to? Did not the Holy Ghost, who taught and guided them, foresee how indispensable its maintenance would be in all subsequent times? Why, then, was it never hinted at? Why is it that when the advocates of this pretended regulation are called upon to sustain it by the word of God, they are wholly unable to adduce in its behalf the semblance of a warrant? There is no presumption in asserting that such could never have been the case, if our blessed Lord and his apostles had been of the same opinion on this subject with our modern high-church neighbours. Had their principles been entertained at the time in which the New Testament was written, and regarded by the inspired writers in the same light in which they are regarded by some ecclesiastical men at the present day, they could not have been silent respecting them, without forfeiting all claim to Christian benevolence, nay to Christian honesty. But

II. Although the doctrine of uninterrupted succession in the ministry, as held by our high-church neighbours, is manifestly not found in Scripture, yet,

as an alleged fact, it might deserve some regard, if it could be fairly made out by the documents of history. Antiquity itself is venerable; and that which can be surely traced through a long line of recorded ancestry, has at least one mark of honour. But this is perfectly impossible; and to assert that it may be thus made out, is an attempt to practise the grossest imposition on the public mind.

The following statement respecting the historical deduction of the pretended ecclesiastical succession, will commend itself to every sober and candid mind as at once unexaggerated and rational. And it is the rather, in this connexion, adopted in place of any thing which the writer himself might frame to a similar amount, because it is understood to be from the pen of a member of the established Church of England, and, of course, with one of the parties in this controversy, will have the more weight.

“If our author means that we ought to believe that the Church of England speaks the truth, because she has the apostolical succession, we greatly doubt whether such a doctrine can be maintained. In the first place, what proof have we of the fact? We have, indeed, heard it said that Providence would certainly have interfered to preserve the apostolical succession in the true Church. But this is an argument fitted for understandings of a different kind from our author’s. He will hardly tell us that the Church of England is the true Church, because she has the succession; and that she has the succession because she is the true Church.”

“What evidence, then, have we for the fact of the apostolical succession? And here we may easily defend the truth against Oxford with the same argu-

ments with which, in old times, the truth was defended by Oxford against Rome. In this stage of our combat with our author, we need few reasons except those which we find in the well-furnished and well-ordered armory of Chillingworth."

"The transmission of orders from the apostles to an English clergyman of the present day, must have been through a very great number of intermediate persons. Now it is probable that no clergyman in the Church of England can trace up his spiritual genealogy, from bishop to bishop, even so far back as the time of the reformation. There remain fifteen or sixteen hundred years during which the history of the transmission of his orders is buried in utter darkness. And whether he be a priest by succession from the apostles depends on the question whether, during that long period, some thousands of events took place, any one of which may, without any gross improbability, be supposed not to have taken place. We have not a tittle of evidence to any one of these events. We do not even know the names or countries of the men to whom it is taken for granted that these events happened. We do not know whether the spiritual ancestors of any one of our contemporaries were Spanish, or Armenian, Arian, or Orthodox. In the utter absence of all particular evidence, we are surely entitled to require that there should be very strong evidence indeed that the strictest regularity was observed in every generation; and that Episcopal functions were exercised by none who were not bishops by succession from the apostles. But we have no such evidence. In the first place, we have not full and accurate information touching the polity of the Church during the century which followed the persecution of



Nero. That, during this period, the overseers of all the little Christian societies scattered through the Roman empire held their spiritual authority by virtue of holy orders derived from the apostles, cannot be proved by contemporary testimony, or by any testimony which can be regarded as decisive. The question whether the primitive ecclesiastical constitution bore a greater resemblance to the Anglican, or to the Calvinistic model, has been fiercely disputed. It is a question on which men of eminent parts, learning, and piety, have differed, and do, to this day, differ very widely. It is a question on which at least a full half\* of the ability and erudition of Protestant Europe has, ever since the reformation, been opposed to the Anglican pretensions. Our author himself, we are persuaded, would have the candour to allow that, if no evidence were admitted but that which is furnished by the genuine Christian literature of the first two centuries, judgment would not go in favour of prelacy. And if he looked at the subject as calmly as he would look at a controversy respecting the Roman *Comitia*, or the Anglo-Saxon *Wittenagemote*, he would probably think that the absence of contemporary evidence during so long a period was a defect which later attestations, however numerous, could but very imperfectly supply."

"It is surely impolitic to rest the doctrines of the English Church on an historical theory, which, to ninety-nine Protestants out of a hundred, would seem much more questionable than any doctrines. Nor is this all. Extreme obscurity overhangs the history of the middle ages; and the facts which are discernible

\* The writer might with great safety have said four-fifths, instead of one-half.

through that obscurity prove that the Church was exceedingly ill regulated. We read of sees of the highest dignity openly sold—transferred backwards and forwards by popular tumult—bestowed sometimes by a profligate woman on her paramour—sometimes by a warlike baron on a kinsman, still a stripling. We read of bishops of ten years old—of bishops five years old—of many popes who were mere boys, and who rivalled the frantic dissoluteness of Caligula—nay, of a female pope. And though this last story, once believed throughout all Europe, has been disproved by the strict researches of modern criticism, the most discerning of those who reject it have admitted that it is not intrinsically improbable. In our own island, it was the complaint of Alfred that not a single priest, south of the Thames, and very few on the north, could read either Latin or English. And this illiterate clergy exercised their ministry amidst a rude and half heathen population, in which Danish pirates, unchristened, or christened by the hundred on a field of battle, were mingled with a Saxon peasantry, scarcely better instructed in religion. The state of Ireland was still worse. ‘*Tota illa per universam Hiberniam dissolutio ecclesiasticæ disciplinæ—illa ubique pro consuetudine Christiana sæva sub-introducta barbaries,*’ are the expressions of St. Bernard. We are, therefore, at a loss to conceive how any clergyman can feel confident that his orders have come down correctly. Whether he be really a successor of the apostles, depends on an immense number of such contingencies as these—whether under King Ethelwolf a stupid priest might not, while baptizing several scores of Danish prisoners, who had just made their option between the font and the gallows,

inadvertently omit to perform the rite on one of these graceless proselytes?—whether, in the seventh century, an impostor, who had never received consecration, might not have passed himself off as a bishop on a rude tribe of Scots?—whether a lad of twelve did really, by a ceremony huddled over when he was too drunk to know what he was about, convey the Episcopal character to a lad of ten?”

“Since the first century, not less, in all probability, than a hundred thousand persons have exercised the functions of bishops. That many of these have not been bishops by apostolical succession is quite certain. Hooker admits that deviations from the general rule have been frequent, and, with a boldness worthy of his high and statesmanlike intellect, pronounces them to have been often justifiable. ‘There may be,’ says he, ‘sometimes very just and sufficient reason to allow ordination made without a bishop. Where the Church must needs have some ordained, and neither hath nor can have, possibly, a bishop to ordain, in case of such necessity the ordinary institution of God *hath* given *oftentimes*, and *may* give place. And, therefore, we are not simply, without exception, to urge a lineal descent of power from the apostles by continued succession of bishops in every effectual ordination.’ There can be little doubt, we think, that the succession, if it ever existed, has often been interrupted in ways much less respectable. For example, let us suppose—and we are sure that no person will think the supposition by any means improbable—that, in the third century, a man of no principle and some parts, who has, in the course of a roving and discreditable life, been a catechumen at Antioch, and has there become familiar with Christian usages and doctrines,

afterwards rambles to Marseilles, where he finds a Christian society, rich, liberal, and simple hearted. He pretends to be a Christian, attracts notice by his abilities and affected zeal, and is raised to the Episcopal dignity without having ever been baptized. That such an event might happen, nay, was very likely to happen, cannot well be disputed by any one who has read the life of Peregrinus. The very virtues, indeed, which distinguished the early Christians seem to have laid them open to those arts which deceived

‘Uriel, though regent of the sun, and held  
The sharpest-sighted spirit of all in heaven.’

“Now this unbaptized impostor is evidently no successor to the apostles. He is not even a Christian; and all orders derived through such a pretended bishop are altogether invalid. Do we know enough of the state of the world and of the Church in the third century, to be able to say with confidence that there were not at that time twenty such pretended bishops? Every such case makes a break in the apostolical succession.”

“Now, suppose that a break, such as Hooker admits to have been both common and justifiable, or such as we have supposed to be produced by hypocrisy and cupidity, were found in the chain which connected the apostles with any of the missionaries who first spread Christianity in the wilder parts of Europe—who can say how extensive the effect of this single break may be? Suppose that St. Patrick, for example, if ever there was such a man, or Theodore of Tarsus, who is said to have consecrated, in the seventh century, the first bishops of many English sees, had not the true apostolical orders, is it not conceivable that such a circumstance may effect the or-

ders of many clergymen now living? Even if it were possible, which it assuredly is not, to prove that the Church had the apostolical orders in the third century, it would be impossible to prove that those orders were not in the twelfth century so far lost that no ecclesiastic could be certain of the legitimate descent of his own spiritual character. And if this were so, no subsequent precautions could repair the evil."

"Chillingworth states the conclusion at which he had arrived on this subject in these very remarkable words—'That of ten thousand probables no one should be false; that of ten thousand requisites, whereof any one may fail, not one should be wanting; this to me is extremely improbable, and even cousin-german to impossible. So that the assurance hereof is like a machine composed of an innumerable multitude of pieces, of which it is strangely unlikely but some will be out of order; and yet if any one be so, the whole fabric falls of necessity to the ground: and he that shall put them together, and maturely consider all the possible ways of lapsing and nullifying a priesthood in the Church of Rome, will be very inclinable to think that it is a hundred to one that among a hundred seeming priests there is not one true one; nay, that it is not a thing very improbable that amongst those many millions which make up the Romish hierarchy, there are not twenty true.' We do not pretend to know to what precise extent the canonists of Oxford agree with those of Rome as to the circumstances which nullify orders. We will not therefore go so far as Chillingworth. We only say that we see no satisfactory proof of the fact, that the Church of England possesses the apostolical succession. And, after all, if our author could prove the apostolical suc-

cession, what would the apostolical succession prove? He says that, 'We have among us the ordained hereditary witnesses of the truth, conveying it to us through an unbroken series from our Lord Jesus Christ and his apostles.' Is this the fact? Is there any doubt that the orders of the Church of England are generally derived from the Church of Rome? Does not the Church of England declare, does not our author himself admit, that the Church of Rome teaches much error, and condemns much truth? And is it not quite clear, that as far as the doctrines of the Church of England differ from those of the Church of Rome, so far the Church of England conveys the truth through a broken series?"

"That the reformers, lay and clerical, of the Church of England, corrected all that required correction in the doctrines of the Church of Rome, and nothing more, may be quite true. But we never can admit the circumstance, that the Church of England possesses the apostolical succession as a proof that she is thus perfect. No stream can rise higher than its fountain. The succession of ministers in the Church of England, derived as it is through the Church of Rome, can never prove more for the Church of England than it proves for the Church of Rome. But this is not all. The Arian churches which once predominated in the kingdoms of the Ostrogoths, the Visigoths, the Burgundians, the Vandals, and the Lombards, were all Episcopal churches, and all had a fairer claim than that of England to the apostolical succession, as being much nearer to the apostolical times. In the East, the Greek church, which is at variance on points of faith with all the western churches, has an equal claim to this succession. The Nestorian, the Euty-

chian, the Jacobite churches, all heretical, all condemned by counsels, of which even Protestant divines have generally spoken with respect, had an equal claim to the apostolical succession. Now, if of teachers having apostolical orders, a vast majority have taught much error—if a large proportion have taught deadly heresy—if, on the other hand, as our author himself admits, churches not having apostolical orders—that of Scotland for example—have been nearer to the standard of orthodoxy than the majority of teachers who have had apostolical orders—how can he possibly call upon us to submit our private judgment to the authority of a church, on the ground that she has these orders?” \*

That the statements contained in the foregoing extracts are founded on correct historical deduction, can be doubted by no well informed and candid reader. Besides the testimony of Hooker and Chillingworth, referred to by the writer just cited, the judgments of almost countless learned men might be adduced in support of the same position.

Bishop Hoadly speaks on the subject thus: “I am fully satisfied that, till a consummate stupidity can be happily established, and universally spread over the land, there is nothing that tends so much to destroy all due respect to the clergy, as the demand of more than can be due to them; and nothing has so effectually thrown contempt upon a regular succession in the ministry, as the calling no succession regular but what was uninterrupted; and the making the eternal salvation of Christians to depend upon that uninterrupted succession, of which the most learned must

\* Edinburgh Review for April, 1839.

have the least assurance, and the unlearned can have no notion but through ignorance and credulity."

Bishop Stillingfleet candidly acknowledges that the belief in such a succession can rest only on the ground of mere *presumption*. "Although," says he, "by the loss of records of the British churches, we cannot draw down the succession of bishops from the apostles (for that of the bishops of London by Jocelin of Furnes is not worth mentioning) yet we have great reason to presume such a succession."\*

The learned Dr. Adam Clarke, the author of the *Commentary on the Bible*, speaks on the subject in the following strong language: "By the kind providence of God, it appears that he has not permitted any apostolical succession to be preserved; lest the members of his church should seek that in an uninterrupted succession, which must be found in the Head alone. The Papists or Roman Catholics, who boast of an uninterrupted succession, which is a mere fable, that never was, and never can be proved, have raised up another head—the Pope."—*Comment on Ezekiel* xxxiv. 23. Again, he says, "Some make Hebrews v. 4, an argument for the uninterrupted succession of Popes and their bishops in the Church, who alone have the authority to ordain for the sacerdotal office; and whosoever is not thus appointed, is, with them, illegitimate. It is idle to employ time in proving that there is no such thing as an uninterrupted succession of this kind. It does not exist; it never did exist. It is a silly fable, invented by ecclesiastical tyrants, and supported by clerical coxcombs. But were it even true, it has nothing to do with the text. It speaks

\* Stillingfleet's *Antiq.* p. 77.



merely of the appointment of a high priest, the succession to be preserved in the tribe of Levi, and in the family of Aaron. But even this succession was interrupted and broken; and the office itself was to cease on the coming of Christ, after whom there could be no high priest; nor can Christ have any successor, and therefore he is said to be a priest for ever; for he ever liveth the Intercessor and Sacrifice for mankind.”—*Comment* on Heb. v. 4.

The learned and pious Dr. Doddridge gives his judgment on this subject in the following terms: “It is a very precarious and uncomfortable foundation for Christian hope, which is laid in the doctrine of an uninterrupted succession of bishops, and which makes the validity of the administration of Christian ministers to depend upon such a succession; since there is so great a darkness upon many periods of ecclesiastical history; insomuch that it is not agreed who were the seven first bishops of the Church of Rome, although that church was so celebrated; and Eusebius himself, from whom the greatest patrons of this doctrine have made their catalogues, expressly owns that it is no easy matter to tell who succeeded the apostles in the government of the churches, excepting such as may be collected from the Apostle Paul’s own words. Contested elections in almost all considerable cities make it very dubious which were the true bishops; and decrees of councils rendering all those ordinations null, where any Simonaical contract was the foundation of them, makes it impossible to prove, at least on the principles of the Romish church, that there is now upon earth any one person who is a legal successor of the apostles, and renders hereditary right as pre-

carious in ecclesiastical, as it certainly is in civil affairs.”—*Lecture 197.*

The truth is, it is just as impossible to trace an uninterrupted succession in the ministry, in any church whatever, as it is to deduce with certainty the genealogy of any particular family from the apostolic age to the nineteenth century. He who should undertake this task, in the case of any family whatever, would, no doubt, find himself completely baffled after going back a few generations; and if he should assert his ability to accomplish it, he would be considered as insulting the understanding of every one in the least acquainted with the subject.

Some, indeed, in vindicating their belief of this doctrine of uninterrupted succession, have told us that we ought not to indulge in regard to it too much of an investigating spirit; that, although we may not be able to establish it by complete historical deduction, yet we ought, nevertheless, to believe it. That as we believe the doctrine of the Trinity, without professing to understand or explain it, so the doctrine in question ought to be received without presuming to scrutinize too closely its historical evidence; indeed, they tell us that there is a species of profaneness in demanding, before we receive it, that every link in the chain of evidence be made out. This retreat into the province of mysticism may be very convenient, but surely it is neither philosophical nor scriptural. The doctrine of the Trinity is plainly revealed in Scripture as a *fact* to be believed, just as the doctrine of the divine omnipresence or omniscience, though we be not able to comprehend the nature of either. When we attempt to pry into the philosophy of such doctrines with too

curious an inquiry, we may indeed be said to indulge a profane spirit. Here we must believe what God has spoken, though we be not able to explain it.

Now if the doctrine of uninterrupted succession in the ministry were revealed in Scripture, as a fact to be believed, the same reasoning might be confidently applied to it. But as it is manifestly not found there, it is truly presumption of the most extraordinary kind to attempt to place it on the same footing with a fundamental truth of the gospel. The moment we take this ground, we adopt a principle which will open the door for receiving the doctrine of Transubstantiation, or any of the worst errors of the Roman Catholic system.

In short, the promise of the Saviour that neither the Church nor her ministry shall ever become extinct, is enough to satisfy me. That the succession in this ministry will be kept up in the same exact manner in every age, the writer of these pages considers neither Scripture nor common sense as requiring him to believe. There are few, if any, who contend more zealously for a strict adherence to ecclesiastical rules than he is disposed to do; nor one who deems it of more importance that we set our faces against every kind of spurious investiture. Yet he has no hesitation in saying, that, if it could be made probably to appear, that, about two hundred or five hundred years ago, the regular mode of investing with holy orders in our church had been, by some ecclesiastical oversight or catastrophe, in a few cases, and for a short time, interrupted, he would not consider it as in the least degree affecting either the legitimacy of our present ministry, or the validity of our present ordinances. It is a great mistake to suppose that the ex-

ternal order of the Church is ordained by her sovereign Head as an *end* instead of a *means*. It is error to suppose that the Church is not vested with the power, in any supposable exigency, to revive and maintain her own ministry. Our blessed Lord seems to have laid down a radical principle, which applies to all similar subjects, when he said concerning an acknowledged divine ordinance, "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath."—But,

III. Supposing the uninterrupted succession to be ever so essential, and ever so well established; supposing it to be the only channel through which ministers of the present day can have the apostolic commission transmitted to them; nothing is more easy than to show, on Presbyterian principles, that the succession in our church, is as distinct, regular, and unbroken, as that of the Episcopal Church.

From the time of the apostles to the æra of the reformation, our line of succession is certainly as good as that of the most rigid Episcopalians, for they are one and the same. When the reformers began their work they found all the churches, both of North and South Britain, under Episcopal government. Until that time, therefore, our opponents themselves being judges, a regular line of ordination had been preserved. If there be any doubt of this, it is a doubt which as much affects their succession as our own. In short, until this period, the lines of ecclesiastical genealogy coincide, share the same fortunes, and are to be traced by the same means. When the reformation began, and the doctrine of clerical imparity was discarded by a considerable portion of the Christians of Britain, the presbyters who had been ordained by the bishops, undertook themselves to ordain in their

turn; and from them it is as easy to trace the succession in the line of presbyters, as it is for Episcopalians in the line of diocesan bishops. Now, if, as Presbyterians believe, and think they can prove, and have proved, the right of ordaining, according to Scripture and primitive usage, belongs to presbyters, it is evident that the succession through them is as perfectly regular and valid as any other. Accordingly we find one of the pious fathers of the second century speaking familiarly of tracing the ministerial succession through the line of presbyters. Thus, then, stands our claim to apostolical succession in the ministry. Up to the period of the reformation it is the very same with that of our Episcopal brethren. From the reformation to the present time we can, undoubtedly, present as regular, unbroken, and unquestionable a line of succession through presbyters, as they can through prelates. And if, as has been shown in the preceding pages, the former is just as legitimate and valid a line of succession as the latter, the case is made out completely in our favour. If, as has been proved, the right to ordain, according to Scripture and primitive usage, belongs to presbyters, the case is clear that prelatists have not the smallest advantage over us on the score of succession.

It has been objected, however, that, even on Presbyterian principles, the Episcopal succession is better than ours; or rather that ours is utterly invalid, because, at the æra of the reformation, the presbyters, in different parts of Europe, who began to ordain, had not the ordaining power specifically or professedly imparted to them by the bishops who ordained them; so that they did not even stand on equal ground with modern Presbyterian ministers, on whom, in their

ordination, the ordaining power is recognised as formally bestowed. But this objection has no force. The popish doctrine, "That it is the intention of the administrator which constitutes the validity of an ecclesiastical ordinance," is discarded by all Protestants. And as the first presbyters who undertook to ordain, after emerging from the darkness of Popery, were regularly invested with the power of preaching the gospel and administering sacraments, all Presbyterians consider the right to ordain as essentially and necessarily included in those powers, whether the fact be expressly mentioned, or even thought of at the time of ordination, or not.

After all, is it credible that we are bound to acknowledge and venerate as successors of the apostles, men who followed the apostles in nothing? men who rejected their doctrine; knew nothing of their spirit; and refused to follow their example; men who were strangers to the humility, the purity, the benevolence, and the unreserved consecration to their Master in heaven which so eminently characterized the apostles? Shall these men, though often manifestly destitute of Christian knowledge, uninfluenced by Christian principles, unholy in their conversation, and notorious for their love of the world, and the neglect of souls, be regarded as the only successors of the apostles, and their ecclesiastical acts as alone valid, simply because the hands of a prelate, as worldly minded, as unholy, and as unlike the apostles as themselves, have been laid upon them;—and shall such men as Luther, and Calvin, and Knox, among the reformers, and Owen, and Baxter, and Charnock, and Bates, and How, and Watts, and Doddridge in later times be considered as mere impostors, and pretenders to the

Christian ministry? If we may believe the advocates of uninterrupted succession, the monsters of impiety and profligacy, who, at different times, filled the papal chair, and the seats of bishops, of which characters the pages of ecclesiastical history are full—were the true and genuine successors of the apostles; while thousands of the most learned, pious, devoted, and exemplary divines that ever lived—men of whom the world was not worthy—were mere impious intruders on functions to which they had no legitimate introduction, and all their ecclesiastical acts so many impious nullities! Can these claims be admitted without rebellion against the King of Zion? This question will soon be decided by a tribunal more impartial and unerring than any that this divided and selfish world can furnish.

## CHAPTER X.

PRACTICAL INFLUENCE OF PRELACY—CONCLUDING  
REMARKS.

THE practical influence of any doctrine, has been generally considered as a good test of its truth. "By their fruits ye shall know them," is a rule which applies to principles as well as to men. Let us apply this rule to the case before us. If prelacy be of exclusive and unalterable divine right: If it be so essential, that there is no true church, no authorized ministry, no valid ordinances without it: If Episcopal churches alone are in covenant with Christ, in the appointed road to heaven, and warranted to hope in the promises of God, then we may reasonably expect and demand, that all churches of this denomination, should display more of the Spirit of Christ than any other classes of professing Christians. The blessing of God, is, beyond all question, most likely to attend those institutions which are most agreeable to his will. But we may go further. All who believe the Bible will acknowledge that there is more religion in the church, than out of it; more of the image and love of the Redeemer among his covenanted people, than among those who are aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of promise. To deny this, would be to call in question every promise which the King of Zion has made to his people, and every advantage of union with him as their Head. Now if all non-episcopal societies are to be consi-



dered as mere uncommanded associations, which have nothing to do with the church of Christ; and, if union with that church is a privilege which belongs to Episcopalians alone, then those who believe this doctrine, are bound, on every Christian principle, to show, that Episcopal churches contain within their bosom more pure and undefiled religion, more harmony, more love for the truth as it is in Jesus, more universal holiness of heart and of life, than any, or than all other religious denominations. But is this in fact the case? Will the friends of prelacy undertake to show, that they alone give this evidence that they belong to Christ? Will they even undertake to show, that Episcopalians exhibit in a pre-eminent degree, this practical testimony, that they are the chosen generation, the peculiar people, who are purified by the blood, and quickened by the Spirit of the Redeemer?

The efficacy of Episcopal government in securing the unity of the church, in guarding against schism, and in promoting harmony and peace, has been much celebrated. But is there such a peculiar and benign efficacy in that form of ecclesiastical order? I am willing to refer the decision of this question to any man who is acquainted with ecclesiastical history. If we consult Eusebius, he will present us with a picture of the violence, the strife, and the divisions among bishops, and among different portions of the church, through their means, which is enough to make a Christian weep. If we consult Gregory Nazianzen, he will tell us, in language before quoted, that prelacy "has caused many fruitless conflicts and bruises, has cast many into the pit, and carried away multitudes to the place of the goats." If we examine

the history of any Episcopal church on earth, we shall find it exhibiting, to say the least, as large a share of heresy, contention, and schism, as any which bears the Presbyterian form; and, what is more, we shall ever find the prelates themselves quite as forward as any others, in scenes of violence and outrage. The Episcopal professor Whitaker, had no high opinion of the benign effects of prelacy, when he declared that if this form of government were introduced as a remedy against schism "the remedy was worse than the disease." "The first express attempt," says the learned Dr. Owen, "to corrupt and divide a church, made from within itself, was that in the church of Jerusalem, made by Thebulis, because Simon Cleopas was chosen bishop, and he was refused. The same rise had the schisms of the Novatians and Donatists, the heresies of Arius and others." In short, the animosities and divisions in the church of Christ, which have taken their rise from the contending interests, the lawless ambition, and the indecent strife of diocesan bishops, are so numerous, that history is full of them; and so disgusting to every mind imbued with the spirit of Christianity, that it would give pain even to an opponent to dwell upon the subject. But further; do we not all know Episcopal churches, at the present day, in which all varieties of theological creeds are received, from the purest orthodoxy, down to the most blasphemous heresies, and that by all ranks of their clergy, as well as their lay members? Is this that unity of the spirit of which the Scriptures speak? Is this that unity which constitutes men one body in Christ, and which will prepare them for the more sublime and perfect union of the church triumphant above?

Again; if the Episcopal Church alone is in communion with Christ; if she possesses the only authorized ministry, and the only valid ordinances; then we have a right to expect that she will pre-eminently display the purifying effects of these peculiar privileges. For if the Christian ministry and ordinances were given to edify the body of Christ, and are the great instruments which God does, in fact, employ for this purpose, as both Presbyterians and Episcopalians concur in believing; then we must suppose that more, much more, of their sacred influence will appear among those who possess these precious gifts, than among those who possess them not. To suppose that an invalid ministry and ordinances will be, in general, as useful in their effects, as those which are valid, is to surrender one of the most important distinctions between truth and error; between divinely appointed observances, and the commandments of men. To suppose that those who are in a state of habitual alienation from God, and rebellion against him, should be as humble, penitent, believing, and obedient; as much distinguished for love to God and love to man as those who are "fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God," is to suppose that there is no profit in being in the Church rather than the world.

Do we, then, actually find in Episcopal churches more real and vital religion, than in other churches? Do we actually find among them more of the image of Christ; more attachment to evangelical truth; more faithful preaching of Jesus Christ, and him crucified; more brotherly love; more pure and holy living; more care to avoid a sinful conformity to the world; more vigorous and scriptural discipline; more

zeal for the divine glory; and a temper and conversation more suited to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, than in the mass of non-episcopal churches? In short, are Episcopalians, as a denomination, more serious, devout, self-denied, benevolent, meek, forgiving, and heavenly-minded, than Presbyterians, as a denomination? Are their societies found in a higher degree than any other to *attract* humble, spiritual zealous believers, and to *repel* the gay, the worldly, and the openly irreligious? We bring no charges against our Episcopal neighbours; we arrogate no superior excellence to ourselves. The great Searcher of hearts knows that the Presbyterian Church has no special reason for self-complacency, in this respect, far less for boasting. We only state what the whole argument necessarily and demonstrably implies; and having made the statement, we only ask, what is the FACT? Let those who have the best opportunity of comparing the mass of the members of the Episcopal Church in our own land, and in other lands, with the mass of the members of other churches, whom some of the former would deliver over to the "uncovenanted mercies of God," bear witness. Perhaps it will be said, that much of what we call vital religion, is rather superstition; and that with respect to true and rational piety, there is full as much, if not more, in Episcopal than in other churches. On this question I will not dwell long. By real religion, I mean a conformity of temper and practice with that system of evangelical truth which is exhibited in the writings, and which adorned the lives of Bishop Jewel, Bishop Hall, Bishop Davenant, Archbishop Usher, and many other illustrious prelates of the Church of England, of former ages; that system

which has been since defended and exemplified by the Herveys, the Romaines, the Newtons, the Scotts, and a multitude more of unmitred divines of the same church, in later times; that evangelical system which is embodied in the articles of that church, and which breathes in the greatest part of her liturgy and offices; that system which exalts the divine Redeemer to the throne, which places the penitent sinner in the dust, at his footstool, which teaches men to rely solely on the atoning sacrifice and perfect righteousness of the Saviour, for pardon and life, and which at the same time, prompts them to follow holiness, and to be zealous of good works. Is there more of this kind of religion in Episcopal churches than in any others? I cannot suppose that there is a single Episcopalian in our country, either so ill informed, or so prejudiced, as to believe, for a moment, that his own church is in the least degree superior, in any of these respects, to her Presbyterian neighbours.

It has been said, in reply to this argument, that the people of Israel, a short time before the coming of the Messiah, had become exceedingly corrupt, although we all confess that the only visible Church on earth was then found in the bosom of that nation. So that even admitting that there is a great lack of piety in the Episcopal Church, (which its members do not admit, and we by no means assert) still it would no more prove that that Church is not the only true one, than the degeneracy before the advent proves that the Jewish people were not then the only true one. But this argument is a failure. There was indeed, at the time referred to, but too little piety in the Jewish Church. But the New Testament proves that there was *some*, nay a considerable amount.

Many persons are referred to as bearing this character. There was evidently more than among the pagans. Besides, it is unquestionably evident from Scripture, that the Jews, up to the opening of the New Testament economy were the peculiar people of God. Let the friends of prelacy make out as much, from the Bible, in favour of their denomination, and we will believe them.

But, perhaps this reasoning will still be objected to by our Episcopal brethren. They will tell us that there is often a wide difference between entertaining correct opinions, and pursuing a suitable practice; that men may and do hold the truth in unrighteousness; and, that the same reasoning, if admitted, would prove that no form of religion is true, because in every church we may find many lukewarm and immoral professors. This objection, however, is nothing to the purpose. It is merely an evasion of the argument. We all daily make and allow the distinction between principles, and the conduct of those who profess them. The former are often excellent, while the latter is base. We protest, and with the strongest reason, against the conclusion, that religion is false, because some men who profess to believe it are immoral; or that a particular church is not a true church of Christ, because many of her members act in a manner unworthy of their profession. But our reasoning and conclusion, in this case, are wholly of a different kind. We only contend, that the ministry and the ordinances of religion, which claim to be exclusively valid, ought to prove themselves more efficacious than those which are destitute of validity. We contend that there is, and must ever be, more virtue and holiness *in* the church of Christ, than *out*

of it. We contend, in short, that in that household of God, to which his gracious promises, and his life-giving Spirit are vouchsafed, while we shall always find much corruption, we must expect to find, in general, much more of the life and power of religion; more fervent piety, more zeal for the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom, and more righteousness of life, than among those who have no connexion with that household. If not, wherein is the greater advantage of being in the Church, than in the world? Nor do we, by taking this ground, furnish either an infidel or an heretic with a handle against us. An enemy of the gospel may come into all of our churches, and point to some, perhaps to many of our members, who do not by any means walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called. Would he have a right from this fact, to infer the falsity of our system of faith? No; the obvious distinction between principles and the conduct of those who profess them, would, if he were a candid man, prevent him from drawing this inference. But if an infidel could come into our solemn assemblies, even the purest of them, and not only assert, but prove, that there is no more either of strict morality or fervent piety, among the professors of religion, than among its despisers; if he could do this, then indeed he might, and ought, to triumph over us. As long as he could only with truth say, "Some of you Christians are as bad as infidels;" I would confidently reply, "They are not Christians, but hypocrites; for, if they had any portion of the spirit of their Master, they would not act thus." But if he could really make it appear that Christians are, in general, and as a body, in no respect better than infidels, he would certainly establish

his argument. This, however, blessed be God! the infidel cannot do; and the very circumstance of the enemies of Christianity marking with such eager triumph, every case of unworthy conduct in the professors of religion, shows that, in their opinion, Christian principles require more holiness than infidel principles require, and are expected to produce more. The same reasoning we adopt with our Episcopal brethren. We do not ask them to produce perfection in their church; we do not ask them to show, that all their members act conformably with their professed principles; but we insist upon their showing that there is, in general, a much larger portion of fervent piety, and of strict morality, in their church, than in any of the non-episcopal churches; and until they do this, every unprejudiced man will consider their claim of being alone "in covenant with Christ," as unreasonable as it is unscriptural.

This has been pronounced by some an invidious and uncandid comparison. But it is neither invidious nor uncandid—For, be it remembered, it is not a comparison between one church and another, or a number of others; but between that which claims to be the ONLY true church, and the "world which lieth in wickedness." Surely it is neither invidious nor unreasonable to demand that there be more of the spirit of Christ in the former than in the latter.

It does not affect the solidity of this argument, that some churches which Presbyterians consider as not regularly organized, upon scriptural principles, nevertheless embrace in their bosom a large portion of unaffected piety. If we undertook to maintain that the Presbyterian church is the only real church on earth, and alone in covenant with Christ the Head, such a



fact would, indeed, present a difficulty of no easy solution. But we make no such arrogant claim. Wherever the unfeigned love of our divine Saviour, an humble reliance on his atoning sacrifice, and a corresponding holiness of life, pervade any denomination of Christians, we hail them as brethren in Christ; we acknowledge them to be a true church; and although we may observe and lament imperfections in their outward government, we consider them as truly in covenant with the King of Zion, as ourselves. All this is perfectly consistent with believing, as we do, that Presbyterian church government was the primitive model, and that it is the duty of every church to conform to this model. It is certainly the duty of every man to keep the whole law of God; yet as we do not deny that an individual professor of religion is a real Christian, because we perceive some imperfections in his character; so neither do we deny a church to be a true church of Christ, because she is not in all respects conformed to our ideas of scriptural purity. We consider our Episcopal brethren as having wandered far from the simplicity of Apostolic order. But what then? Must we arrogantly unchurch them on that account? By no means. No Presbyterian ever thought of adopting such an inference. We lament their deviation; but notwithstanding this, can freely embrace them as members of the church universal; and were there no church nearer to the apostolical model with which we could commune, should feel no scruple in holding communion with them as brethren.

Let none, then, be intimidated by the sentence often pronounced by certain advocates of the exclusive high church claim, that "there is *great danger* to the best interests of the soul in being found without the

pale of the Episcopal Church. My deliberate and confident answer to all such denunciations is, that the real danger is *all the other way*; that is, there is real danger in being found within the pale of those who make this unscriptural claim. I am far from meaning that there is danger in being found in an Episcopal church, as such; for I have no doubt that there may be, and actually have been, and are now to be found among Episcopalians as real, ardent piety, as precious, well founded gospel hopes, as in the Presbyterian or any other Church. When I read the writings of John Newton, and Cecil, and Scott, and many more of like spirit, who were ornaments of an Episcopal church, I am ready cordially to say, "Let my soul be with their's for time and eternity!"

But my meaning is, that there is REAL DANGER in being found in an ecclesiastical inclosure in which the high-church doctrine above referred to, with its usual spirit and accompanying errors, form the prevalent system; real danger in being cast, and in believing with those who consider baptism as marking and constituting the commencement of spiritual life; who rely for justification before God on the sacramental seals of the visible church, instead of the perfect righteousness of the Divine Redeemer; and who lay more stress on ecclesiastical genealogy, on the official ministration of an "authorized priesthood," than on the work of the Holy Spirit, conforming the heart and the life to the image of Jesus Christ. In *such a* pale there is the deepest danger of eternal perdition. And, therefore, there is no point concerning which Presbyterian ministers are more careful to put the members of their own communion on their guard, than a reliance on external ordinances, instead of

union with the Redeemer by faith, as a mistake pre-eminently adapted to turn away the mind from the only scriptural ground of hope, and to destroy the soul. They diligently and conscientiously teach the people to regard with sacred care the scriptural order of the Church; but they are always much more anxious that they should hold fast that precious system of evangelical truth which is "the life of the soul"—which is "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth," and without which the most perfect external order is a lifeless form.

Here we close our discussion of this subject; a discussion in which we engaged with reluctance, and which nothing but the unceasing invasions of scriptural truth on this subject, on the part of our opponents would have tempted us to undertake. Whether our pastors are lawful ministers, and the ordinances which they dispense legitimate ordinances, are questions which, happily, it is not for partial and bigotted sectaries to decide. There is a day approaching when they will be decided by an unerring Judge, and with consequences more interesting than language can express. Happy will it be for us, if, in that day, we shall all be found members of that holy church which the divine Redeemer hath purchased with his blood, and adorned with his Spirit! Happy will it be for us if it shall then appear that we have not rested in rites and forms, and that we have never "given heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions rather than godly edifying!" Happy if we shall then be found to have received, not a mere name, or external organization, but the truth as it is in Jesus in the love of it; to have had "Christ formed in us the

hope of glory;" and to belong to that "chosen generation, that royal priesthood, that holy nation, that peculiar people, who shall for ever show forth the praises of Him who hath called them out of darkness, into his marvellous light!" That this may be the blessedness of those in whose favour this plea is offered, and *equally* of those also whom it is intended to oppose, is the unceasing prayer of him who has thought it his duty to pen the foregoing pages.

## ADDITIONAL NOTES.

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### TESTIMONY OF SCRIPTURE.

IN the chapter on this subject it was attempted to be shown, that the power of preaching the gospel, and administering the sacraments of the Church, evidently, in the nature of things, included the highest powers that could be committed to the ministers of our holy religion. On this point, John Milton, the immortal author of “Paradise Lost,” makes the following remarks:

“Wherein, or in what work, is the office of a prelate excellent above that of a pastor? In ordination, you will say; but flatly against the Scripture; for there we know that Timothy received ordination by the hands of the presbytery—notwithstanding all the vain delusions that are used to evade that testimony, and maintain an unwarrantable usurpation. But wherefore should ordination be a cause of setting up a superior degree in the Church? Is not that whereby Christ became our Saviour, a higher and greater work than that whereby he did ordain messengers to preach and publish him as our Saviour? Every minister sustains the person of Christ in his highest work of communicating to us the mysteries of our salvation, and hath the power of binding and absolving; how should he need a higher dignity to represent or execute that which is an inferior work in Christ? Why should the performance of ordination, which is a lower office, exalt a prelate, and not the seldom discharge of a higher and more noble office, which is preaching and administering, much rather depress him? Verily, neither the nature nor the example of ordination doth any way require an imparity between the ordainer and the ordained. For what more natural than every like to produce his like—man to beget man; fire to propagate fire? And in examples of highest opinion the or-

dainer is inferior to the ordained; for the Pope is not made by the precedent Pope, but by cardinals, who ordain and consecrate to a higher and greater office than their own.”—*The Reason of Church Government against Prelaty*. Book I. Chapter IV.

The celebrated Henry Dodwell, who flourished in the reigns of King William and Queen Anne, is well known as one of the most ultra high-churchmen of the day in which he lived. Notwithstanding, however, his extravagant claims on the subject of Episcopacy, he speaks thus in regard to the testimony of Scripture.

“Est sane admodum precaria omnis illa argumentatio, qua colligitur disciplinæ ecclesiasticæ in posterum recipiendæ rationem omnem e Scripturis Novi Fœderis esse hauriendam. Nullus enim est qui id profiteatur aperte sacri Scriptoris locus. Et ne quidem ullus qui ita de regimine agat ecclesiastico quasi id voluissêt scriptor, aut scriptoris Auctor, Spiritus Sanctus, ut formam aliquam unam regiminis ubique et in omne ævum duraturi describeret. Nusquam scriptores sacri satis expresse tradiderunt, quanta secuta fuerit in regimine ecclesiarum mutatio cum primum discederent a Synagogarum communione ecclesiæ. Nusquam satis aperte quantum donis concessum fuerit Spiritus Sanctus personalibus quantum vicissim locis et officiis. Nusquam officarios extraordinarios qui illo ipso seculo finem habituri essent ab ordinariis satis accurate secernunt qui nullo unquam seculo essent, dum iterum veniret Christus, in desuetudinem abituri. Imo sic omnia tum passim nota ipsi quoque nota supponunt, nec ipsi posterorum causa explicant, quasi eum duntaxat, qui tum obtinuerit, statum in animo haberent. Officia ipsa nusquam qualia fuerint, aut quam late patuerint, ex professo describunt, quod tamen sane faciendum erat si formam prescripsissent perpetuo duraturum.”\*

In English as follows:

“The reasoning is entirely precarious from which men conclude that the whole model of ecclesiastical discipline may be drawn from the writings of the New Testament. There is no passage of any inspired writer which openly professes this design. There is not one which so treats of ecclesiastical government as if the writer, or the writer’s author, the Holy Spirit, had intended to describe any one form of polity, as designed to remain every where and for ever inviolate. The sacred penmen have no where declared, with

sufficient clearness, how great a change must take place in church government, when the Church should first withdraw from the communion of the synagogues. They no where clearly enough show how much was allowed to the personal gifts of the Holy Ghost, and how much to places and offices. They no where with sufficient accuracy distinguish the extraordinary officers who were not to outlive that age, from the ordinary who were not to cease till the second coming of Christ. Nay, all the things then generally known, they also suppose to be known, and never, for the sake of posterity explain, minding only the state in which things were at the time. They no where professedly describe the ministries themselves, so as to explain either their nature or their extent; which was surely indispensable, if they meant to settle a model in perpetuity."

After such an acknowledgment, the claims made by Dodwell and his adherents were equally unreasonable and revolting. It is observable, too, that this eminent prelatist seems to have considered the primitive Church as bearing the type of the Synagogue.

It is worthy of notice that the oldest Syriac version of the New Testament, commonly called the *Peshito*, probably made early in the second century, and bearing a very high character for faithfulness and accuracy, uniformly renders the *ἐπισκοπος*, as it occurs in Acts xx. 17, 28; in 1 Peter v. 1, 2, "elder;" and the word *ἐπισκοπη*, in 1 Tim. iii. 1, &c. the "office of an elder." On this fact, the learned John David Michaelis, in his "Introduction to the New Testament," thus remarks: "We know that the distinction between bishops and elders was introduced into the Christian Church in a very early age; yet the distinction was unknown to the Syrian translator." In reference to this statement, Dr. Herbert Marsh, afterwards bishop of Peterborough, and a zealous high-churchman, in his "Notes" on Michaelis' work, makes the following observation—"This proves that the Syriac translator understood his original; and that he made a proper distinction between the language of the *primitive* and the *hierarchal* Church." See Marsh's Michaelis, Vol. ii. p. 32. 553.

It seems, then, by the acknowledgment of Bishop Marsh, that the hierarchal Church had departed in this respect from the primitive Church. If the distinction in question was unknown at the date of the Syriac version, it surely cannot claim an apostolic origin.

## TESTIMONY OF THE FATHERS.

AMONG the almost innumerable proofs, from the early ecclesiastical writers, that the primitive bishop was, simply, the overseer or pastor of a single congregation, one is, that the bishop's charge is every where, in the first three centuries, called a *parish*. This remarkable fact deserves more pointed attention than was given it in the appropriate place in the preceding volume.

The learned principal, Campbell, of Aberdeen, speaking of the testimony of the fathers of the first two or three hundred years, in relation to this subject, expresses himself in the following language :

“As one bishop is invariably considered, in the most ancient usage, as having only one *ἐκκλησία*, it is manifest that his inspection was at first only over one parish. Indeed, the words congregation and parish are, if not synonymous, predicable of each other. The former term relates more properly to the people as actually congregated; the other relates to the extent of ground which the dwelling houses of the members of one congregation occupy. Accordingly, the territory to which the bishop's charge extended, was always named, in the period I am speaking of, in Greek *παροικία*, in Latin *parochia*, or rather *parœcia*, which answers to the English word parish, and means, properly, a neighbourhood.”

“Let it not be imagined that I lay too great stress on the import of words, whose significations in time come insensibly to alter. It merits to be observed, that in the first application of a name to a particular purpose, there is commonly a strict regard paid to etymology. As this word, together with the adjective *παροικος*, i. e. *vicinus*, or neighbouring, are conjugates of the verb *παροικεω*, *accolo*, *juxta habito*, it can be applied no otherwise, when it relates to place, than the term parish is with us at this day. And this exactly agrees with the exposition of the word given by Stephanus, that learned and accurate lexicographer. “Ego non parochias primum, sed parœcias appellatas esse censeo: *παροικοι* enim sunt accolæ, quare qui fanum aliquod accolunt paroeci dicti sunt, ejusdem scilicet fani consortes, et parœcia accolarum conventus et accolatus, sacraque vicinia, nam *παροικοι* dicuntur etiam *οι προσοικοι*, id est vicini.”

Let it be observed further, that, in those early ages, the



bishop's charge or district was never called *διοίκησις*, a diocese, concerning the import of which I shall add the following passage from the same authority—"Latini quoque utuntur hoc vocabulo: dioeceses vocantes quasdam quasi minores provincias, quas aliquis, qui eis præfectus est, administrat, et in quibus jus dicit, unde et pontificum *διοικητας* apud recentiores." Thus in a few ages afterwards, when the bishop's charge became so extensive as more to resemble a province than a parish, nay, when, in fact, it comprised many churches and parishes within it, the name was changed, and it was then very properly called a diocese. The other term (parish) without deviating in the least from its original and proper import, received a new application to that which was put under the care of a presbyter only."—*Lectures on Ecclesiastical History*, I. 206, &c.

This view of the subject is confirmed by the pious and venerable Richard Baxter, in his *Treatise of Episcopacy*, Part II. p. 74. "When churches," says he, "first became diocesan (in the sense opposed) they were suited to the form of the civil government, and dioceses, &c. came in at the same door. The very term *διοίκησις* was long unknown in a sacred sense, and was afterwards borrowed from the civil divisions, when the Church was formed according to them. The word parish was before used in a narrower sense for a vicinity of Christians." And the very learned Calderwood, in his *Altare Damascenum*, p. 290, concurs in the same opinion. "Vox *διοίκησις*, ut refertur ad Episcopum, ignota fuit Eusebio et superioribus seculis."

#### CONCESSIONS OF EMINENT EPISCOPALIANS.

THE celebrated Bishop Hall, from whom an extract was given in p. 321, in some other of his works expressed himself in still more decisive terms. The following specimens will suffice to satisfy every candid reader.

"I fear not to say, those men are but superstitiously curious who would call back all circumstances to their first patterns. The spouse of Christ hath been ever clothed with her own rites; and, as apparel, so religion hath her fashions, variable according to ages and places. To reduce us to the same observances which were in apostolical use, were no better than to tie us to the sandals of the disciples, or to the seamless coat of the Saviour. In these cases they did what we need not; and we may what they did not. God meant

us no bondage in their example. 'Their canons bind us, whether for manners or doctrines, but not for ceremonies. Neither Christ nor his apostles did all things for imitation.'—*Letters to the Bishop of Worcester*. Epist. II. Decade V. of his Epistles.

Again, "Where God hath bidden, God forbid that we should care for the forbiddance of man. I reverence from my soul (so doth our church, their dear sister,) those worthy foreign churches, which have chosen and followed those forms of outward government that are every way fittest for their own condition. It is enough for your sect to censure them. I touch nothing common to them with you."—*Hall's Apology against the Brownists*, Section 19. "We may not either have, or expect now in the Church, that ministry which Christ set. Where are our 'apostles,' 'prophets,' 'evangelists?' If we must always look for the very same administration of the Church which our Saviour left, why do we not challenge these extraordinary functions? Do we not rather think, since it pleased him to begin with those offices which should not continue, that herein he purposely intended to teach us, that if we have the same heavenly business done, we should not be curious in the circumstances of the persons. But for those ordinary callings of pastors and doctors (intended to perpetuity) with what forehead can he deny them to be in our church?"—*Ibid.* Section 27.

#### UNINTERRUPTED SUCCESSION.

THE talents, learning, and piety, of the celebrated Dr. John Owen, are known throughout the Protestant world. The following pungent remarks from his pen, in reference to the doctrine of uninterrupted succession, will show the light in which that subject was viewed by one of the most competent judges of the seventeenth century.

"The limiting of this succession by the successive ordination of diocesan prelates or bishops, as the only means of communicating church power, and so of preserving the church state, is built on so many inevident presumptions and false principles, as will leave it altogether uncertain whether there be any church state in the world or no. As, first, that such bishops were ordained by the apostles, which can never be proved. Secondly, that they received power from the apostles to ordain others, and communicate their whole power unto them by an authority inherent in themselves alone, yet

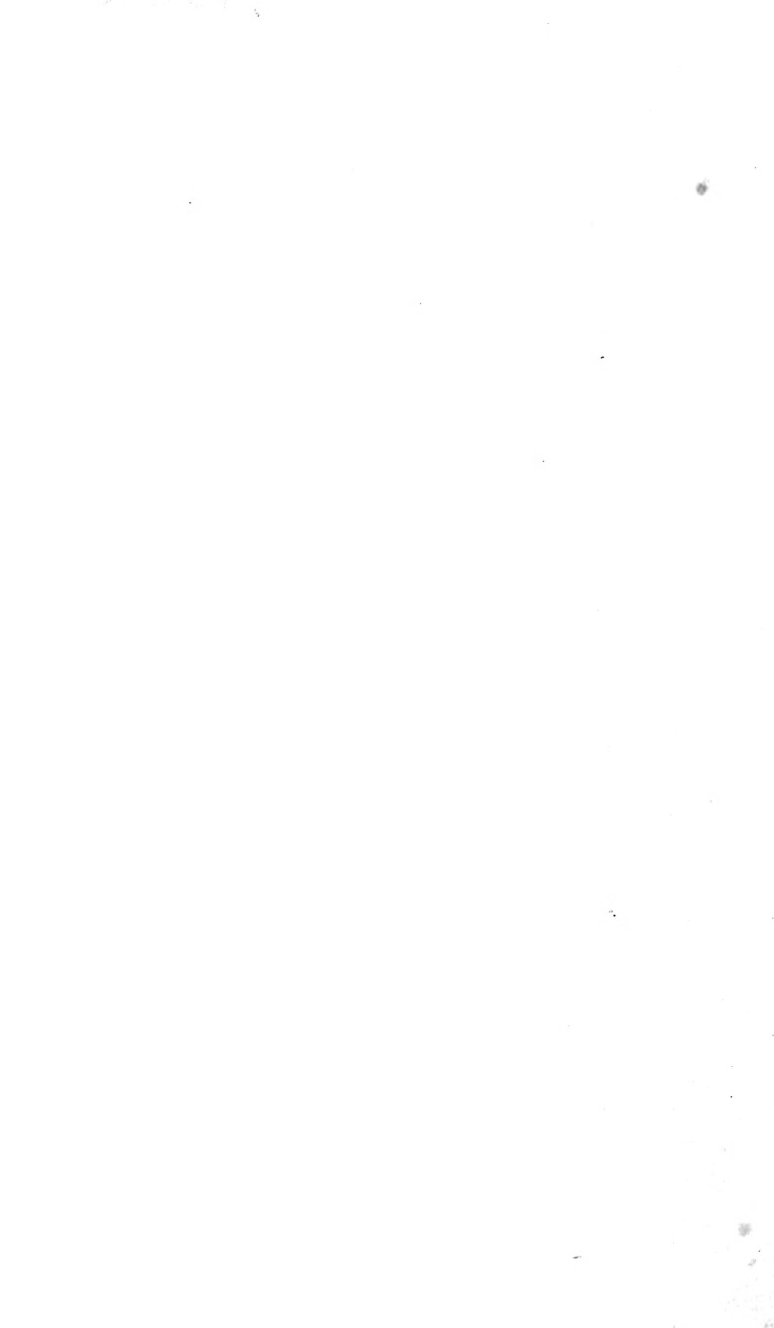
still reserving their whole power unto themselves also, giving all, and retaining all at the same time, which hath no more of truth than the former, and may be easily disproved. Thirdly, that they never did, nor could, any of them forfeit this power by any crime or error. Fourthly, that they all ordained others in such manner and way as to render their ordination valid. Fifthly, that whatever heresy, idolatry, flagitiousness of life, persecution of the true churches of Christ, these prelatial ordainers might fall into, yet nothing could deprive them of their right of communicating all church power unto others by ordination. Sixthly, that it is not lawful for believers, or the disciples of Christ, to yield obedience to his commands, without this Episcopal ordination, which many churches cannot have, and more will not, as judging it against the mind and will of Christ. Seventhly, that one worldly, ignorant, proud, sensual beast, such as some of the heads of this ordination, as the Popes of Rome have been, should have more power and authority from Christ to preserve and continue a church state by ordination, than any the most holy church in the world, that is, or can be gathered according to his mind—with other unwarrantable presumptions innumerable.”

“The pernicious consequences that may ensue on this principle, do manifest its inconsistency with what our Lord Jesus Christ hath ordained unto the end of the continuance of his Church. If we consider whither this doctrine of successive ordination hath already led a great part of the Church, we may easily judge what it is meet for. It hath led men, for instance, in the Church of Rome, into a presumption of a good church state, in the loss of holiness and truth; in the practice of false worship and idolatry; and the persecution and slaughter of the faithful servants of Christ; unto a state plainly anti-christian. To think that there should be a flux and communication of heavenly and spiritual power, from Jesus Christ and his apostles, in and by the hands and actings of persons ignorant, simoniacal, adulterous, incestuous, proud, ambitious, sensual, presiding in a church state never appointed by him; immersed in false and idolatrous worship; persecuting the true Church of Christ, wherein was the true succession of apostolical doctrine and holiness, is an imagination for men who embrace the shadows and appearances of things, never once seriously thinking of the true nature of them. In brief, it is vain to derive a succession whereon the being of the Church should depend, through the presence of Christ with the bishops of Rome, who, for an hundred years

together, from the year 900 to 1000, were monsters for ignorance, lust, pride, and luxury; as Baronius acknowledgeth, A. D. 912, 5, 8. Or by the Church of Antioch, by Samosatenus, Eudoxius, Gnapheus, Severus, and the like heretics. Or in Constantinople, by Macedonius, Eusebius, Demophilus, Authorinus, and their companions. Or at Alexandria, by Lucius, Dioscorus, Ælurus, Sergius, and the rest of the same sort."—*Answer to Stillingfleet on the Unreasonableness of Separation, &c.* p. 55. &c.

THE END.







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