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OF THE
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EMBRACING
SEVERAL ON PRACTICAL SUBJECTS.

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THE

PARITY OF THE MINISTRY.

BY

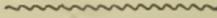
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PHILADELPHIA :
PRESBYTERIAN BOARD OF PUBLICATION.

PARITY OF THE MINISTRY.



EPHESIANS iv. 11—16.—And he gave some apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers. From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

IN this passage of holy writ, the apostle treats, at considerable length, of the Church of God, and compares it to a body, of which Christ is the Head, and his people the members. To this relation to the Lord Jesus Christ they are brought by the operation of his word and Spirit. The Church or body itself is in the first instance considered as in a state of infancy, and so are the members. Placed in the body, however, each in its proper position, they, in virtue of such union, derive from Christ their head, through his divinely appointed agencies, those supplies and influences by which; “according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, it maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.” This process is continued, “till we all come, in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” Thus divinely nurtured and trained, they would “be no more children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.”

Now, with a view of “sanctifying and cleansing this Church which he hath purchased with his own blood, with the washing of water by the word, and presenting it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish,” “He gave some apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers.” By these appointments he designed to gather a Church and prepare it for heaven; or, in the language of our text,

“for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” We have, in these ascension gifts of Christ, the divine provision for gathering, edifying, governing, and perpetuating a Church on earth. Other officers there are none of divine appointment, excepting the Ruling Elders, who have been given to be helps to the ministry in the government of the Church, and Deacons, to whom the special trust of taking care of the poor has been committed.

The apostles were a body of men selected and appointed by Christ himself to fulfil the whole work of the ministry in the establishment of the Church under the new dispensation. Their original number was twelve. Judas fell from it by transgression. Matthias was afterwards added by lot, and Paul was called to it by Christ himself. In order to be an apostle, it was necessary to have seen Christ after his resurrection, that they might be witnesses of that cardinal fact. Hence they could have no successors in that office.

Evangelists were ordinary ministers of the gospel, without a stated pastoral charge, sent forth to preach the gospel in unevangelized regions, and bring them into gospel order. They answer well to what in modern times are called missionaries. Such, probably, were Timothy and Titus. *The prophets*, we have good reason to suppose, were ordinary ministers of the gospel, but specially endowed with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, enabling them to expound and apply the word of God, and some to foretel future events, of whom was Agabus, who, on one occasion, foretold a coming dearth, and on another, that bonds and imprisonment awaited Paul at Jerusalem. By *pastors* and *teachers* has generally been understood the ordinary, stated, and permanent ministry of the New Testament, acknowledged by all to be authorized to preach the gospel and administer the sacraments, and by all, except Papists and Prelatists or Episcopalians, to perform all the functions of the sacred ministry, including ordination. This last is specifically denied to them by the whole body of Prelatists, against whose assumption of prelatic supremacy over Presbyters we feel bound to contend earnestly in favour of the parity of the sacred ministry. The particular point to be discussed is this—whether the Scriptures, or the early history of the Church, give any countenance to the idea that Bishops are a superior order of ministers to Presbyters. For this, Prelatists, or high church Episcopalians, contend,

and they assume, that without such an order, to whom they give the sole power of ordination, there is no scriptural ministry, and no valid administration of divine ordinances, and of course no Church. Hence they leave all non-Episcopalians to what they are pleased to call "the uncovenanted mercies of God." They are the Church, without whose pale there is ordinarily no salvation. And this conclusion, from their views of the subject, is the more legitimate, because they commonly hold the identity of baptism and regeneration; and baptism, as they say, can be validly administered by those only who have been episcopally ordained.

The language of high church Episcopalians or Prelatists, on the subject of their being the lineal successors of the apostles, and, therefore, alone possessed of a scriptural and valid ministry capable of administering divine ordinances, is so positive and strong, and their denunciations against all who differ from them with respect to this branch of ecclesiastical polity are so sweeping, as to oblige all who hold to ministerial parity either to stand on their defence, or give up their polity, or the hope of salvation by its use. Even decent self-respect would require the adoption of one of the alternatives. Hear what the late Bishop Ravenscroft, of North Carolina, has said on the subject— "What Presbyterian or other dissenter will risk the purchase of property from a distant owner, by power of attorney, upon the mere assertion of the agent that he is empowered to convey the title? Know you of any who would not require to see the power of attorney, that it was in due form of law, and such as would bind the principal, before he would pay the price, or even become bound for it? And know you not of thousands who bargain for the rich inheritance of the gospel, for themselves and their families, without the slightest security beyond the mere say so of the agent? Alas! how very true are our Saviour's words, 'that the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.' Episcopalians present these doctrines to their hearers, in the full persuasion that the Church, the ministry, and the sacraments, are as distinctly and truly appointments of God, in order to the salvation of sinners, as the faith of the gospel; and that only as these are united in the profession of religion, can the hope thereby given to man be worthy of the name of assurance." Says Dr. How, "Wilful opposition to episcopacy is certainly rebellion against God, and must, there-

fore, exclude from his presence." Bishop Hobart says, "Where the gospel is proclaimed, communion with the Church," (and he acknowledged no Church without a bishop apostolically succeeding) "by the participation of its ordinances, at the hands of the duly authorized priesthood, is the indispensable condition of salvation." I could quote volumes of similar and even stronger declarations from both sides of the Atlantic. The pulpit and the press have teemed with them.

Under such circumstances what shall we do? While we cheerfully allow our Episcopal brethren to be a branch of the true Church of Christ, and acknowledge the validity of ordinances as administered by them; while we earnestly desire to live in all brotherly affection with them, and would studiously avoid, as we have sought to do, all controversy with them; still we are deeply and conscientiously persuaded not only that our own is in itself "a more excellent way," better calculated to subserve unity, peace, purity, and edification, but that it is in more strict and perfect conformity with the model left us in the word of God. Hence we cannot, conscientiously, give it up, even if our brethren attempt, on that account, to exclude us from the visible body of Christ, and with it, under ordinary circumstances, the hope of salvation; thankful to our God that he now graciously accords us his communion in the ordinances as we enjoy them, and satisfied that he will not exclude us from his presence in glory, conscientiously professing "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." But to proceed to the matter in hand.

We aver, then, that there is no scriptural ground or divine warrant for the threefold order of bishops, priests, and deacons, as held by our prelatical brethren, but that the Lord Jesus has instituted but one permanent order of ministry in his Church, and that these are interchangeably denominated Bishops and Elders, whom he has made equal to each other, and clothed with all the authority and power necessary to perpetuate and edify the Church, which is his body.

The apostles do not come into this category. They were specially called, ordained, and qualified by Christ himself to be his witnesses, specially of his resurrection, establish and organize the Church, and complete the canon of Scripture. When their work was done he called them away, and in this high trust they have left no successors—if

they have, let them produce their apostolical credentials from the Lord, and we will receive them as such, but not till then. Diocesan bishops indeed claim the succession; but it is a somewhat remarkable fact, that they have studiously avoided the name, perhaps fearing that the qualifications would be demanded, which it would not be an easy matter to produce. When some in apostolical days claimed to act by apostolical authority, the very devils exclaimed, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are ye?"

With respect to deacons we say, that while we recognize them as officers divinely appointed in the Church, they have neither lot nor part in the ministry of reconciliation. They were appointed to serve tables, or to collect and distribute the alms of the Church; and, as deacons, had nothing to do with respect to the preaching of the gospel and the administration of the ordinances. Their duties are specifically pointed out in the sixth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. Nor is there any scriptural propriety or warrant for denominating them an order of the ministry under the New Testament. It is an idle, if not a wicked conceit to do so. The New Testament recognizes no priest but Christ. And it is right that it should be so, for he has offered the last sacrifice which God has appointed or will accept. The duties of the ministry have been materially changed under the New Testament, and the Holy Ghost has seen fit to designate them by more appropriate names than that of priest. The circumstance that Prelatists have called one order of ministers *priests*, contrary to their designation in the New Testament, and found another order in the secular office of deacon, is itself enough to cast a shade of suspicion over their whole system. Where so much efficacy is claimed for mere ministerial action, and that is made dependent upon lineal descent of ordination from the apostles, by the hands of diocesan bishops, men ought to be very certain of being able to produce a warrant from the word of God, of so plain a nature that no man could mistake its meaning, and then to lay his hand on every separate link in the chain of descent. Nothing less ought to satisfy us on a subject of such vast importance. We call their assumption unwarrantable, absurd, and, in the circumstances of the Church and the world for the last eighteen hundred years, impossible,

unless a divinely inspired history can be produced. Among the proofs for the parity of the ministry, I mention,—

1. The parity which Christ established in the apostolical college. Ambition had early crept into that sacred fraternity. The sons of Zebedee sought early to be placed on the Saviour's right hand and left hand, in his kingdom; and he rebuked them for it in the most decisive terms. "But be ye not called Rabbi, for one is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon earth, for one is your father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters, for one is your master, even Christ. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant." There was, therefore, a perfect equality among the apostles of our Lord. He did not place any one of them above the rest. They were all of the same order, and were no more authorized to lord it over each other than over the Lord's heritage. It is scarcely to be credited, therefore, that they would establish a different system in the Church, unless they had been expressly directed to do so by the Lord. And that could scarcely be expected after the pains which Christ took to repress the workings of pride and ambition in the hearts of his immediate disciples. Let it also be remembered that the charge of Christ, to which our attention has been directed, was delivered after the supposed grant of primacy to Peter, and consequently cuts it up, root and branch, and shows the utter absurdity of the construction which has been put upon the words which Christ used upon that occasion.

2. In the New Testament the terms bishop and presbyter, or elder, are interchangeably used to designate the same person and office. A striking proof of this occurs in the twentieth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. In the seventeenth verse we find these words—"And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the Church." And in the 28th verse, Paul addresses these same elders in the following words:—"Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." The word rendered "overseers" in the 28th verse, is the same in the original with the word commonly rendered "bishop." The

elders of the 17th verse, then, become bishops in the 28th verse. One of two things is certain; either Paul, and Luke who is the historian, and the Holy Ghost, by whose inspiration he wrote, must have used words in a very loose and improper sense, or else the terms bishop and elder, or presbyter, are by divine authority applied to the same office. Again, in that famous passage of Paul's Epistle to Titus, from which high churchmen profess to derive the prelatical character of Titus, we find Paul using the following language—"For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldst set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders 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, but a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and to convince gainsayers." Where is the relevancy or propriety of Paul's describing, in so elaborate and graphic a manner, the character and office of a bishop, if he left him in Crete only to ordain elders in every city, unless elders and bishops are identical? It surely would be an absurdity of which an inspired apostle could never be guilty. If words have any determinate meaning, this passage proves conclusively that Paul used the words to designate the same office. With a single remark to elucidate it, the same truth will appear from the apostle's language to Timothy, 1 Tim. iii. 1—7. The remark is this—"That scriptural bishops, unlike diocesans, are never represented as being set over their brethren in the ministry, but over the Church." We accordingly find, that after the apostle has named the office of a bishop in the first verse, he speaks of him in the fifth verse as having the care of the Church committed to him. Besides, it is perfectly absurd to suppose, that when Paul has made bishop and presbyter identical in writing to Titus, he should use almost the same language in describing his character and office in writing to Timothy, but, without intimating the change, mean an office as widely different as that of a diocesan bishop, and an elder or pastoral bishop. From names let us,—

3. Proceed to things which are much more important, and we shall find the same identity for which we contend. This appears very plainly from the qualifications and duties which the Scriptures predicate of them. I instance again the passages to which I have before referred, viz. Acts xx. 17, 28; 1 Tim. iii. 1—7; Tit. i. 5, 9. With respect to qualifications, they must be “blameless” in their lives, ordering their families in an exemplary manner, not self-willed, nor irascible, temperate, not given to strife or covetousness, just, holy in heart and life, hospitable, capable of instructing and governing the Church, and putting gainsayers to silence. In a word, they must have the natural, moral, and intellectual endowments, by the exercise of which they may adorn the holy doctrines which they profess, make full proof of their ministry, and in the best manner edify the body of Christ as workmen that need not be ashamed. The Scriptures are as specific with respect to duties, making no difference between bishops and presbyters or elders, leaving us no room to doubt that they are not only equal but the same. And not only so, but with respect to the vexed question of ordination, which Prelatists contend can never be performed in a valid manner without a diocesan bishop, we assert, and stand ready to prove, that they no where speak of bishops at all in connexion with ordination, unless they be part and parcel of the presbytery; but they do speak explicitly of ordination by “the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.” You will find the proof in 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.” What is a presbytery? What the very name imports—“A company or council of elders or presbyters.” Here, then, we have a divine warrant for Presbyterian ordination. And now I will thank any man who will show me one for ordination by a bishop, in the prelatial sense of the word. But does not Paul elsewhere say that Timothy was ordained by the laying on of his (Paul’s) hands? Perhaps he does. Let us, however, examine the case. The passage is found in 2 Tim. i. 6—“Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by putting on of my hands.” The apostle here refers either to the same transaction spoken of in 1 Tim. iv. 14, in connexion with the laying on

of the hands of the presbytery," or to some other. If to the same, then Paul, in that transaction, united with the other members of the presbytery as one of them, in the ordination of Timothy, and then the ordination was purely presbyterial. Or he refers to some other; and then Timothy was either twice ordained, of which we meet with no other example in Scripture, or else the imposition of hands by Paul alone has no respect to ordination at all, but was done for the purpose of communicating to him the supernatural gifts of the Holy Ghost, which was commonly done by the laying on of the hands of an apostle. The last is probably the true state of the case. If this supposition be correct, then not only have presbyters the power of ordination, but it is predicated in the Scriptures of no other description of persons, unless it be of the apostles; and it is known that they are sometimes denominated elders or presbyters. In this respect we claim for them, scripturally, a rank above that of bishops. For if ordination be "by the hands of the presbytery," then do they ordain in virtue of their being presbyters, and not bishops; and we have already proved the interchangeable use of the names with respect to the same persons.

4. We have other reasons for this conclusion, some of which we proceed to mention. In the fifteenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, we are told that a dispute arose in the Church at Antioch, on the subject of circumcision, and it was sent up to Jerusalem to be determined there. A council was convened to adjudicate the matter. Of whom was it composed? Of the "apostles and elders." But where were the bishops? There either were none, or they were found among the denomination of elders or presbyters. If they had been a separate and higher order, they would doubtless have been named. To the Church at Philippi, Paul thus addresses his epistle—"To all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons." What, in this case, becomes of "the elders or presbyters" who were "commanded to be ordained in every city—the working men of the Church, to whom its oversight was invariably committed? There either were none, or they were the bishops to whom the epistle was addressed, of which there can scarcely be a reasonable doubt.

There were in the Church at Ephesus a number of

bishops, as we learn from the twentieth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles,—and so there were in the Church at Philippi. But upon the principles of the prelacy, there could have been but one, for they allow but one to a city or diocese. The conclusion, therefore, is irresistible, that the bishops of the apostolic churches were not diocesan, but Presbyterian; and to these, it is again and again asserted, was the whole oversight and government of the Church committed; which includes the preaching of the gospel, the administration of the ordinances, the exercise of discipline, and the power of perpetuating itself, or ordination. This is proved by Paul's address to the elders of Ephesus, already quoted. Peter's exhortation to his fellow elders proves the same thing, 1 Peter v. 1—3. "The elders 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 (or episcopal supervision) thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock." This is surely as full a power as any may need, to fulfil all the functions of the gospel ministry; but a bitter rebuke to those who would exercise an authority in the Church, which God has not delegated to them.

Such were the bishops, or elders, to whom the apostles committed the care and oversight of the Church, when they had fulfilled their ministry, and were called home by the Master; and these the only successors whom they left behind them, as I will now,

5. Proceed briefly to prove from the earliest and best authorities of the Christian Church; premising that our opponents have no right to ask this at our hands, after we have established the parity of the ministry by the word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice. We utterly protest against being bound by any other authority. Still we believe we can show from the best authenticated remains of the first two centuries, that our views of apostolical practice, and interpretations of God's word, with respect to the subject which we are considering, agree substantially with theirs.

Let it then be observed, that the early fathers used

the terms "bishop" and "presbyter," interchangeably, to designate the same office, and that when, in process of time, one of the presbyters was made stated or permanent chairman, moderator, or president of the council of elders or presbytery, of any particular Church, and called on that account the first presbyter or bishop, and eventually "the bishop," this was not of divine right, or as designating a different office or degree in the ministry, but by courtesy, or for the sake of order. And from this, in process of time, as the Church increased and extended herself, the presiding officer became a more important and influential character, claimed supremacy over his fellow presbyters, as of right, and at last became the diocesan bishop, having brought into subjection to him the pastors or bishops of the smaller churches or parishes in the surrounding country. And from this arose, at last, archbishoprics, patriarchates, and that greatest of all abominations, the popedom; and all as of divine right. "Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth!" I proceed to verify the statement which I have made.

The first witness I shall cite is Jerome, who, Bingham says, is able to "give us the sense of the ancients." I quote from a note of his on the first chapter of Titus:

"Presbyters and bishops were formerly equal. And before the devil incited men to make divisions in religion, and one was led to say, I am of Paul; and another, I of Apollos; churches were governed by the common council of the presbyters. But, afterwards, when every one in baptizing rather made proselytes to himself than to Christ, it was every where decreed that one person, elected from the rest of the presbyters of each church, should be placed over the others, that the chief care of the Church devolving upon him, the seeds of division might be taken away. Should any one suppose this opinion, viz.—that bishops and presbyters are the same, and that one is the denomination of age, and the other of office, is not determined by the Scriptures, but is only a private opinion, let him read over again the apostle's words to the Philippians, 'Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons.' Philippi is one of the cities of Macedonia, and as to those who are now esteemed bishops, not more than one at a time can be in one and the same city. But

because bishops at that time were called the same as presbyters, therefore the apostle speaks of bishops indifferently, as being the same as presbyters. And here it should be carefully observed how the apostle, sending for the elders, in the plural, of the single city of Ephesus only, afterwards calls the same persons bishops, Acts xx. 17, 28. He who receives the Epistle of Paul to the Hebrews, there finds the care of the Church divided equally among many. ‘Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.’ And Peter, who received his name from the firmness of his faith, says in his epistle, “The presbyters who 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, taking the oversight thereof, (episcopountes, that is, superintending it,) not by constraint, but willingly.’ These passages we have brought forward to show, that with the ancients, presbyters were the same as bishops. But that the roots of the dissention might be plucked up, a usage gradually took place, that the chief care should devolve upon one. Therefore, as presbyters know, that it is by the custom of the Church that they are to be subject to him who is placed over them; so let the bishops know, that they are above presbyters rather by custom than by divine appointment, and that the Church ought to be ruled in common.” Thus far Jerome.

We now proceed to fortify his statements by those of others. We begin with Clemens Romanus, who flourished near the close of the first century. He never mentions together more orders than two, presbyters and deacons, or bishops and deacons, thus exactly following the New Testament, using the names bishop and presbyter as synonymous, both meaning the same order of men. “Bishops, with St. Clement,” says Lord Barington, “are always the same with elders or presbyters, as any one must see, if they read the epistle.” Ignatius, who flourished in the beginning of the second century, furnishes matter on both sides of the question; but his writings have been so manifestly and greatly corrupted, that it would be labour lost to quote him as a witness on

either side, although he represented the office and power of the presbyter as high as any Presbyterian could wish.

Polycarp, who was cotemporary with Ignatius, in the only epistle of his extant, addresses his epistle as follows:—"Polycarp, and the presbyters that are with him, to the Church of God, which is at Philippi," and exhorts them to be "subject to the presbyters and deacons as unto God and Christ"—evidently because he knew of no higher officer in that Church than that of presbyter.

Justin Martyr, who flourished about the middle of the second century, denominates the presiding officer of the Christian assembly *proestos*, or president; using, in no case, either of the terms bishop or presbyter. Reeves, the translator of Justin, himself an Episcopalian, in his notes on the passage, allows that the *Proestos* or president of Justin, the *Probati Seniores* of Tertullian, the *Majores natu* of Cyprian, and the *Proestotes Presbuteroi* of Paul in his 1st Epistle to Timothy, were all one and the same, and of course not bishops in the prelatical sense of the word, but presbyters, chosen by their fellows to preside over the body, and of the same order with the others.

Irenæus, who flourished toward the latter part of the second century, mentions both bishops and presbyters, and uses them synonymously. In speaking of some who left the Scriptures, and pretended tradition for their errors, he says—"But when we appeal to the tradition which has been preserved to us by the succession of presbyters in the churches," meaning thereby the Scriptures, "they presume they are wiser not only than the presbyters, but even than the apostles, and that they have found the truth in a purer form." In the next chapter he calls this succession "the succession of the bishops." In the celebrated epistle which he wrote to Victor, bishop of Rome one of the pretended predecessors of the pope, he speaks of Aniclitus, Pius, Hyginus, Telesphorus, and Xystus, presiding as presbyters over the Church of Rome." These presbyters are all put as links into the succession, by Papists and Prelatists, without which their chain is not complete. Again Irenæus says, "Wherefore obedience ought to be rendered to those who are presbyters in the Church, who have, as we have shown, succession from the apostles, and who, with the succession of their episcopacy, have a sure deposit of the truth divinely granted to

them according to the good pleasure of our heavenly Father." I could multiply passages from him of similar import, but time obliges me to refrain.

The writers of the third century can be interpreted consistently with the views which we have maintained, although it is admitted that considerably higher notions on the subject of episcopacy began to be entertained. Still there were strong advocates for ministerial parity. Firmilian, bishop of Cesarea in Cappadocia, a friend and cotemporary of Cyprian, and one of the ablest men of his age, was one of them. A very long letter of his is found in Cyprian's works, in which he says, "All power and grace is in the Church, in which presbyters preside, and have the power of baptizing, confirming, and ordaining." It is scarcely probable that Cyprian would dissent from this opinion, inasmuch as he was his bosom friend and great admirer, and when in exile on account of persecution, wrote to his own presbyters as follows:—"I beseech you, according to your faith and religion, that you perform your own duties, and also those belonging to me, so that nothing may be wanting either as to diligence or discipline." Again—"I rely upon your love and your religion, which I well know, and by these letters I exhort and commit the charge to you, that you, whose presence does not expose you to such perils, would discharge my duty, act in my place, and perform all those things which the administration of the Church requires." These are certainly very ample powers: may we not say plenary? But how they consist with the divine right of diocesan episcopacy is quite another question which will be found to be of not very easy solution. Cyprian, however, is claimed by Prelatists as a very important witness. With how much propriety, I leave you to judge.

A single point more, briefly illustrated, and I will close the discussion. It relates to divine truth as a necessary ingredient in a valid apostolical succession. It seems to have been taken for granted, in modern times, that the succession of which we are speaking is purely of persons, altogether independent of doctrinal truth and personal purity. Hence we find Prelatists fraternizing with the Roman hierarchy, notwithstanding all its corruptions and abominations, while they utterly repudiate the purest churches of the Reformation, and give them over to the uncovenanted mercies of

God, because, forsooth, they are not episcopally organized. Not so the primitive Church in its better days. They allowed no valid claim of apostolical succession by the ministry, where purity of doctrine was not maintained. Hence they cast out the heretical sects which, from time to time, sprang up in the bosom of the Church; such as the Arians, the Pelagians, the Donatists, and many others. Take the following from Tertullian. In speaking of heretics who claim by personal succession from the apostles, he says—"But if the heretics feign or fabricate such a succession, this will not help them. For their doctrine itself, compared with the doctrines of the apostles, will, by its own diversity and contrariety, pronounce against them that it had not, as its authority, either any apostle or apostolical man; for as there is no difference among the apostles in their doctrine, so neither did any apostolical men teach anything contrary to them, except those who divided from the apostles, and preached differently. To this form of trial will appeal be made by those churches henceforward daily established, which, though they have neither any of the apostles nor any apostolical men for their founders, yet all agreeing in the same faith, are, from this consanguinity of doctrine, to be esteemed not less apostolical than the former." Many quotations to the same effect might be made, not only from individual authors, but from large and respectable councils. But time fails me. I only add two Scripture testimonies. Says the apostle John—"If there come any man unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed; for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." Says Paul—"If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." Of so much importance did the apostles hold doctrinal truth to be. If men hold not the essential truth of God, the imposition of an apostle's hands would not make them true ministers of Christ.

I have thus, in the best and briefest manner in my power, endeavoured to lay before you some of the reasons of the faith we hold with respect to the order of the ministry of reconciliation, as established by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose will on the subject we learn from the teachings of his holy book, than which we acknowledge no other authoritative and bind-

ing rule of faith and practice. From that book we have endeavoured to show that the apostles were temporary officers, appointed by the Lord for the authoritative propagation of his gospel, and the gathering, organization, and establishment of his visible Church or kingdom on earth, in its New Testament form: that he fully qualified them for the work by bestowing upon them the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit: that in fulfilling their trust they ordained elders or bishops in every Church, to whom they gave its entire care and oversight: that these names are interchangeably applied to the same persons: that a number of those were placed over the same Church at the same time, which could not have been the case if the government had been Episcopal in the modern sense of the word: that the apostles had no successors of apostolical character: that when they died, they appointed no other officers to take charge of the Church than those to whose care they had previously committed it, who are indifferently called elders and bishops: that deacons are not spiritual officers, to whom the care of souls was committed: that the Scriptures never associate the threefold order of bishops, presbyters or priests, and deacons, together, as orders in the ministry, nor speak of priests at all as ministers under the New Testament. And from this we have come to the conclusion that God has established but one order of ministers in the Church under the New Testament, viz. elders or bishops, and that these are all equal. This, we have also shown, is fully borne out by the history of the Church for more than two hundred years after the commencement of the Christian era, and the change to diocesan episcopacy was gradually brought in, and is a human device.

These are some of our reasons for being Presbyterians, and preferring Presbyterian order and government. The subject, as you know, has been rarely introduced into our pulpits, and has latterly found its way there, more as a matter of necessity in self-defence than of choice. We have borne not only reproach, but wrong; our members have been told that they belonged to no church, had no ministry, no divine ordinances; and our very children have been reproached as being unbaptized heathen. We have been silent, and our very silence has been taken for a confession of guilt. We have given

our answer, the reason of our hope, and the ground of our practice. But we will not, we dare not revile. May God bless those who differ from us, and enable them better to understand the teachings of his word on the subject. And may the members of all our churches, whenever they are questioned on the subject, be able to give an intelligent and scriptural reason for their preference and hope. Amen.

THE END.