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Discourses on the  
apostolical succession

# DISCOURSES


ON THE

## APOSTOLICAL SUCCESSION.



BY W. D. SNODGRASS, D. D.,

PASTOR OF THE SECOND-STREET PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, TROY.



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TROY, *February* 19, 1844.

REV. W. D. SNODGRASS,

*Dear Sir*,—The undersigned, members of your Session, Board of Trustees, and Congregation, have listened with attention to the able and interesting series of discourses which you have recently delivered on the Apostolical Succession. This subject has, from recent occurrences, become one of deep interest to all evangelical denominations of christians. And fully believing, as we do, that you have, in those discourses, clearly and satisfactorily shown from the Word of God, what it is that constitutes an authorized christian ministry; and, entertaining the opinion, that their publication, with a view to a more extended circulation, would be useful in contributing to establish in the public mind, enlightened, sound, safe, and scriptural views of this important subject—we most respectfully request, that they may be presented to the public, through the medium of the press, in such form as you may prefer, and as early as may suit your convenience.

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TROY, *February 22*, 1844.

TO THE SESSION, TRUSTEES, AND OTHERS,

OF THE SECOND-STREET PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, TROY:

*Christian Friends*,—The discourses, referred to in your communication, are in the form of short notes, which were prepared from week to week during the course of their delivery. In yielding to your request, therefore, I cannot promise that you will be able, at all times, to recognize the exact language in which you heard them, nor precisely the same arrangement as to the matter. It may seem expedient, also, in preparing them for the press, to amplify the discussion on some points, as well as to make some addition to the list of authorities. The general course of the argument, however, shall remain the same.

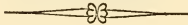
It is known to you all, that any thing like fondness for controversy has been far from the tenor and spirit of my ministry among you. In the present case, there was a demand, on the part of yourselves and others, for a temperate discussion of the High Church doctrine of Apostolical Succession, which it would have been wrong for me to resist. And nothing but a disposition to meet the wishes of those, who listened to the argument with so much patience and respectful attention, could have induced me to consent to its publication.

I remain yours,

With sincere respect and affection,

W. D. SNODGRASS.

## ADVERTISEMENT.

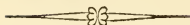


THE foregoing correspondence will sufficiently account for the appearance of the following pages.

Things which are very absurd in themselves, are sometimes forced by circumstances into positions of great importance. This we believe to be true of the modern doctrine of Apostolical Succession. Nothing could save it from utter contempt, but the extent and respectability of the denomination of christians with which it stands associated. Enormous as its pretensions are, it gains currency from the stations and influence of those who appear on its side; and it will not die of itself. Like other errors, it must be brought to the tests of reason and scripture; and to subject it to the operation of these tests, is the appropriate work of the pastors of the churches, who, in their respective places, are set for the defence of the Gospel.

These are the views which governed the author, in the preparation and delivery of the discourses which are contained in this volume. His aim was to exhibit an outline of the plain reasons which exist for rejecting the doctrine in question, not only as untrue, but as tending directly to the ejection of a large proportion of the christian world from the inheritance of the people of God. Not a few, whose judgment he is bound to respect, have supposed that a wider circulation of the views presented might subserve the interests of the cause of truth. And, in compliance with their wishes, he submits these views to the candid consideration of the christian public.

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# DISCOURSE I.



THE DOCTRINE STATED—ITS EXCLUSIVE, AND UNCHURCHING CHARACTER—REASONS FOR DISCUSSING IT.

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JUDGES xvii. 13. Now know I that the Lord will do me good, seeing I have a Levite to my priest.

It occurs among the wise remarks of the wisest of mere men, that “there is no *new* thing under the sun.” “Is there any thing,” he inquires, “whereof it may be said, see, this is new”? And he answers this inquiry, by saying, “it hath been already of old time which was before us.”—To trace the evidences of the truth of this statement as they lie out to our view upon the general field of history and observation, is no part of my present purpose. I advert to it, only for the purpose of reminding you, that one of the chief illustrations of its truth, is to be found in the errors which appear from time to time, in connection with the progress of the church of Christ. Many of these

errors seem, to the popular apprehension, to be "new"; and, in some cases, they are so, to the generation who occupy the stage of life when they arise. But, in going back over the history of the past, we shall generally find, that, instead of being new in reality, they are merely the revival or re-appearance of old errors, which have prevailed in other times—which have never, perhaps, been entirely eradicated from the human mind—and which, after lying dormant for years, and sometimes for centuries, break out afresh, and prevail with equal, and not unfrequently with increased activity and power.

In view of this fact, you will not be surprised, if I invite you to accompany me, as far back in the history of the past as to the words of the text, for an example and illustration of an error, which is re-appearing in our age and country, and the revival of which is attracting the attention and awakening the solicitude of the friends of evangelical piety in this, and in other lands. It seems, from the connection in which the passage is found, that, "in those days in which there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes," there came a strolling Levite to Mount Ephraim, to the house of a man whose name was Micah. This latter individual, though an unprincipled and wicked man, was yet of a re-

religious turn, according to his own views of what religion required. He was an Israelite, by birth and education : he believed in the existence and character of the true God ; but his modes of worship were moddled, in many respects, after the idolatrous practices of the heathen. The historical notice, in regard to this point, is, that he “ had a house of gods” : he had “ a graven image and a molten image,” made of “ two hundred shekels of silver” ; and besides these, “ an ephod and teraphim.” And, to complete his arrangements, he “ consecrated one of his sons who became his priest.” With this latter item in the arrangement, however, he seems never to have been entirely satisfied. He chose a member of his own family, to be the officiating Priest of his house, not because he preferred him above all others, but because he had no other material at hand, from which to make the selection. And, therefore, when the wandering Levite appeared at the door of his house, it occurred to him at once, that an opportunity for a better adjustment, in respect to this point, was now presented. He broached the subject immediately, by inquiring, “Whence comest thou” ? And the reply was, “ I am a Levite of Beth-lehem-judah, and I go to sojourn where I may find a place. And Micah said unto him, dwell with me, and be unto me a father and a

priest, and I will give thee ten shekels of silver by the year, and a suit of apparel, and thy victuals.” (Not a very flattering offer, it must be confessed—amounting to an annual consideration of something less than six dollars, with boarding and a suit of clothes!—Nevertheless, in the absence of any thing better, it was accepted.) “So the Levite went in. And the Levite was content to dwell with the man; and the young man was unto him as one of his sons. And Micah consecrated the Levite; and the young man became his priest, and was in the house of Micah.” Thus far, the history. And, now, we come to Micah’s reflections upon the value of the acquisition he had made. To his view, it was an acquisition which connected him immediately and certainly with the blessing of God. He knew, indeed, that the person whom he had received into his house, was an idle vagabond, who had wandered far from home in search of a place, and who had no higher object in view than to get a living, by making merchandise of his Levitical character and relations. And yet, in the mere circumstance that he *was* a Levite, he regarded himself as furnished with every thing that he needed, and sung out his superstitious confidence, by saying, “Now know I that the Lord will do me good, seeing I have a Levite to my priest.” It mattered not to him, what he

was, in other respects : his moral and religious character, as an individual, was not, for one moment, taken into the account : he might be as wicked as Cain, and as wily and hypocritical as Satan himself ; but, because there was Levitical blood in his veins, and he could prove a legitimate descent by succession from the true priesthood, there was no reason to doubt, that he would be the means of securing, to those for whom he officiated, the favor and the benediction of God.

Nor was the man of Mount Ephraim, who reasoned thus, the only one of his time who embraced and rested on the same views. It was then, and for ages afterwards continued to be, the received and favorite doctrine of the Jewish nation, that a divine virtue was deposited for them in a particular priesthood ; and that all who could say, with truth, “ we have Abraham to our father,” were secure as to their hope of acceptance with God.—When their Messiah came, he labored to dissipate the mists of this delusion ; and characterized the persons who, without personal piety, were thus depending upon their priesthood for salvation, as a “ generation of vipers,” who were not likely to “ escape the damnation of hell.” A leading object of his teaching was, to establish the hopes of the human soul upon other and different grounds. He made repentance for sin, and faith in himself,

as “ the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world,” the only door of admission into the kingdom of heaven; and declared all, who entered by this door, to be the true sheep, without stopping to inquire, by what ministry their admission was procured. Of the same tenor, were all the instructions of his apostles, after his ascension, both by word and epistle. Their constant effort was, to draw away the minds of men from all external grounds of hope towards God, and to fix their reliance exclusively upon faith, as appropriating the righteousness of Christ, and leading by consequence to a life of holy activity in the service of God. These instructions were not without their effect, at the time; and, for a while afterwards, their fruits were visible, in the eminently spiritual character which the church maintained, and exhibited to the surrounding world. But, although the old leaven was thus restrained in its operation for a time, it was not destroyed; and, very soon after the death of the Apostles, it began to show itself, in the prevalence of the same sentiments respecting the christian ministry, which had before prevailed in reference to the Jewish priesthood. Spiritual piety was again lost sight of, while the religion of forms was unduly exalted. A change obtained, in this respect, which increased from century to century, until it became the received

doctrine over more than half the world, that the only authorized hope of salvation was in connection with a ministry constituted in a particular way—that, of this ministry, the occupant of the Papal throne was the visible and supreme head, upon earth—and that, beyond the pale of its influences and virtues, men had reason to expect nothing, but the curse of God, both in this world, and the world to come.

During the period of the Reformation, the principle of this error was again searched out, and exposed. The light of truth was made to shine upon it, revealing its deformities and dangers; and the minds of men were called back to the true nature of religion, as consisting in immediate personal intercourse with God, through the atonement and intercession of Christ. Over extensive regions of christendom, the influence of this reformation extended, with the rapidity of light: the system of formality and superstition, which had been gathering strength for ages, was assailed with success: and, in general, the march of improvement has been onward, from the days of Luther until now. In the mean time, it is true, the symptoms of a relapse have been often seen, to a limited extent, in particular places. The tendency in human nature, to rely more upon the forms than the spiritualities of religion, has never disappeared entire-



ly. And the signs of the times now are, that, under the guidance and propelling force of this tendency, another retrograde movement is about to be witnessed on a large scale—that the old error of connecting the hope of salvation exclusively with a particular ministry, is destined to reign elsewhere than within the visible limits of the Papal dominion—that its dark shadow, and its blighting influence, are likely to extend over an important branch of the Protestant Church—and its work of mischief upon the souls of men, to form a conspicuous feature of the times, through which we are now passing.

To CHARACTERIZE this error, in the form in which I propose to examine it—to furnish you with some EVIDENCE of its existence, and increasing prevalence—and to exhibit some of the REASONS why its examination seems to be called for, under existing circumstances—is all that I propose, farther, to accomplish, at the present time.

In setting forth the doctrine of APOSTOLICAL SUCCESSION, as involving the error to which I have just referred, I shall rely, mainly, upon the statements of its own advocates. They shall speak for themselves. And, from their exposition of their own views, it will appear—that membership in the church of Christ, together with a scriptural hope of salvation, depends upon *a mere forma-*

*lity.* Their scheme is, that there cannot be a church of Christ, excepting in connection with a Hierarchy, the orders of which are Bishops, Priests, and Deacons—that Bishops, who are the superior order, are the only persons who have the power of perpetuating a christian ministry—that this power belongs to them, by virtue of their descent from the Apostles, by an unbroken line of succession—that a true ministry and church are, therefore, to be found, only in connection with the Prelatical Episcopacy of this, and of other countries—and, of course, that none, who have not received Episcopal ordination, have any right to regard themselves as called by the Head of the Church, either to preach his gospel, or to administer the ordinances of his house. “Our Bishops,” they say, “are successors of the Apostles; and we, as ordained by them, share in the succession, and are therefore the authorized teachers of God’s word, and the administrators of his sacraments.”—“The only ministrations to which the Lord has promised his presence, are those of the Bishops, who are successors of the first commissioned Apostles, and the other clergy, acting under their sanction, and by their authority.”—“The sacrament of the Lord’s Supper can only be administered, by ministers duly ordained; and, therefore, it is needful to continue in a church, professing an

Apostolical succession.”—“ Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, alone, can administer Christ’s sacraments and ordinances.”—“ The real ground of our authority, is our apostolical descent.”—“ An uninterrupted series of valid ordinations, has carried down the Apostolical succession, in our churches, to the present day” ; and “ we must necessarily consider none ordained, who are not thus ordained.”

These declarations are selected from different authors ; and they are sufficiently explicit, not only, as presenting the true notion of the succession scheme, but, also, as exhibiting its exclusive, and *unchurching* character. As this is a point, however, of great importance, in the discussion on which we are entering, and, as I am anxious that no doubt should remain upon your minds in relation to it, you will bear with me, in the recital of some other testimonies, from the same, or from kindred sources. And, that you may not regard me, as calling up from the dead, the narrow-mindedness and bigotry of other and darker ages, I shall confine myself, mainly, to the writings and sayings of persons, who are now living, or whose memory is still fresh, in the minds of the intelligent and reading public :—in the first place, to authors of other countries ; and, in the second place, to those of our own.

In the far-famed series of publications, known as the Oxford Tracts, we find such language as the following: "Episcopal authority, is the very bond which unites christians to each other, and to Christ."—"Christ never appointed two ways to heaven; nor did he build a church to save some, and make another institution to save other men. There is no other name, given under heaven among men, whereby we may be saved, but the name of Jesus; and that is no otherwise given under heaven, than in the church."—"It is not merely because Episcopacy is a better, or more scriptural form than Presbyterianism, (true as this may be in itself,) that Episcopalians are right, and Presbyterians are wrong, but because the Presbyterian ministers have assumed a power, which was never intrusted to them. They have presumed to exercise the power of ordination, and to perpetuate a succession of ministers, without having received a commission to do so."—"A person, not commissioned from the Bishop, may use the words of baptism, and sprinkle, or bathe, with the water on earth; but there is no promise from Christ, that such a man shall admit souls to the kingdom of heaven. A person, not commissioned, may break bread, and pour out wine, and pretend to give the Lord's supper, but it can afford no comfort to any to receive it at his hands, be-

cause there is no warrant from Christ, to lead communicants to suppose, that, while he does so here upon earth, they will be partakers in the Saviour's heavenly body and blood. And, as for the person himself, who takes upon himself, without warrant, to minister in holy things, he is, all the while, *treading in the footsteps of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, whose awful punishment you read of in the Book of Numbers.*" No. 35, p. 2, 3.

In an article in the *British Critic*, for October, 1839, the conductors of the work say,—“We are of THE CHURCH—not of the Episcopal Church—our bishops are not merely an order in her organization, but *the principle of her continuance*; and to call ourselves Episcopalians, is to imply, that we differ from the mass of dissenters mainly in church government and form; whereas the difference is, that we are here, and *they are there*: we *in* the church, and they *out* of it.”

From a work, entitled, *A Doctrinal Catechism of the Church of England, &c.*, the following questions and answers, as bearing upon the same point, are extracted. “Who appoints dissenting teachers? They either wickedly appoint each other, or are not appointed at all; and so, in either case, their assuming the office is very wicked.—But, are not dissenting teachers thought to be very

good men? They are often thought to be such, and so were Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, till God showed them to be very wicked.—But, may we not hear them preach? No; for God says, ‘*Depart from the tents of these wicked men.*’ ”\*

Palmer, in his Treatise on the Church, speaking of the Presbyterians of Scotland, and of their rejection of Episcopacy, says, “All the temporal enactments and powers of the whole world could not cure this fault, *nor render them a portion of the Church of Christ.*” Again, he says of non-episcopal churches generally, “Of these communities, whether collectively or individually considered, I affirm, that they are *no part of the Church of Christ.*”—“They are *human societies.* The will of man makes them, regulates them, un-makes them. They are, in a word, purely voluntary associations, and, therefore, cannot be any part of that church, which is formed by the divine command.”—“They, and their generations, ARE AS THE HEATHEN; and, though we may have reason to believe, that many of their descendants are not obstinate in their errors, still, it seems to me, that *we are not warranted in affirming absolutely that they can be saved.*” Vol. i. pp. 110, 399, 407.

Dr. Hook, the present vicar of Leeds, discourses, in this manner—“Unless Christ be spiritual-

\* See Smyth on Ap. Suc.: p. 128.

ly present with the ministers of religion, in their services, those services will be vain ; but the *only* ministrations, to which he has promised his presence, are those of *Bishops*, who are successors to the first commissioned apostles, and to the other clergy, acting under their sanction, and by their authority.”

And now, that you may not suppose, that these unchurching views prevail, exclusively, on the other side of the Atlantic, I invite your attention to some specimens of the style of writing, on the same subject, which is becoming every day more common, in our own country. Dr. Howe says, in his *Vindication of the Protestant Episcopal Church*—“Well, the supposition is, that Christ established distinct grades of ministers, and conferred upon the highest grade the exclusive power of ordaining. When a minister of the highest grade, then, ordains, Christ ordains ; when a minister of the second grade ordains, it is not Christ that ordains, but man. Thus Episcopal ordination confers the sacerdotal office ; Presbyterial ordination does not. If, therefore, the former ordination be laid aside, and the latter be substituted in its place, the sacerdotal office must cease to exist ; and, as there can be no church without a ministry, the church must cease to exist also.”—  
P. 354.

Bishop Hobart, in his Companion for the Altar, says—"The Judge of the whole earth, indeed, will do right. The grace of God quickens and animates all the degenerate children of Adam. The mercy of the Saviour is co-extensive with the ruin into which sin has plunged mankind. And, 'in every nation, he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him.' But, 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.*" P. 202.

In an address on unity, delivered not long since by the Bishop of the Eastern Diocese of New York, we are told, that "none but the Bishops can unite us to the Father, in the way of Christ's appointment; and these Bishops must be such, as receive their mission from the first commissioned Apostles."

In a Treatise on Apostolical Succession, published and circulated by the Episcopal Tract Society, there is a passage, which runs thus—"The Church of England holds, that the commission and authority for ministering in the name of God, has been transmitted from the Apostles, by what is called Episcopal Succession: that is to say, that the Apostles left the power, which they had received from Christ, to govern the churches, and



to preach the gospel, and to administer the sacraments, and to ordain other clergy to assist in all these duties, in the hands of a certain class of chief pastors (to whom in very early times the term Bishop was appropriated;) that this power and commission has been handed down in the church, from their time till now, by Bishops ordaining Bishops; and that *none, who have not received Episcopal ordination are lawful ministers of the church, or warranted to perform any acts, in the name, or with the authority of God.*"

In a sermon, recently delivered and published in the city of New York, the author speaks in the following manner. He refers to the Church of England, as having given to the world our accepted version of the Bible; and, in the progress of his remarks concerning her, says—"She must preach to you the Word, and nothing else—she must administer to you, according to the record of her own testimony, which you hold in your hands. Within these prescribed boundaries, her power is absolute over you, so long as you remain in her communion—a communion which you cannot renounce, excepting at the peril of your salvation."

The following passages are extracted, from a work by Rev. Palmer Dyer of Whitehall. "No religious society, or communion, of whatever de-

nomination or character, is a church of Christ, unless it be Episcopal.”—“ We cannot be brought into the holy covenant, except in an Episcopal church, or by the agency of an Episcopal ministry.”—“ Those who profess to be ministers of the Gospel, without having received Episcopal ordination, possess no more ministerial authority than any private christian.”—“ Their supposed commission is a nullity. And, still farther, it is worse than a nullity: it involves the guilt of schism and rebellion.”—“ Those who separate from the Episcopal church, reviling and opposing it, and connecting themselves with anti-Episcopal sects, are, in fact, fighting against God.”—“ *We can have no fellowship with non-Episcopal sects, nor ever pretend to receive christian sacraments from them: they have no real sacraments to give.*”

If it were necessary, I might occupy your attention, for hours, in producing extracts of a similar kind. These are but specimens of, what are now, the every-day productions, both of the pulpit and the press. And they are surely enough, to satisfy the most sceptical, that, in one point at least, we are fast falling back upon the times of popish bigotry and intolerance. I shall indulge in no comments upon the language of these quotations, for the purpose of showing, that the views which they express *are* exclusive, and *do* unchurch the

non-Episcopal denominations of this, and of other countries. This is so plain, that any attempt to prove it, would be an insult to your understandings. I may remind you, however, that, in full conformity with the spirit of the foregoing declarations, the Episcopal Church is now called, exclusively, **THE CHURCH**. We read, both in official communications, and in newspaper paragraphs, of “the Bishop of New Jersey,” “the Bishop of Pennsylvania,” &c.; and, in the Church Almanac, of the “Dioceses of *the Church of the United States*.” True to the import of these titles, we also find, that the use of the word “Church,” as applied to other denominations, is carefully avoided. They are called dissenters, schismatics, sectaries, societies, communions, but never Churches—the clear import of which is, that those, who are thus designated, have no fellow-citizenship with the saints, and no connection with the household of God. And yet, it is a fact, that we are gravely told, by some of the advocates of these High-Church claims, that *they* do not unchurch us—that we unchurch *ourselves*. ‘The door of the Church,’ they say, ‘is open, and you are not only at liberty, but are invited, to enter—we are so far from having no charity for you, that we should be glad, at any moment, to receive you --if you are excluded, therefore, it is not by us—you

are shut out by an act of your own.' Most kindly and compassionately spoken! So reasons the Man of Sin, while "drunk with the blood of the saints." It is the very essence of the charity of Popery to say, 'We are the Church—out of the Church there is no salvation—we open our arms to embrace you—and, if you will enter our fold, and be submissive to our claims, all will be well. If you resist and rebel, we do, indeed, pronounce our anathema upon you—we send your body to the stake, and your soul to perdition!—but remember, this is *your* work and not ours!—you die by your own hand—and the sin of your perdition must lie upon your own head!' Whether such charity is "from above," or whether it is "earthly, sensual, and *devilish*," is a question, which, in your presence, I need not discuss.

Having thus defined the doctrine of Apostolical Succession, and the position taken by its advocates, with respect to other denominations of christians, I regard it as proper, to advert to some of the REASONS, for calling your attention to it, in the public manner in which I propose to examine it.

And, here, allow me to say, that I am not urged to this examination, by *any feeling of jealousy, or unkindness, towards the Episcopal Church.* With those who belong to this communion, con-

sidered as one, among other denominations of professing christians, we have no controversy. In the case of those Episcopalians, who are willing to meet us on the ground of a common christianity, instead of casting us out of the church of Christ, on account of a difference in external forms, we had rather strengthen, than do any thing to weaken, the bonds of union. For all such, we have the right hand of an undissembled and cordial fellowship; and their preferences for Episcopacy, above other forms of church polity, we should never feel ourselves called upon to assail. We have no sympathy with those, who are ever active in disturbing others in the quiet and peaceable enjoyment of their christian liberty and rights. We accord to all men the same privilege, in this respect, which we claim for ourselves; and can sincerely rejoice, in all the success which attends the efforts of those, who differ from us in modes and forms, in promoting the general interests of the kingdom of Christ. We beg you, therefore, to understand and remember, throughout this discussion, that we wage no aggressive warfare upon the territory and rights of the Episcopal church. Our concern is not with this denomination as such, but only with the unwarrantable assumptions of a part of those who belong to it. And, even with respect to them, we propose to do noth-

ing more than stand on the defensive. They have excluded us from the Church of Christ; and we ask the privilege of showing, that this sentence of exclusion is without authority. They have said, “the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are *we* ;” and we wish to prove, that we have some right to a place in this temple, as well as themselves.

I pass, now, to remark,

1. That we find a sufficient reason for engaging in this discussion, in *the character* of the doctrine, which we propose to examine. It proceeds, as we have seen, upon the assumption, that all professing Christians, who are unconnected with Prelatical Bishops, considered as the lineal descendants of the Apostles, are as widely separated from the Church of Christ as the heathen—have no interest in the covenanted mercy of God—and are, therefore, in such a situation, that “we are not warranted in affirming, absolutely, that they *can be saved*.” And this, we alledge, is altogether, and without qualification, *a monstrous assumption*—involving a breach of Christian charity, too outrageous, to be tolerated in silence. “To unchurch”—says a late eloquent writer of our own country—“with a dash of the pen, all the non-Episcopal denominations under heaven; and cast their members, indiscriminately, into a

condition worse than that of the very heathen, is, to say the least of it, a most dreadful excommunication ; and, if not clearly enjoined by the authority of God, as criminal as it is dreadful. That all those glorious Churches, which have flourished in Geneva, Holland, France, Scotland, England, Ireland, &c., since the Reformation; and all which have spread, and are spreading, through this vast Continent—that those heroes of the truth, who, though they bowed not to the mitre, rescued millions from the Man of Sin, lighted up the lamp of genuine religion, and left it burning with a pure and steady flame to the generation following—that all those faithful ministers, and all those private christians, who, though not of the hierarchy, adorned the doctrine of God their Saviour, living in faith, dying in faith; scores, hundreds, thousands of them going away to their Father's house, under the strong consolations of the Holy Ghost, with anticipated heaven in their hearts, and its hallelujahs on their lips—that all, all were without the pale of the visible Church; were destitute of covenanted grace; and left the world without any chance for eternal life, but that unpledged, unpromised mercy, which their accusers charitably hope may be extended to such as labor under involuntary or unavoidable error; and this, merely because they renounced Episcopacy—are

positions of such deep-toned horror as may well make our hair stand up, 'like quills upon the fretful porcupine;' and freeze the warm blood at its fountain."\*

And who is there, here, that does not respond from the heart, to the sentiment expressed, in this elevated and glowing language? Is there one, of all the large audience which I address, who is not prepared to say, in the outset, that the system which draws after it such consequences as these, *must* be unscriptural and false; and deserves to be held up, publicly and formally, to the universal abhorrence and execration of the christian mind?

2. It seems proper, that public attention should be turned to the revival of this exclusive spirit, as being *a most remarkable feature of the present times*—a feature too prominent and peculiar, to be overlooked, or regarded with indifference. If there is any hope for the world, in reference to the spread of evangelical piety, it must certainly rest, in a great measure, so far as the instrumentality is concerned, upon the Christians of Great Britain, and America. These are the main fountains, from which the streams of civilization and christianity must be expected to flow. They are the nations, that come into most frequent contact with the barbarous parts of the earth, in the pursuits of trade and commerce; and they are doing

\* Dr. J. M. Mason.



a large proportion of all that is now in progress—in circulating the word of God—in sending missionaries to the heathen—and in keeping all the kindred influences in operation, that have the best interests of the world in view. Now, that a large and influential portion of the professedly Christian community of these two countries, under the advancing light and liberty of this age, should revive and rally around the assumption, that they alone are the Church of Christ—that all ministries, differently constituted from theirs, are essentially irregular and invalid—and that all who attend upon them, however circumspect and godly their lives may be, are not in possession of a scriptural hope of salvation—is so entirely aside from any thing, that might naturally have been expected, that we may well inquire, What can it mean? We can account for it, that an inhabitant of the Celestial Empire should look upon all other nations as outside barbarians: because the education of his country has never taught him a different lesson. And we can account for it, in a similar way, that a follower of the false Prophet should look with disdain upon those whom he regards as Christian dogs, and turn away from them as unfit to be associated with him in the hope of future felicity. But that men, brought up in the lap of Christianity, in the purest state in which

it is known to exist, and called in the providence of God to take so prominent a part in the furtherance of its interests, should so far mistake its true genius and spirit, as to think of confining it within the frame-work of a particular external organization and of casting out all who are beyond this inclosure from any fellowship with them in the faith and comfort of the gospel, is indeed worthy of being contemplated as a moral wonder. It savors, too much, of the spirit of the darkest age the world ever saw, to have a fit place in the century, through which we are passing. And, considered as clogging the wheels of that chariot, which is carrying life and salvation to the ends of the earth, it deserves, not only our deliberate notice, but our intelligent and decided condemnation.

3. We find a reason for this discussion, in the fact, that *it never can be right to submit, without resistance, to attempts that are made, from any quarter, to deprive us of our dearest rights and privileges.* In respect to social and civil immunities, we all understand this principle, sufficiently well. Let an attempt be made, even by the publication of a theory, to undermine the foundation of our title to the property we possess, or the places of trust and influence we occupy, and we are ready, at once, to meet the aggressor, with the keenest weapons of truth and argument we

know how to employ. But, what are the interests endangered in such a case, when compared with what I, and most of you, must lose, if the lofty claims, involved in the succession scheme, are admitted? The consequence must be, that I am a usurper of the place which I occupy, and that you are fighting against the institutions of God, in giving countenance to those ministrations, on which you attend. And is all this to be borne, without a word to show that this disfranchising and merciless system is as entirely unsupported by evidence, as it is extraordinary in its character? If our immunities, as those who have abjured the authority of all hierarchies, both in Church and in State, are worth having, they are worth defending; and if we suffer them to be wrested from us, without a struggle, we incur the same reproach, which was due to him, “who, for one morsel of meat, sold his birthright.”

4. Some notice of the doctrine, which we propose to discuss, is demanded, by *the present posture of the public mind in relation to it*. The christian community, of all Protestant denominations, are in the attitude of inquiry. Various events, of recent occurrence, both at home and abroad, have awakened their attention—their ears are open—and many, even of those who are too well established to be in danger of yielding to the

claims of the unchurching system, would like, nevertheless, to see its absurdity exposed, the arguments against it presented in form, and the grounds of a contrary belief made plain, from such sources of evidence as are accessible, but which, a large proportion of the community, are not likely to seek and obtain for themselves. This demand, it is the duty of the pulpit, as well as of the press, to supply. A work is thus assigned to the pastors of the churches, which they cannot, in faithfulness, refuse to perform. There is a call for information, to which it is their duty to respond.

5. Once more, it is meet that the bold pretensions of this system should be discussed, in our popular christian assemblies; because, *if frequently repeated in the public ear, without being contradicted, there is real danger, that many will receive and embrace them.* A story often told, especially if told with an air of sincerity and confidence, is likely, for this reason alone, to be believed, however slender the evidence on which it rests. And who can doubt, that we are, and have been for years, exposed to the operation of this principle, as connected with the present subject? The pulpit, in certain quarters, is the constant vehicle of discussions, which are intended to show, that the existence of the Church of Christ depends upon a particular form of ministerial ordination,

while, from those who are banished, by this doctrine, from all visible connexion with the family of God, there comes no voice of objection, of remonstrance, or of self-defence. You may sit, for years, under the preaching of a non-Episcopal ministry, without hearing a word in opposition to this assumption, or in maintenance of the contrary truth. And, if there must be an extreme, this is undoubtedly the one to be preferred. If others err, in saying too much about the *forms* of religion, let it be our distinction, that we dwell, mainly, on its doctrinal substance, and its practical power. But still, it is not right, that this unchurching process should go on, forever, without being noticed, in the way of refutation and rebuke. If it does, there is good reason to apprehend, that some will suppose we are silent, because we have nothing to say, in justification of our own position. And this, I am persuaded, will absolve me, in your estimation, from the charge of over-stepping the line of my official duties, while engaged in the present discussion. The subject to be examined, is one which involves my authority to preach the gospel; and, at the same time, the safety of your course, in consenting to receive it from the lips of one, on whose head the hands of a spiritual hierarch have never been imposed.

## DISCOURSE II.



THE DOCTRINE BROUGHT TO ITS PROPER TEST—NO STARTING-POINT, IN SCRIPTURE, FOR A LINE OF SUCCESSION BY PRELATES—NO NAME FOR A PRELITICAL BISHOP AMONG THE SCRIPTURAL TITLES.

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ISAIAH viii. 20. To the law, and to the testimony : if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.

IN approaching the settlement of disputed questions, the first thing to be done, is, to fix upon *the tribunal*, to which the appeal is to be made—*the judge*, before whom the cause is to be carried—*the umpire*, whose opinion is to decide the case. In matters, involving the social and civil rights of men, there may, sometimes, be a choice, between one tribunal and another. The selection may depend upon circumstances ; and, especially, upon consent of parties. But, in religious controversies, there is nothing, here, to be determined by man—the only infallible umpire is the word of God : “ To the law and to the testimony : if

they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.”

In theory, it is not often, that the truth and justice of this position are called in question. Almost all who accept the Bible as a revelation from God, profess to regard it as the authoritative rule of faith and practice. And yet, even among them, there are ways of so trenching upon this rule, indirectly, as, in a great measure, to nullify it in practice.—The Jew, for instance, will not deny, that, in determining all questions between him and others, the appeal should be, to the Old Testament scriptures. And, if this position were adhered to, without qualification, the controversy between Christianity and Judaism, might soon be brought to a satisfactory issue. But, in practice, he brings with him such unmingled veneration for the Apocryphal and Rabbinical writings of his nation, and lays so much stress on “the traditions” received from his fathers, that the testimony of scripture is rendered “void,” and becomes “of none effect.”—In like manner, the Romish Church are free to profess, that the Bible is the rule of faith, and that its declarations, when rightly understood, are to be received as conclusive and final. But, in the application of this rule, they so insist upon passing the Bible through the crucible of the Church’s interpretation, and upon

adding, by the authority of the Church, to its doctrines and institutions, that, in effect, the meaning of scripture is perverted; and, in many cases, its judgment reversed.—And, so it is, with the advocates and supporters of the scheme, which makes a prelatical succession essential to the existence of a Church. They are willing to enter with us into the temple of divine revelation, and to have the question considered and determined there; but they insist, at the same time, upon our inviting the uninspired christian fathers to accompany us, and submitting our views, as to the meaning of scripture, to their correction and control—so that, when their opinions conflict with what may seem to us to be the plain import of the language of the sacred writers, we must surrender our private judgment into their hands and allow them to be our guides to the knowledge of the truth. In this way, another rule of faith than the word of God is introduced, and becomes, in effect, the main ground of dependence; because, on this principle, the controversy must be decided, not by the infallible authority of inspiration, but by the fallible opinions and teachings of men.

Now, to a tribunal constituted in this way, we cannot consent to go—although, as you shall see hereafter, we are entirely willing that the testimony of the early Christian writers should be receiv-



ed, on this, as on all other questions of fact and doctrine, for what it is worth. As true Protestants, we cannot permit any human interpreter to stand between us and the voice of God, as speaking in the scriptures. In all matters, essential to salvation, they speak, in plain language, to the understandings of plain men. And, as we expect to show, the person who goes to uninspired tradition to find out their meaning, resorts to a commentary, which is far more difficult to be understood than the text. We adopt, therefore, as defining our position, in respect to this point, the immortal declarations of Chillingworth, as contained in the following eloquent passage. Speaking of "the Bible," and "the Bible only," as "the religion of Protestants," he says—"I, for my part, after a long and (as I verily believe and hope) impartial search of the true way to eternal happiness, do profess plainly, that I cannot find any rest for the sole of my foot, but upon *this Rock* only. I see plainly, and with mine own eyes, that there are 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, the Church of one age against the Church of another age. Traditive interpretations of scripture are pretended, but there are few, or none, to be found: no tradition, but only of scripture,

can derive itself from the fountain ; but may be plainly proved, either to have been brought in, in such an age after Christ, or that, in such an age, it was not brought in. In a word, there is no sufficient certainty, but of scripture only, for any considering man to build upon. This, therefore, and this only I have reason to believe : this I will profess : according to this I will live : and, for this, if there be occasion, I will not only willingly, but even gladly, lose my life—though I should be sorry, that Christians should take it from me. Propose me any thing out of this book, and require whether I believe it or no ; and, seem it never so incomprehensible to human reason, I will subscribe it with hand and heart, as knowing no demonstration can be stronger than this—God hath said so : therefore, it is true. In other things, I will take no man's liberty of judgment from him ; neither shall any man take mine from me. I will think no man the worse man, nor the worse Christian : I will love no man the less, for differing in opinion from me. And what measure I mete to others, I expect from them again. I am fully assured, that God does not, and, therefore, that men ought not, to require more of any man than this—to believe the scripture to be God's word, to endeavor to find the true sense of it, and to live according to it."

Bear in mind, one other preliminary consideration ; and we shall, then, be prepared, to submit the claims of that hierarchy, which embosoms the doctrine of Apostolical Succession, to the decision of the word of God. I refer to what, it seems to me, no candid mind can be unwilling to concede ; and that is—that we may expect to find *every thing, essential to salvation*, CLEARLY REVEALED in scripture. Indifferent things, may be left in comparative darkness ; but, that God should have given a revelation to man, in which, but little is said, and that very obscurely, in regard to things, which lie at the very basis of the hope of salvation, is not, for a moment, to be believed.—Consider, then, that, according to the scheme, of which we are now to speak, an uninterrupted succession of prelates, is an *essential* element in the Christian system. Its advocates say, that those, who decline or renounce the authority of bishops, are guilty of “renouncing the Church of Christ”—of “renouncing her ministers” ; and, through them, of renouncing “Christ himself”—that they cannot therefore “expect to be considered as Christians ; but, according to the command of Christ, as heathens and publicans”—that they are “not *in* the Church, but *out* of it”—and are slighting that, which is “the *indispensable* condition of salvation.” Now, if this is the case, we surely have a

right to expect, that nothing will be set forth in a clearer light on the pages of inspiration, than the name, character, and office of prelatical bishops; together with the necessity of such an order to the constitution of the Christian ministry.

On this point, I cannot refrain, from introducing to your notice, a passage from Dr. Barrow, in which this idea is strikingly presented, as applied to the supremacy of the Pope. He says—“ If God had designed the bishop of Rome to be for a perpetual course of times sovereign monarch of his Church, it may reasonably be supposed, that he would *expressly* have declared his mind in the case; it being a point of greatest importance of all that concern the administration of his kingdom in the world. Princes do not use to send their viceroys, unfurnished with patents, *clearly* signifying their commission, that no man, out of ignorance or doubts concerning that point, excusably may refuse compliance; and, in all equity, *promulgation* is requisite, to the establishment of any law, or exacting obedience. But, in all the pandects of divine revelation, the bishop of Rome is not so much as once mentioned, either by name or by character, or by probable intimation. They cannot hook him in, otherwise than by straining hard, and framing a long chain of consequences, each of which is too subtle for to constrain any

man's persuasion."—Expunge, from this passage, *the bishop of Rome*, and insert *prelatical bishops*; and you then have the argument, in the very form in which I desire to present it. If God has "designed" such bishops to be the perpetual monarchs of his Church, so that the Church cannot exist without them, we may look, with confidence, for an express declaration of "his mind in the case." He would not have established such a law, without "promulgating" it, in clear and convincing terms. And if, "in all the pandects of divine revelation," prelatical bishops are not so much as once mentioned by name, or by character, or by probable intimation—if we "cannot hook them in, otherwise than by straining hard, and framing a long chain of consequences"—we shall certainly be entitled to conclude, that this peculiar constitution of the christian ministry has no exclusive warrant from the word of God; and, therefore, that the doctrine of succession, which depends upon it, must fall to the ground.

"To the law," then, "and to the testimony." What do *the scriptures* say, in regard to the nature and constitution of the christian ministry? Do they represent it as a hierarchy, consisting of three orders, the superior one of which are prelatical bishops? And do they promulgate it, plainly, as a law, to the operation of which there can

be no exception, that this order, alone, have the power of perpetuating the sacred office—so that, neither a church, nor a ministry, can exist, excepting on the line of this particular succession ?

My *first* position, in answer to this inquiry, is, that *there is no such functionary, known to the New Testament at all, as* A PRELITICAL BISHOP: he is not to be found, there, either by “name,” by “character,” or by “probable intimation”: and, therefore, there is no hook, at the superior end, on which the chain of this boasted succession can hang.

If there is such an officer, in connection with the ministry, as established by the Saviour and his apostles, where are we to look for him ? That he cannot be *easily* found, I may, surely, be justified in affirming, since quite as much as this is confessed, by some of the most distinguished advocates of prelacy themselves.—The following is the language of Bishop Tomline—“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.”—“As it has 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.”—Palmer says, “We do not find the origin of episcopacy *exactly* recorded.”—In Tract No. 8 of the Oxford series, the author remarks, “there is no part of the ecclesiastical system, which is not *faintly* traced in scripture; and no part, which is *much more* than faintly traced.” Again, in No. 85, it is said, “every one must allow, that there is next to nothing, on *the surface* of scripture, about them”—referring to episcopacy, succession, the power of the church, &c.—“and very little, *even under the surface*, of a satisfactory character.”—Dr. Hammond, in the preface to his work on the Power of the Keys, thus inquires—“Who were the apostles’ successors, in that power, which concerned the governing the churches, which they planted”? And his answer is, “that, it being a matter of fact, or story, later than the scripture can universally reach to, *it cannot be fully satisfied, or answered, from thence*; but will, in the full latitude, through the universal church, in these times, be made clear, from the recent evidences that we have, viz. from the consent of the Greek and Latin *fathers*, who generally resolve, that bishops are those successors.”—Dodwell, admits the same thing, when he says,—“They (i. e. the sacred writers) *no-*

*where* professedly explain the offices, or ministries themselves, as to their nature, or extent, which surely they would have done, if any particular form had been prescribed, for perpetual duration.”\*—And, to these, I shall only add the testimony of Bishop Beveridge. He says,—“*Nothing can be determined, from what the Apostles did, in their early proceedings, in preaching the gospel, as to the establishment of any certain form of church government for perpetual duration.*”†

Now, in the review of such concessions, coming from such men, what shall we say? If they, in their zeal for episcopacy, could discover no distinct and infallible features of the system in scripture, who else shall be expected to find them? “What can the man do,” says Solomon, “that cometh after the king”? These are the kings and princes, among the writers who have espoused episcopal claims; and any one, who comes after them, and proposes to find an explicit warrant for prelacy in the word of God, may well be suspected of having obtained the imaginary sight of that, which does not exist.

But, without deferring to the judgment of others, on either side of the question, let us examine the scriptures, briefly, for ourselves. And let us

\* See Powell, p. 26. † See *ibid.* p. 27.



endeavor to approach this examination, uninfluenced by any thing, that we have ever read, or heard, on the subject. Let us suppose the New Testament, especially, to be placed in our hands, for the first time ; and that we are called upon to examine its statements, for the single purpose of ascertaining what it teaches, in regard to the men, who are to preach it to their fellow men.

Entering upon its perusal, with this view, we find, that, immediately after the commencement of his own ministry, Jesus “ordained twelve” disciples—“whom, also, he named apostles”—“that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach.” It is related, also, that, at a subsequent time, he “appointed other seventy also, and sent them before his face, into every city, and place, whither he himself should come.” And, finally, it is recorded, concerning “the eleven,” who remained, of the first class, after the death of Judas, that, before his ascension, he 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. Amen.”—These passages, brief as they

are, contain the sum of our Saviour's teaching, on the subject of the ministry, as appointed and organized by himself. And, having recited them, we stop, at once, to inquire—In what part of this account are we to find the office, and features, of a prelatial bishop? What evidence, does it furnish, of a superior order in the ministry, exercising authority over two others, and by the imposition of whose hands, alone, a true ministry can be continued? Does it trace the lines of such an order, even "faintly"? And, is it credible, that the notion of such a hierarchy, as that to which this order belongs, could ever have entered the human mind, through the medium of such statements alone? They speak of "twelve," and, afterwards of "seventy," who were called to preach the gospel of the kingdom; but they say, not a word, about either of these, as possessing the sole power of ordination, and government. And, if an upper grade, among his ministering servants, holding this power exclusively, was to be essential to the being of a church, who can believe, that the Great Teacher would have left the world, without announcing the doctrine in explicit terms; and, thereby, affording such evidence of its truth as none could overlook, or evade?

The answer to this, on the part of those who contend for episcopacy, as of divine right, is,—

that, although the doctrine was not taught by the Saviour, *expressly*, the elements of the system *were* in force, under his own administration. And this is made out, by assigning the *first* order, in the ministry, to himself—the *second*, to the twelve apostles—and the *third*, to the seventy disciples. To say nothing of the fact, that this distribution is unsanctioned by Christ himself, there are many and cogent reasons, why no unprejudiced mind can embrace it, as justified by the circumstances of the case.—In the *first* place, that must be a weak cause, which cannot be supported, without bringing down the Head of the church, from his high and exclusive position, so as to make him *an order, among his own servants!* And, even if this could be done, without absurdity, of what advantage would it be? How could one infallible, universal Bishop, who could have no equals, represent an order, which may be extended indefinitely? This might answer to the constitution of the Papal hierarchy, but not to that, of which we are now speaking.—In the *second* place, if the twelve apostles belonged to the second order in the ministry, the system of prelacy contradicts itself. Its fundamental position is, that the apostles were of the *first* order, and that prelati- cal bishops are their successors. To be consistent, in the argument now under consideration,

they must regard themselves as the successors of *Christ*, and not of the apostles.—And, in the *third* place, there is no authority whatever for saying, that the twelve apostles and the seventy, sustained towards each other, the relation of a higher, and a lower order in the ministry. They were called, to the same work—they were sent out, in the same way, “two and two”—and their commissions were the same, both in form and substance, and, to a great extent, in the very language employed. They were both reminded, that the “harvest” was “great,” and the “laborers” “few”; and were commanded, while going forth themselves, to “pray the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth more laborers into his harvest”—they were both forbidden, to provide any means of support for themselves, remembering that “the laborer is worthy of his hire”—they were both commanded to proclaim the nearness of the kingdom of God, and to shake off the dust of their feet, against those, who would not receive their message—and they were both addressed, in the encouraging language, “he that receiveth you, receiveth me, and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me.”—That there was a difference between them, in the purpose of their calling, *in some respects*, we do not, indeed, deny. Christ chose the twelve apostles, to be “WITH

HIM''—to be the members of his family—to live near to his person—to receive instruction, from his own lips—and, in various things, of which we shall speak hereafter, to do an extraordinary work, in establishing the church, and completing the volume of divine revelation. But, that they differed from, and were superior to, the seventy, in such a sense as to form a distinct and higher grade, in the ordinary and permanent ministry of the gospel, is a position, unsupported by any one declaration, or fact, which the history of our Saviour's life and teaching contains.

From the commencement of the New Testament history, then, till the ascension of Christ, we may confidently say, there is not the shadow of *a prelate* to be seen, even in the remotest distance : he is not known, to the evangelical record, either by name, or by the office, which he is supposed to fill.

Pursuing our way, we now inquire, whether any traces of the prelatical character and office are to be found, among THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES, or, in any of THE EPISTLES, written by them for the instruction of the churches ? If there is a single passage, in either of these departments, which represents the christian ministry as consisting essentially of *three grades*, and which attaches the powers of ordination, and government, exclu-

sively to the *superior* one, let the advocates of this system produce it. That any thing can be found, in the way of *direct* teaching, to this effect, no one pretends. There is no passage in which, three orders of ministers are mentioned, together—there is no passage, which speaks of any one order, as being superior to any other order—there is no passage, which teaches that there *are* orders in the ministry, at all. All the proof, bearing upon these points, which the friends of prelacy attempt to produce, is indirect; and consists of *inferences* drawn from historical facts. Though the matter to be proved is fundamental, it is granted, on all hands, that, if established, it must rest, not upon the *positive* instructions or commands of the apostles; but, only, upon things which occurred, incidentally, in the establishment and government of the primitive churches. And to what does the evidence, arising from this source, amount? We take the position, in answer to this inquiry, in the first place, that, in all the notices of ecclesiastical rulers, which are to be found in the Acts, and Epistles, there is not so much, as an appropriate NAME, for a prelatial bishop! Be not startled, at the apparent boldness, and temerity, of this proposition; for the fact, as we shall endeavor to show you, is precisely so. And we ask your candid attention to it, as going, in

our view, to the foundations of the whole subject ; and, as deciding the question, to every considerate and unprejudiced mind. If there *is* such an officer, in the church of Christ, as a prelatical bishop, he is *without a name*, in the scriptural vocabulary. According to the pretensions of the system, we are examining, he constitutes the chief order in the ministry—he, alone, possesses the power of ordaining other men to preach the gospel—and, without him, a church cannot exist. And yet, no appellation was assigned to him, by the sacred writers, by which he was distinguished, in their day ; or, by which he might be known, in subsequent times.—If there *is* a scriptural name for him, what is it, and where are we to find it ? The proof rests with those, who say that it exists, and not with us. Were I acquainted with it, I should not hesitate to pronounce it : but, having never met with it, in my own reading of the New Testament, and knowing nothing of its discovery, by others, I may be justified in saying, that it is not to be found, and therefore cannot *be* produced.

But, though the burden of proof, here, does not rest with us, allow me to occupy your attention, for a few moments, in showing, how the case, in reference to this particular, stands. And, for the purpose of placing the truth, in regard to it, before you, I renew the inquiry,—If there *is* a name,

in the New Testament, for a prelatical bishop, what is it? Is it to be found, in *the word* BISHOP, as this word is used, in either of the connections in which it occurs? The cases, in which this name is applied, are only *five* in number. And, having examined them, briefly, in their order, I shall leave it with you, to judge, whether, in either, it can signify what is claimed for the office of bishop, in the scheme now under consideration.

We meet with it, *first*, in Acts xx. 28. "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you *overseers*" (bishops.) The question to be determined, here, is, who are the persons, to whom the name overseer, or bishop, is here applied. By going back to verse 17, we ascertain that they were "elders," or presbyters.—"From Miletus, he sent to Ephesus and called the *elders* of the church. And, when *they* were come, he said unto them," &c. The same persons, therefore, who are called "elders," in the language of the historian, were addressed by Paul, as *bishops*—proving, incontestably, that, in the judgment of scripture, the words bishop and presbyter, instead of pointing to different orders in the ministry, are names for one and the same order; and showing, at the same time, that a bishop, in the true sense, is not the ruler of ministers and churches, but the



immediate pastor of the flock of God, whose business it is, to feed them with the spiritual food, imparted in the direct and ordinary ministrations of the word.

The *second* instance, in which the name occurs, is in Phillippians i. 1,—where the Apostle, in his salutation to the church at Phillippi, addresses them as “the saints,” “with the *bishops* and deacons.”—It is not credible, neither is it supposed by any, that there could have been, at this early period, a plurality of *prelates* in Phillippi, each one exercising the authority which is claimed for this office. And, if not, the conclusion is unavoidable, that here, as in the former case, the name is applied to the ordinary pastors, in the character of overseers of the flock.

The *third* and *fourth* cases, in which the name occurs, are in parallel passages, and may be taken together—one in I. Tim. iii. 2. “A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife,” &c.; and the other in Titus i. 7. “For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God,” &c. The object here is to exhibit, in detail, the needful traits of the ministerial character. And who the ministers referred to *are*, the context clearly shows. The apostle is giving directions in respect to the ordination of “elders.”—“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," &c., verse 5. These elders, he insists, shall possess certain moral qualifications; and the reason assigned is, that a *bishop* must be "blameless," &c.—which brings us back to the position, that a bishop and an elder, in the language of the New Testament, are identical. They are one in office; and the different names are taken, from the different aspects in which that office may be contemplated.

The *fifth*, and only remaining passage, in which the word bishop is found, is I. Peter ii. 25. "For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls." But, as the name is applied, in this instance, to *Christ*, and not to the incumbent of any office among men, it cannot be regarded as having any bearing upon the results of the present inquiry.

It is plain, then, from this reference to the scriptural applications of the name, that the bishop of New Testament times was not a bishop, in the *prelatical* sense. He occupied no superior place, as compared with other ministers, in the exercise of government and discipline, but was himself a presbyter, brought into immediate connection with an individual church, as its spiritual instructor and guide. On this point, however, we do

not dwell, because the position we have taken in relation to it is not, now, denied. There *have been* writers on episcopacy who have denied it; but their day is past. The truth has finally prevailed, and it stands confessed, that, according to scriptural usage, a bishop and a presbyter are the same. Dr. Bowden says, in reference to this usage, “that presbyters were called bishops, I readily grant.” And Bishop Onderdonk, in his *Episcopacy tested by Scripture*, has the following language—“The *name* ‘bishop,’ which now designates the highest grade of the ministry, is not appropriated to that office in scripture. That name is there given to the middle order, or presbyters; and all that we read in the New Testament concerning ‘bishops’—including, of course the words, overseers, and oversight, which have the same derivation—is to be regarded as pertaining to that middle grade.”

Having reached this conclusion, we advance a step, and press the inquiry—If there is no prelatical bishop to be found in the name “bishop,” as used in scripture, under *what other* name shall we find him? Shall we say, that his character and office are designated by the word APOSTLE? His claims to a share in the apostolical *office*, will be considered hereafter. At present, we are concerned with the name, only. And we challenge

the advocates of the system we are opposing, to produce any one respect in which the name, in this application of it, would be appropriate. Is there a bishop of any diocese, in this or any other country, who would be willing to assume it? And, if he were to assume it, would any thing more be wanting to expose him to a degree of ridicule from which he could never recover? THE APOSTLE OF NEW-YORK! THE APOSTLE OF NEW-JERSEY! Would not the bare announcement of the title carry with it, to the public ear, a sufficient exposure of its arrogance and absurdity?

Remember, moreover, that prelatists themselves being judges, the name "apostle" was given by Him who conferred it, not to the *first* order in the ministry, but to the *second*. We have already seen, that according to their views of the hierarchy, as existing in the time of Christ, the *superior* office was filled by Christ himself, while the apostles belonged to the next *inferior*. It was while they occupied this inferior position that they were called "apostles"—"the twelve whom he *named* apostles." This was the appellation assigned to them by their Bishop, who was above them in rank and station. He belonged to the *upper*, and they to the *middle* grade. And from this, it follows, that prelates have no more right to the name "apostle," than to the name "bishop."

On their own principles, it was given in scripture to an order *below* that to which they belong; or, in other words, if the name “apostle,” as originally given and used in scripture, is the appropriate name of an *order* in the ministry, it must, according to this system, be the order of *priests*, and not the order of *bishops*.

Failing, then, to find a name for a prelatical bishop, either in the word “bishop,” or the word “apostle,” the question returns—What shall we call him? If there is a name for him in the Bible, what is it? Shall we call him a “prophet”? or shall we style him an “evangelist”? or shall we give him the appellation of a “pastor” or “teacher”? or shall we look for him in any of the “helps” or “governments,” which are referred to as connected with the primitive church? None of these names would be appropriate—there is not one in the entire list which would answer. And so strongly does this circumstance press upon the minds of candid prelatical writers, that we begin to hear it confessed, in high places, that the fact is as we have stated it—that there is *no name*, in scripture, for a minister of the *superior* grade in the episcopal scheme. Hear Bishop Onderdonk on this point; and then say, whether I do not tell you the truth. He says,—“when we find in the New Testament the name “bishop,”

we must regard it as meaning the bishop of a parish, or a presbyter ; but the bishop of a diocese, or the highest grade of the ministry, we must there seek, *not* under that name, and INDEPENDENTLY OF ANY NAME AT ALL.”\*

Here, then, we arrive at an important point—let us look around, for a moment, and see how the case now stands. If prelacy is taught in scripture, we have come to a most remarkable phenomenon! The church of Christ—the most important society on earth—is established in connection with proper officers, and with proper rules for its government. The officers named, are “bishops,” or “presbyters,” and “deacons.” These names occur frequently, and we read of no others. And yet we are soberly called upon, and expected to believe, that there is another officer, who is NAMELESS,—more important than either—essential to *the being* of a church—“not merely an order in her organization, but *the principle of her continuance*”—whose authority none can decline, without being guilty of rebellion and schism—who alone “can unite us to the Father, in the way of Christ’s appointment”—and whose administration we cannot renounce, “*excepting at the peril of our salvation*”!!! Is this credible? Has any thing like it ever occurred in the

\* Episcopacy Examined, p. 13.

organization of any associated body of men? Is it consistent with what is most obviously demanded, by the nature and circumstances of the case? "That official titles," says Dr. Mason, "should be conferred upon every grade of officers in the church except the highest; that this officer should have no place in the official catalogue; that he should wander up and down among the churches without so much as a name"—"so far surpasses all the powers of belief, that the proof of his existence is almost, if not altogether, impossible."

The conclusion, then, to which we are urged by this reasoning, is, that no such person as a prelatial bishop was known to the minds of inspired men, when the New Testament was written. If he had occupied as wide a place in the field of their mental vision, as he does in that of the advocates of prelacy now, beyond a doubt they would have said *something* concerning him—they would at least have given him *a name*. But the truth is, that they knew nothing of him, or his office, as existing by divine authority, and therefore they have left him *without* a name. This omission, *uninspired* men have undertaken to supply—they have *found* a name for the upper grade of the hierarchy which has come into existence since—and they have done it, no otherwise, than by *an act of usurpation*. They have seized up-

on one of the names of the scriptural presbyter—robbed it of its original meaning—and made it signify something, which, by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, it was never intended to express. A BISHOP, by *human* authority, is a prelate—A BISHOP, by *divine* authority, is a parochial pastor.

At this point, I propose to relieve your attention, for the present. But, before closing, allow me to remind you, in this as the proper place—that, *when non-episcopal denominations call their parochial ministers BISHOPS, they are guilty of no perversion, or misapplication, of the name.* On the other hand, they are using it in its original and authorized sense. It means, in scripture, the overseer of a particular flock; and it never means any thing else, excepting in the one case in which it is applied to Christ. This is granted, by the advocates, as well as by the opponents, of episcopacy. They all acknowledge, that the application of the name to a higher order than that of presbyters, was begun after the inspired writers had finished their work. “It was *after the apostolic age,*” says Bishop Onderdonk, “that the name ‘bishop’ was taken from the second order and appropriated to the first.” The usurpers in this case, therefore, are not those who call themselves bishops, according to the system of presbyterian parity, but they are the prelatical or



diocesan bishops, who claim for themselves what the sacred writers never intended that this name should import. Yet the title is borne by the latter, with the most undisturbed and serene self-complacency,—as if there could be no doubt in regard to its authority and fitness—while its assumption by the former provokes, upon the countenances of many, a smile of incredulity bordering on derision.

So much for the influence of usages, which are contrary to scripture, even upon the minds of those who have the scriptures in their possession. No man ever read the word “bishop,” on the pages of the Bible, as signifying any thing higher than a presbyter. And yet the sound of its application to such an individual now, falls upon the public ear as something which is strange, unauthorized, and even presumptuous. For names, in themselves considered, it is not worth while to contend; but it often happens, in the progress of human affairs, that names become *things*. And, therefore, it is of some importance to adhere to the *phraseology* of the scriptures, as a means of preserving unimpaired the system of faith and duty which they were intended to reveal.

## DISCOURSE III.



THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED—PRELITICAL BISHOPS NOT KNOWN IN SCRIPTURE, BY CHARACTER, AND OFFICE—ARE NOT SUCCESSORS TO THE APOSTLES.

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ACTS xvii. 11. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether these things were so.

THE value of this passage to us, in our present position, consists in this—that, by divine authority, it pronounces a commendation upon those, who adhere exclusively to the scriptures as the rule of their faith. The persons to whom it refers, were attending upon the instructions of no less an individual than the apostle Paul. He had come to Berea, in the prosecution of a missionary journey, in company with Silas; and, entering into the synagogue of the Jews, according to his custom, he preached the messiahship and mission of Jesus to the children of Abraham. Contrary to his experience, in most other places, he was

heard, not only with respectful attention, but with deep interest. The views of truth which he presented, struck the minds of the Jews as plausible in a high degree; and how these views were finally disposed of, it is the object of the text to inform us. They did not receive his teaching, merely because it was plausible in itself, or on account of the channel through which it was conveyed; but they brought it to the test of their inspired writings. They “searched the scriptures, daily,” with a view of ascertaining how far the preaching of the Apostle coincided with the instructions of Moses and the Prophets—determined to receive so much of his teaching, as would stand the test of this rule of faith, and no more. And, in view of their course in this respect, they have been set up on the page of sacred history, as “a lamp” to the “feet” and “a light” to the “path” of all the succeeding generations of men.

It is on the platform of this example, that we take our stand in the present discussion. We are willing to be tried by the word of God, and to stand, or fall, according to the verdict which it renders. Point us to any place in THE SCRIPTURES, where prelacy is represented as an essential element in the constitution of the christian church, and we yield at once. But tell us not of fathers and councils, of tradition and of church authority,

of apostolical bishops and lines of succession, until we have found something, in this one and *only rule of our faith*, which will serve as a basis on which the system may rest. "To the law and to the testimony," we again say; "if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

Adhering to this principle, we proceed in our endeavor to show, that "*there is no such functionary, known to the New Testament at all, as a PRELITICAL BISHOP.*" We have seen, that no traces of his character and office are to be discovered in the *evangelical history*; and that *no name* for him is to be found, in the lists of official titles which occur, either in the Acts of the Apostles, or in any of the Epistles. The incidents recorded in these subsequent parts of the New Testament, occurred while the primitive churches were in their forming state; and frequent reference is had, not only to "the saints" in their associated state, but also to their spiritual helps and rulers. We read of "pastors," "teachers," "elders," "bishops," "deacons," &c.—but, among them all, there is no name for a prelate. So that we must seek him there, as one of his staunchest advocates has said, "INDEPENDENTLY OF ANY NAME AT ALL."

This, to our minds, is perfectly conclusive as to the fact, that no such superior officer exists in

connection with the church, by divine authority. For who, that has not a favorite system to support by such an assumption, can believe, that the Great Head of the church would have left the most important official character in all his household without an appropriate appellation, by which he might be known distinctly, and unchangeably, till the end of time? Who ever heard of a government, either great or small, established, with such an omission as this? A greater omission, it would not have been, if the framers of the Constitution of the United States had finished their work, without giving a name to the Chief Magistrate of the Union! They might have given titles to all the inferior officers, and heads of department—assigning to each his appropriate sphere, and specifying his particular duties—and then have separated, without fixing upon any title for *him*, who was to exercise a controlling influence over them all; and not have committed a greater absurdity than the sacred writers have committed, if a prelate is to be sought for in their acts and instructions independently of a name.

But we are here met by the plea, on the part of the advocates of prelacy, that *names* are nothing—“we are inquiring for *the thing*—*the name* is not worth a line of controversy.” We beg leave, however, to remind those who urge this

plea, that *things* so important as a prelatical Bishop is supposed to be, are not generally to be found *without* names. In our world, there are names for all things that have a real existence, so far as they come within the sphere of our knowledge. We have an appellation at hand for every object and being, both in the natural and moral world, to which we sustain any relation. And, for this reason, where there are *no names*, either good, bad, or indifferent, we generally conclude there are *no things*.

Dismissing the matter of the name, however, we now inquire, whether "THE THING" is to be found in scripture, *without* a name? And, on this part of the subject, the ground which we must occupy, is marked out for us—we must go where the friends of prelacy lead us—we must accompany them to those parts of scripture, which they regard as forming the strong holds of their own system—and see whether the bishop of their superior order is really to be found, in those places in which they profess to discover the traces of his character and office.

Their *first* position, is, that the rank and office of their prelates is to be found in the rank and office of THE APOSTLES. And, as this is a main point, in its relations to the whole discussion, we solicit your patient attention, while we examine it somewhat in detail.

The first thing to be observed in regard to it, is, that it furnishes a striking specimen of the manner in which prelacy shifts its ground, and even contradicts itself, as new emergencies and difficulties arise. We have already seen, that the advocates of this system, in order to make out a *triple order* in the ministry from the beginning, find it necessary to place the apostles in the *second* order, assigning the *first* order to the Saviour himself. This, according to their views, was the state of things, when the apostolic office was created, and characterized by its appropriate name. But now, when the object is to find the character and office of a prelatical bishop in particular, the apostles are brought before us, with their rank and character entirely altered—they are no longer in the *second* order of the ministry, but belong to the *first*! This unceremonious change in their position is, no doubt, very convenient. But the candid inquirer after truth, will be likely to ask for the authority on which it is made. If an apostle, by the call and appointment of Christ, was one who belonged to the *middle* grade in the ministry, then it is impossible that, by the same authority, and without any transmutation either of name, or of office, he can belong to the *superior* grade. And if, to cover the ground of this absurdity, it should be said, that the apostles were

*transferred*, after their first vocation, from the *second* grade to the *first*, we inquire—*when* were they transferred? *Who* transferred them? And in what *manner* was the transfer made? If these questions can be answered, by pointing us to any record or notice of the change, we shall be satisfied. But this has not been done, and it never can be. It is easy to say, that, before the ascension of Christ, they received a new commission—conferring upon them new power, and elevating them to a higher office—but we want *the proof*, and not the naked assertion. There is no record, either of the fact itself, or of any thing, from which it can be fairly inferred.

Besides, if the apostles ever were transferred or ordained from a *second* order in the ministry to a *superior* one, where would be the propriety of still calling them by the same *name*? Does not a change of name follow a change of rank, and office, by a necessary consequence? In the prelatical system, is a *deacon* still called a deacon, after he becomes a *priest*; and a *priest* still called a priest, after he becomes a *bishop*? And if not, why should an apostle—if this was his proper title, when he belonged to the *second* order—be still called an apostle, after he has entered upon the *first* order? Such are the strange incon-



sistencies, to which it is necessary to resort, in supporting this unscriptural and proofless scheme.

Nevertheless, it is still asserted and attempted to be proved, that the apostles *were* the highest of three grades in the ministry, and that modern prelatial bishops are their successors *in office*. “The real ground of our authority,” say the Tract writers, “is our *apostolical descent*”—“our bishops *are successors of the apostles.*” Bishop Onderdonk speaks of “the bishops, who *succeed the apostles.*” And to these, I shall add a somewhat extended passage, from Dr. Hicks on the Dignity of the Episcopal Order—which will not only exhibit the position taken, on this point, by the advocates of high-church episcopacy, but also illustrate *the spirit*, which this lofty claim is adapted to engender—“Bishops are appointed *to succeed the Apostles*; and, like them, to stand in Christ’s place, and exercise his kingly, priestly, and prophetic office over their flocks. Can you, when you consider this, think it novel, or improper, or uncouth, to call them spiritual *princes*, and their dioceses *principalities*, when they have every thing in their office which can denominate a prince? For what is a prince, but a chief ruler of a society, that hath authority over the rest, to make laws for it, to *challenge the obedience* of all the members, and all ranks of men in it, and

power *to coerce* them, if they will not obey.”—  
“They stand in God’s and Christ’s stead over their flocks, the clergy as well as the people are to be *subject* to them, as to the *vicegerents* of our Lord.”—“The *successors of the apostles*, the bishops, like spiritual *princes*, exercise the same *coercive* authority that they did in inflicting spiritual censures upon their disobedient *subjects*. It would require a volume, to show you the various punishments, with which they corrected their disobedience. They degraded clergymen from their order, and as for the people, they put down those who were in the uppermost class of communion into the station of penitents, and other inferior places; others they forbade to come farther than the church doors, and those whom they did not so degrade, they often suspended from the sacrament. The contumacious, both of the clergy and laity, they punished with excommunication; from which, after very long and very severe penances, they absolved some; and others, who were enormous, and very frequent lapsers, they would not reconcile to the peace of the church, but in the danger and prospect of death. I need not tell you how much the ancient christians stood in awe of the APOSTOLIC ROD *in the hands of their bishops*, especially of excommunication, which they looked upon as the spiritual ax and sword to the soul,

and thought more terrible than death.”\* Here is the true genius and tendency of the system! The fruit is in keeping with the nature of the tree! Establish the fact, in regard to any individual, that he is a veritable successor of the great apostles, and what degrees of prerogative and power, in spiritual things, may he not be expected to claim? You have put him on a level immeasurably above that which is occupied by ordinary men; and before his high authority, who should hesitate to bow with humble and unresisting submission?

We proceed, however, to an examination of *the grounds*, on which this enormous claim is supposed to rest.—It is not maintained, of course, that prelatical bishops are like the apostles *in all respects*; because, in this unqualified and naked form, the claim would refute itself. They had prerogatives and powers of certain kinds, which none, since their day, have pretended to exercise. And the first effort of those, who advocate the doctrine of an identity between them and modern bishops is, to set aside, as not essential to the nature of the apostolic office, all those things in respect to which it is clearly impossible that other persons could be supposed to resemble them. The argument is, that the characteristic nature of

\* Quoted by Powell, fr. Lond. ed. 1707, pp. 191, &c.

their *office* is to be learned exclusively from their *commission*; and their whole commission is supposed to be contained in the following words—“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.” Referring to this passage alone, a distinguished defender of the system says—“The authentic voucher of office is the *commission*. To the commission of the apostles, then, we must refer you for the distinctive peculiarities of their office. Whatever is not contained *therein*, either expressly, or by necessary inference, must be considered as not pertaining to the characteristic duties and powers of the apostles.”

Now, if leave were granted to deal with the apostolical office in this way, it is not denied, that some portion of the absurdity, which must otherwise attach to the claim in question, might be avoided. Allow an individual to construct a pattern to suit himself, and he may have no difficulty in producing a likeness between one thing and another. But where is the authority for disposing of the apostolical character, and office, in this way? We grant, if you please, that “the authentic voucher of office is the *commission*”; but the

question arises here—Does the passage above referred to contain the *only* commission which was given to the apostles; or their commission, in such a sense, as to exclude *every thing else* which was said to them, in the way of indicating their powers and duties? Here lies a fallacy, to which, it is important, your attention should be directed. The word “*commission*” is not a scriptural word, in this relation; and, in its technical sense, has no application to this subject at all. The same thing may be said of the word “*office*.” In their unrestricted or popular meaning, there can be no objection to the use of either. But, if we insist upon confining the former to any one item of the Saviour’s directions to his apostles, as distinguished from others; and the latter, to any particular portion of the duties, or services, which he called them to perform, we take liberties with the sacred record which are unauthorised and unfair. Let the word “*commission*” be understood so as to cover *all* the declarations of Christ as to what his apostles were to do, *wherever* they are found; and the word “*office*,” so as to include all the duties and services which, as his messengers, they were expected to perform: and then we shall be in no danger of going astray.

And is not this rule of interpretation obviously and undeniably just? Who has a right to single

out *one* passage, from the multitude that bear on the prerogatives and powers of the Apostles, and dignify *it* with the name of their "commission," to the exclusion of all others? If any distinction is allowed, here, it should rather be in favor of what was said, when they were *first appointed*. Surely, the time of their *ordination* was the proper time, for announcing the nature of the office *to which* they were ordained. And yet, if we admit this, we are compelled to allow, that some important things are included in their office, which are not referred to, in the language uttered by the Saviour immediately before his ascension. The record states, that "He *ordained* twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach, and to have power to *heal sicknesses* and to *cast out devils*." According to this, to heal sicknesses, and cast out devils, were things which they were expressly ordained to do; and, if they were *ordained* to do them, were they not *commissioned* to do them; and, if they were commissioned to do them, were they not things which formed a part of their *office*? To acknowledge this, would be fatal to the succession scheme; because these are prerogatives, in reference to which, no likeness *could* exist between the apostles, and any successors. And hence the

effort to restrict their commission and office to such limits, as may suit the emergency.

In farther investigating the apostleship of prelati- cal bishops, then, we shall proceed, *without* restriction, to set before you the various things appertaining to their character and calling, as they are referred to in the New Testament history; and shall show you, in relation to each in its turn, that, in the nature of the case, they can have no successors.

Bear in mind, as we enter upon this investigation, that the word "apostle" signifies *a messenger*, or one who *is sent*. This is its general meaning; and, as applied to "*the twelve*," it is restricted by the expression, "the apostles of *Christ*." With this restriction, it is never applied to any others. Any one who *is sent*, may be properly denominated an "apostle," without regard either to *the errand* on which he is sent, or *the person* who sends him. But an *apostle of Christ*, is one who derives his character from the fact, that he is sent by *Christ himself*, or that Christ is *the person* who calls him to the service, which he is directed to perform.

We commence, then, by remarking, that no one can be an apostle of Christ, who has not received AN IMMEDIATE AND PERSONAL CALL FROM CHRIST HIMSELF. This was the actual fact, in re-

gard to every individual who belonged to the apostolical college. There was no intervention of any human, or angelic, agency in the matter—no ordination by the imposition of hands—no rising through inferior grades by the performance of any visible ceremony. The whole truth is stated by Paul, when he calls himself “an apostle, not of men neither *by* man, but *by Jesus Christ.*” This carries us back to the account of the transaction, as related by himself. Acts xxvi. He was on his way from Jerusalem to Damascus, in the character of a persecutor. A light shone around him, at mid-day, above the brightness of the sun. And he heard a voice speaking to him—which was none other than the voice of Jesus whom he was persecuting—and saying, “I have *appeared* unto thee *for this purpose*, to make thee a minister, and a witness, both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now *I send* (ἀποστειλλω) *thee.*” Here is a distinct recognition of the fact, that he was made an apostle by Christ, and that this was the one purpose for which Christ appeared to him in this extraordinary manner. Without this, he might have been an apostle of *some other* individual, but he could not have been an apostle *of Christ.*—Similar to



this, as to the source from which it came, was the vocation of all the rest. Christ appeared to them in person—spake to them with his own voice, and said, “Come, follow me. And they arose, left all, and followed him.”

Here, then, we find, in the outset, a wide and irreconcilable difference between the apostles of Christ, and the superior order in the episcopacy of modern times. The mode of introduction to their work is not, and never can be, the same, unless the age of miracles should return. The former were called by Christ *in person*, and were raised to their station *immediately*; but nothing of this occurs in the appointment of prelatial bishops. They have never heard the voice of Christ, designating them to their office; nor would such a designation be consistent with the indispensable requirements of their system. No proceeding could be more fundamentally uncannonical, than to appoint and consecrate as Bishop, one who had not been previously both a Deacon, and a Priest. And therefore, there is not only the want of a perfect likeness, here, to the mode of constituting the apostleship, but a dissimilarity which extends to the most important and essential feature.

The next thing we notice, as characterising the apostles of Christ, is, that they RECEIVED THEIR

INSTRUCTIONS DIRECTLY FROM HIM, and were thereby qualified to speak with a degree of *authority*, to which no other teachers could lay a reasonable claim. Paul, in referring to the source from which he derived his knowledge of the gospel, says—"I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by *the revelation of Jesus Christ.*" And this was equally true of those who were in the office before him. What *he* received in a more miraculous way, after the Saviour's ascension, *they* had learned from their personal intercourse with him during his ministry upon earth. They were called to be "*with him,*" before he "sent them forth to preach"; and this implied, that he was to be their instructor immediately and personally. They were hence called emphatically "*his disciples*"—learners in his school—persons whom he had undertaken to teach, with a view of qualifying them for the work on which they were to enter, after his departure. And this was the circumstance which prepared them to speak with so much confidence, in delivering the truth to their fellow men. "*We have seen,*" says the apostle John, "and *do testify*, that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." None others had been furnished with their opportunities of *knowing* the truth, and therefore none could bear witness to it, with that

air of assurance with which they were entitled to speak.

And this presents another peculiarity, in respect to which no likeness can be found to the character and calling of modern bishops. They have no means of access to the mind of Christ, which are not free to all who possess the scriptures. The days of personal intercourse between men and the Great Teacher are past.—He has taken his departure from the earth—and the heavens have received Him, “until the times of the restitution of all things.”

As in keeping with the source from which they derived their *instructions*, the apostles of Christ WERE INFALLIBLE AS PUBLIC TEACHERS. They were sure that what they communicated, in this capacity, was the truth of God; and therefore they had no hesitation in saying, in regard to the person who should preach “any other gospel” than that which they preached—though he should be “an angel from heaven”—“let him be *accursed*.” If they had been liable to the errors into which ordinary men are prone to fall, they would have lacked the necessary qualification for an essential part of their work. They were appointed to act “in *Christ’s* stead”—to carry out what he had begun, in reference to the establishment of his church in the world—to deliver to mankind such views of

truth as were to be the rule of faith and practice till the end of time—or, in other words, to make such additions to the Saviour's personal teaching as were needful to complete the volume of that "scripture," which was to be appealed to forever, as "given by inspiration of God." This was a leading design of their calling—they were the messengers, or missionaries, of Christ for this purpose—and, failing in this, they would not have answered, either to their name, or to the end of their appointment.

How, then, can any be regarded as their successors in office, who are neither called to the same work, nor possess the essential qualification for its performance. If modern bishops would establish their claim to an identity with them, let them produce the proof of their infallibility as teachers, and show that their instructions are entitled to be regarded as the word of God to all the generations of men. Nothing short of this can suffice, because nothing below this would fill the place which was occupied by the apostles of Christ.

Another thing, which the Apostles were "ordained" to do—and which must therefore have been a part of their office—was TO WORK MIRACLES; or, as expressed in the language used at the time of their appointment, "*to heal sicknesses*

*and to cast out devils."* An office, embracing this prerogative, was all important to the first establishment of the gospel. Miracles were needed to prove, that its teachers were divinely sent. They were visible evidences of the presence and approbation of God; and, as furnishing proof that no one unattended by such evidence could be properly regarded as a true apostle, we find Paul referring expressly to his *miraculous works*, as the *signs* of his apostleship. To the Corinthians he says—"Truly the *signs* of an apostle were wrought among you, in all patience, in *signs*, and *wonders*, and *mighty deeds*." Those, therefore, who claim a share in his office, are bound, in all consistency, to produce the same signs. Let them do this, and their claim will not be rejected; but, failing to produce the signs, there surely can be no cause of complaint, if *the thing signified* should not be awarded upon the mere ground of their unsupported pretensions.

It is no answer to this, to say that miraculous powers were *not peculiar* to the Apostles, but were possessed and exercised by others, as Stephen and Phillip, to whom the name "apostle" was not given. This may be admitted, without at all affecting our argument. The question is not, whether such powers belonged to the Apostles *alone*, but whether an individual, who did *not*

possess them, *could be* an apostle? Our position is, that they were *inseparably connected* with the office; and that none, who could not appeal to them, in proof of their mission, had any reason to expect, that they would be received as apostles of Christ. This, it is presumed, will not be denied. And we therefore insist upon it, as fair and scriptural, that, if prelatival bishops are unendowed with miraculous power, the conclusion is inevitable, that they have not succeeded to the apostolical office.

In connection with miraculous power, as put forth by themselves, they had also the prerogative of conferring these powers *upon others*. Paul laid his hands on certain disciples at Corinth; and, receiving the Holy Ghost, they “spake with tongues and prophesied.” And Peter and John are represented, as having done the same, in the case of those who received the word of God in Samaria.—To this endowment, modern bishops can make no pretensions; and this interposes another line of dissimilarity between their office, and that of the Apostles.

Advancing another step, we find it to be a prominent feature of the apostolical office, that those who bore it were to be WITNESSES OF THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST. This is declared, expressly, to have been the purpose for which they

were “chosen of God.” And there is no other end of their appointment so frequently and emphatically referred to. “Him,” says the Apostle Peter, “God raised up the third day and showed him openly; not to *all* the people, but unto *witnesses chosen before of God*, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead.” Nothing could be more explicit than this. And, after reading this passage, we may well be surprised, that the ground should ever have been taken, that, to bear witness to the resurrection of Christ, is no part of *the office* to which the Apostles were called.

That the Apostles *themselves* understood this to be the *main* thing to which they were set apart, is sufficiently evident from the language of Peter at the election of Matthias. He spoke, on that occasion, of the apostacy and death of Judas, who had been one of their number; and of the propriety of filling the vacancy, by the choice of another. It was a fit occasion for showing *who were eligible* to the office, as well as for pointing out the true *nature* and *design* of the office itself. And, in reference to these points, his words are these—“Wherefore, of these men which have *companied with us*, all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he

was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be *a witness WITH US of his RESURRECTION.*” This is the same as to say—‘*we* have been ordained, to be witnesses of the resurrection of Christ—*another* must now be ordained to this office, in the room of Judas—and none are *qualified*, but those who companied with us, while Christ was among us.’ The clear import of this, in connection with the former passage, is, that the apostles of Christ were chosen to be “*with him*” while he lived, and to “*eat and drink with him* after he rose from the dead,” that, after his ascension, they might go forth into all the world, and testify, from their *personal knowledge*, that he had risen from the dead.

That this is the true interpretation, is farther evident, from the circumstances attending the calling of the Apostle Paul. He had not “*companied*” with those who had been the companions of Christ, either during his life, or between the events of his resurrection and ascension; and, of course, in the ordinary way, he could not be a witness, from *personal* observation, to the fact that he *had* risen. To supply what was wanting, in this respect, therefore, *a miracle* must be wrought. He must SEE the risen Jesus with his own eyes, and receive instruction from him directly, before he could be an apostle. And, to



this end, the ascended Saviour appeared to him in the natural heaven, surrounded by a supernatural light—spake to him in an audible voice—arrested him in his persecuting career—and turned his attention and affections to the new work to which he was called. From that time he was qualified to bear a part in the apostolical work: because, as he himself expresses it, in reporting the words of Ananias, he had been permitted to “SEE that Just One,” and “hear the voice of his mouth.” He could now go abroad with the other apostles, and preach the resurrection of Jesus, as a truth established by the testimony of his own senses. And, accordingly, in referring to this qualification afterwards, he says—“Am I not *an apostle*? Have I not SEEN Jesus Christ our Lord”?

As in keeping with this view of the subject, it appears, from the record of the subsequent labors of these men, that *the resurrection of Jesus* was their prominent theme—“This JESUS hath God raised up, whereof we are *witnesses*”—“And we are *witnesses* of these things”—“If Christ be not *risen*, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea and we are found *false witnesses* of God; because *we have testified* of God that he raised up Christ.” This great truth is the keystone in the arch of the christian system; and it

was needful, that credible and well qualified witnesses should be brought to support it. For this purpose the apostles of Christ were chosen—to this work they were “ordained”—and, in reference to it, they could say, what could not be said by others: “that which we have SEEN, and HEARD, declare we unto you.”

Need I remind you, that, in respect to this part of their work, they could have no successors; and therefore, that the claim of prelatical bishops to the inheritance of their office, must be set aside, here also, as visionary and baseless? If they *are* in the same office, they are surely entitled to challenge the attention of mankind to the fact in the same *way*; and this would represent them as saying—‘Are we not apostles? Have we not *seen* Jesus Christ our Lord? We have *testified* of God that he *raised up Christ*!’ But, as none would venture upon the use of such language, neither should any pretend that they are successors in office to the individual, by whom it was uttered.

The only remaining fact, appertaining to the office of the apostles of Christ, to which I refer you, in this connection, is, that THEIR NUMBER WAS DEFINITE AND SPECIFIED—there were only TWELVE—and this number was not to be increased. “Jesus said, have I not chosen you *twelve*”? And the *word* “twelve” was the name by which

they were constantly known. In the absence of other proof, it might, indeed, be admitted as probable, that this name was intended only to mark their number during the ministry of Christ. But there are other passages which clearly show, that this limitation of its meaning is not to be allowed. In Matthew xix. 28, it is thus recorded—"And Jesus said unto them, verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon *twelve thrones*, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." Now, it matters but little, what these "thrones," and this "judging," may be supposed to describe. It is clear enough, in any event, that the scene is laid at the end of the world; and, while these words refer to some distinction which is to be conferred upon the apostles of Christ, the whole passage proceeds upon the assumption, that their number *then*, as it was in the beginning, will be only "*twelve*." There will still be a correspondence, in this respect, between them, and the "twelve tribes of Israel"; and therefore "twelve thrones" will be sufficient for their accommodation.—Of the same tenor is the passage which occurs in the description of the New Jerusalem, Rev. xxi. 14. "And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of *the TWELVE apostles of*

*the Lamb.*” Here we are transported, not only to the end of time, but to the visions of eternity. “The first heaven, and the first earth,” have passed away, and there is “no more sea”—“the tabernacle of God is with men,” and he dwells “among them”—“the great city, the holy Jerusalem,” has descended “out of heaven from God”—and “the nations of them which are saved walk in the light of it”: and still the number of the apostles is only *twelve*. This was their number at first, and it will not be extended, either by the events of time, or in the records of eternity.

It is no objection to this view of the subject to say, that the word “apostle” is actually applied, in the New Testament, to *several* persons *in addition* to the original “twelve.” In its unrestricted sense, as signifying in general *a messenger*, we acknowledge this to be true. Any one who goes on an errand of any description, at the bidding of another, may be called an apostle, because he is one who *is sent*. In this unofficial sense, it is applied to Epaphroditus: he is called the “messenger” (*αποστολον*) of the church at Phillippi, because he was sent by them, as the bearer of what they had collected for the use of Paul, while he was in bonds at Rome. Phil. ii. 25, and iv. 18.—This is the sense in which it is applied to *Christ*, when he is called “*the Apostle, and High Priest of our*

profession." It designates him, in general, as *the sent of God*—as the *Messenger* of Jehovah to the inhabitants of our world.—In the same sense, it is applied to Barnabas, who was "*sent*" on a special mission in company with Paul.—But, in its restricted and official sense, it is never applied to any but "the twelve." They alone are called "THE apostles"—"the apostles OF CHRIST," and "the apostles OF THE LAMB," to distinguish them from all inferior messengers who are, or may be, sent by others. There are *two* cases, indeed, in reference to which the attempt is made to show, that these phrases *do* include others. The *first* is in Rom. xvi. 7, where Paul says—"Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, *who are of note among the Apostles.*" But this obviously means, not that these persons were numbered *with* the apostles, but only that they were held in high estimation *by* the apostles. The *second* is in the first Epistle to the Thessalonians. In chap. i. 1, Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus are represented as uniting in the salutation to the Thessalonian church. And, in chap. ii. 6, the following language occurs—"Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome as *the apostles of Christ.*" Here, it is said, that the word "*we*" includes *all* the persons who are mentioned in the salutation,

and that, speaking *conjointly*, they call themselves *the apostles of Christ*. But the answer to this is, that, in this, as in all his other epistles, the Apostle, in speaking of himself, uses sometimes the plural "*we*," and sometimes the singular "*I*,"—changing, not unfrequently, in the same passage, from one to the other. Take an instance, from chap. ii. 18, "Wherefore **WE** would have come unto you, even **I PAUL** once and again; but Satan hindered **us**." Another may be found in chap. iv. 13—15. He also says, chap. v. 1, 23, 27, "*I* write unto you"—"*I* charge you," &c.; from all which it is undeniably evident, that the epistle was *not a joint* communication, but as exclusively the letter of Paul, as any he ever wrote. When he uses the plural "**WE**," therefore, in reference to "*the apostles of Christ*," the fair interpretation is, that he speaks of *himself*, as one of their number; and that his object, in the passage referred to, is to state what he might have done, if he had been so disposed, upon the ground that he *was* an apostle, or *in virtue of* the apostolic office, with which he and his associates were invested.

We believe it then, to be a position which cannot be assailed with success,—that none are called indefinitely "**THE** apostles," "*the apostles of CHRIST*," or "*the apostles of THE LAMB*," except-

ing "*the twelve*," who were ordained to their work immediately and personally by Christ himself.

In taking this ground, however, we are not unmindful, that a difficulty may seem to present itself, growing out of the case of PAUL *himself*. In him, it may be said, we actually find A THIRTEENTH *apostle*; since the place, vacated by the apostacy of Judas, was filled by the election of *Matthias*, before he was converted. This involves the disputed question whether *Matthias* ever *was* numbered among "the twelve," by divine direction? The negative of this question is maintained by respectable names; and the more we reflect upon the *circumstances* attending his election, the more we incline to the belief, that this is the side on which the truth lies. Dr. M'Night expresses his opinion, without any reference to the general subject we are now discussing, in the following language,—“ One of the apostles, *Judas* by name, having fallen from his office by transgression, the *eleven* judged it necessary to supply his place; and, for that purpose, chose *Matthias* by lot. In this, however, they acted not by the direction of the Holy Ghost, for he was not yet given to them, but merely by the dictates of human prudence, which, on that occasion seem to have carried them too far. No man, nor body of men whatever,

could, by *their designation*, confer an office whose authority bound the consciences of all men, and whose duties could not be performed without the gifts of inspiration and miracles. To *ordain an apostle* belonged to Christ alone, who, with the appointment, could also give the supernatural powers necessary to the function. Some time, therefore, after the election of Matthias, Jesus himself seems to have superceded it, by appointing another to be his apostle and witness in the place of Judas.”\*

These views are certainly too natural, and address themselves too strongly to the understanding of the unbiased reader, to be treated lightly. And, in enlarging upon them, I ask your candid attention to the following considerations.

1. *The interval of TIME*, during which this transaction occurred. It was the period between the ascension of Christ, and the descent of the Spirit. And the *manner* in which the apostles were to spend this period, they were not left to determine for themselves. They had received directions on this subject from their ascending Master. And what *were* those directions? Not that they should go forward, *at once*, to any part of the work to which they were called; but that they should “WAIT”—“WAIT *for* THE PROMISE OF

\* Work on the Epistles, vol. i. p. 50.



THE FATHER"—remain in quiet and prayerful expectation of the coming of the Holy Ghost, who was to "GUIDE" them "into all truth," and indue them with the qualifications necessary for their official duties. But, *instead* of waiting, *Peter*, with a precipitation characteristic of himself, proposed the measure, which was carried out under his direction, and which resulted in numbering Matthias with the eleven apostles.

2. *The PERSONS who were the active agents* in this transaction. It is common to speak of it as a thing done by *the apostles*. But nothing could be farther from the truth, as stated in the record. *Peter himself*, is the only apostle mentioned: the others *might* have been present, and perhaps were; but there is no allusion made to them by the historian, and therefore no proof that they concurred in the election, either actively, or by an expression of their assent. Supposing, however, that they *did* co-operate, it is in vain to say, that *they were the persons* who chose Matthias, or who appointed the "*two*" from whom the choice was made. The narration states, that "Peter rose up in the midst of the disciples," and that "the number of the names together were about an hundred and twenty"—that "THEY appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas," &c.—that "THEY prayed," &c.—and that "THEY gave forth their lots."

The thing therefore was *not* done by the apostles ; but by a promiscuous assemblage of disciples sufficient to outnumber them ten times, and of course to control the result. And does it seem consistent to suppose, that such a congregation had the right, by divine authority, of controlling the appointment of an apostle of Christ ?

3. *The MANNER in which the thing was done.* The propriety of the measure was suggested by Peter, not as the result of any special revelation, but as *an inference*, drawn by him from a passage in the book of Psalms, considered it its application to the case of Judas ;—“It is written,” he says, “in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein ; and his bishoprick let another take.” “This scripture,” he alleges, “must needs have been fulfilled” ; and his proposition was, to proceed to its fulfillment at once. Now the question is,—was Peter, at this time, an *inspired* man ; and was his conclusion therefore infallible, that this was the proper occasion, and that the one hundred and twenty disciples present were the proper persons, to carry out the prediction in the Psalms, by filling the vacancy occasioned by the death of Judas ? “The *Spirit*,” let it be remembered, “was *not yet given*.” Nothing had yet occurred, to render Peter a different man from what he was,

when he committed the mistakes, which are recorded of him as occurring on former occasions. But a day or two previous to this, he had united with the other apostles in asking the Saviour, "Lord, wilt thou, at this time, restore again the kingdom to Israel"? Their notions and hopes respecting a temporal kingdom were still unre-moved. The promised influence, which was to rectify their views, and guide them "into all truth," had not yet come. And, under these circumstances, where is there any proof of a divine sanction upon the results of Peter's reasoning in respect to the appointment of an apostle?

Besides, are there not evident signs of human contrivance, rather than of divine direction, in the *indirect* and *circuitous* manner in which the result was arrived at? There was no concentration of opinion in the minds of the assembly in regard to any particular individual. Peter directed their attention in general to *the class* of persons, who might be regarded as eligible to the office. They then agreed upon "two," between whom, in their opinion, the choice might properly lie. But, unprepared in their own minds to designate either, they finally referred the selection to the Lord himself, by prayer and the casting of lots. The difference between this, and any other recorded appointment to office in the church of

Christ, is so *wide*, that we find it difficult to regard it as occurring under the superintendence and direction of the Spirit of God.

4. *The absence of ANY REFERENCE to Matthias AFTER this*—we never hear of him again. Not that we regard this fact as conclusive of itself; because there are others of whom little or nothing is said. Still, it is worthy of notice, as falling in with the circumstances already mentioned. The course of subsequent events was just what might have been expected, upon the supposition that the place of Judas was still vacant. In a short time, the Spirit was poured out according to the promise. Thus endowed, the Apostles entered upon their work. And when the time came for going beyond Judea, and occupying the territory of the Gentiles, Saul of Tarsus was converted—was called to the apostleship by Jesus Christ himself—and was regarded, from that time, as a member of the original apostolical family.

These are the aspects of the case of Matthias, which present themselves on the face of the record; and which seem to us to point significantly to the conclusion, that his election was unauthorized and invalid.—Nor does the objection appear to us to be of any weight, that this view of the subject has a tendency to impair our confidence in the inspiration of the sacred history. The ob-

ject of history is to record events as they occurred. The record itself is true to the facts in the case; and this is all that we have a right to expect. Examples might be easily produced to show, that things are recorded in scripture, even of good men, which were not as they should be, and which are permitted to pass without any expression of censure. Silence, under such circumstances, cannot be construed into a sign of approbation. We must judge of the *propriety* of the things recorded, in the light of general principles, and by comparing scripture with scripture.

We have dwelt upon this case, thus long, not because it is essential to the integrity of our general argument; but because we think the facts in regard to it are not commonly estimated as they should be. We could afford to admit, that Matthias *was* an apostle, and that the original number “*twelve*” was extended to a *thirteenth* in the person of Paul, and still have points enough remaining, in respect to which there can be no identity between the apostolical office and that of prelatical bishops. The difference is as wide, as between any other things which are opposite in their nature, in all the other enumerated particulars. Modern bishops are neither *called* directly by Christ, as the apostles were—nor *instructed* immediately by him—nor endowed with the pow-

er of *working miracles*—nor clothed with *infallibility* as public teachers—nor appointed to be *eyewitnesses of our Lord's resurrection*—and therefore, whatever else may, or may not be true in regard to them, they *cannot* be their successors in office.

I take leave of this topic, by adverting to the opinions of some of the most eminent advocates of episcopacy, as coinciding with the doctrine we have maintained in the progress of this discussion—that the prelatial office is not to be found in that of the apostles—for the reason, that the apostles have not, and *cannot* have, any successors. Dr. Barrow speaks in the following explicit and decided language,—“The apostolical office, as such, was personal and temporary; and therefore, according to its nature and design, *not successive*, or 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 special 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.*”—“It was requisite, that an apostle should be able *to attest concerning our Lord's resurrection*”—“It was

needful, also, that an apostle should be *endowed with miraculous gifts and graces.*—“In fine, the apostleship was, as St. Chrysostom telleth us, *a business fraught with ten thousand good things; both greater than all privileges of grace, and comprehensive of them.*”—“Now such an office, consisting of so many extraordinary privileges and miraculous powers, which were requisite for 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 containeth in it divers things, which apparently were not communicated, and which NO MAN WITHOUT GROSS IMPOSTURE AND HYPOCRISY COULD CHALLENGE TO HIMSELF.”\* To this may be added the testimony of Dodwell, whose learning as well as zeal in the support of prelacy, has not been surpassed. He says,—“The office of the apostles *perished with the apostles*; in which office, there *never was any succession* to any of them, except to *Judas the traitor.*”† And so clear is this to the mind even of Bellarmine, the great champion of the Papacy, that he asserts without qualification, that “*bishops have no part of the true apostolical authority.*”†

Thus far, then, the attempt to find a divine

\* Works vol. vi. p. 129, &c. † Quoted by Powell, p. 49.

warrant for prelacy, in the apostolical *office*, fails entirely.

There is one important point, however, connected with this part of the subject, which remains to be examined. The advocates of the succession contend, that the apostolical office was exclusively the *ordaining* office—that, while the apostles lived, *they alone* set apart other persons to the ministry—and that, in the exercise of this prerogative, the superior order of the episcopacy *may be*, and *are* their successors. This claim will occupy our attention in the progress of the next discourse; in which, our endeavor will be to show, that the succession scheme clothes the matter of ordination with *a degree of importance* which is not assigned to it in scripture—that such as it is, however, this rite *was* performed by *other* persons than the apostles, even while the apostles lived—and, of course, that no aid can be derived from this source, in support of the high pretensions which this scheme is intended to establish.





## DISCOURSE IV.



THE NATURE OF ORDINATION—THE POWER OF ORDINATION NOT PECULIAR TO THE APOSTOLICAL OFFICE—PRELITICAL BISHOPS NOT THEIR ONLY SUCCESSORS IN THE EXERCISE OF THIS FUNCTION.

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I. TIMOTHY, ii. 7. Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle.

I OFFER this passage to your notice, at the present time, not because I propose to dwell upon it exclusively, but only because it is one of several passages in the New Testament which refer to the subject of ORDINATION—a subject which we are necessarily called upon to examine at this stage of our remarks on the general doctrine of apostolical succession.

This doctrine, as we have already had occasion to define it, is, that, in an unbroken line from the apostles downward there has been a personal succession of bishops or chief pastors—that they succeed the apostles, as belonging to *the highest* of

*three grades* of which the christian ministry is supposed to consist—that they alone are clothed with the power of governing the churches by a general supervision, and especially of ordaining others to the ministerial work—and that their order, together with the inferior ones, is perpetuated by one ordaining another in continuity from age to age.

In this scheme, it will be seen at once, that every thing depends upon the question,—Whether, by the appointment of Christ and the authority of scripture, *there is* any such superior grade in the ministry *at all*, as that to which prelatial bishops belong? If *there is not*, the controversy is ended—the chain of succession is not only defective in itself, but without a hook at the superior end on which it can hang—and the stupendous fabric of the hierarchy vanishes into thin air, like a creature of the imagination, when brought to the tests of reality and truth.

Our object, in the last two discourses, has therefore been to test the grounds on which the scriptural warrant for prelacy is supposed to rest. And thus far we have failed to find any traces of the bishop of this order, either by *name* or by *office*. The *name* we have disposed of finally; but various things, in regard to the *office*, are yet to be considered. To show that the APOSTOLICAL *office*

does not represent the office of a prelatial bishop, we have brought the distinctive features of that office before you; and have seen that, in the language of Dr. Barrow, "it containeth in it *divers* things, which apparently were not communicated, and which no man without *gross imposture* and *hypocrisy* could challenge to himself." But, other considerations apart, it is stoutly maintained by the advocates of prelacy, that the Apostles alone ORDAINED—that this was the *main* characteristic of their office—and that in respect to this prerogative the *possibility* of succession must be granted, while the *fact* of such succession as applied to prelatial bishops can be established by satisfactory evidence.

This, then, is the point at which we take up the thread of the argument on the present occasion. And, it will help not a little to clear our way, if we advert in the outset to THE REAL NATURE and DESIGN of this rite of ordination, of which so much is made by the advocates and supporters of this scheme.

In the *Romish* system, ordination is exalted to the grade of *a sacrament*. And we cannot see that it occupies a much lower place, in the high-toned prelatial system we are now considering. One would really think, from the language in which the advocates of this system speak, that

there is something in the nature of this ceremony which is awfully mysterious, and even inscrutable; something which lies beyond the ken of ordinary mortals; and in regard to which, it is better 'to believe than to reason.' They refer to it, as if its invariable and sure effect were to imprint upon the subject of it a new and indelible character—introducing him into a new relation, both to God and his fellow men—putting him in possession of something which, though invisible, intangible, and incomprehensible, is yet real, and of wonderful efficacy—clothing him with the power of giving practical effect to the ordinances which he administers—and doing all this with certainty, without regard either to his moral character, or his mental endowments. In virtue of the 'apostolical grace' or the 'grace of the episcopal order,' which he thus receives, the sprinkling of water by his hands, in baptism, ensures *regeneration*—the bread and wine of the eucharist are made to convey the real body and blood of the Saviour to those who receive them—and the door of the kingdom of heaven is opened to the penitent and believing who receive these sacraments at his hands, while none who renounce his authority can enter, unless in some way which the scriptures do not reveal. If this is not going the *whole distance* to Rome, it is certainly performing more than half the journey!

To convince you, that I have not misstated the high-church doctrine in regard to ordination, especially as conferring these wonderful powers on men without any regard to their *personal character* and *qualifications*, I ask your attention to the following expressions of opinion, which are from competent sources. “*The unworthiness of man,*” say the Tract writers, “*cannot prevent the goodness of God from flowing in those channels in which he has destined it to flow; and the christian congregations of the present day, who sit at the feet of ministers duly ordained, have the same reason for reverencing in them the successors of the apostles, as the primitive churches of Ephesus and of Crete had for honoring in Timothy and in Titus the apostolic authority of him who had appointed them.*” No. 5, p. 10, 11.—Rev. Henry Melville, one of the most celebrated living preachers, goes still farther, and is more explicit. Speaking of Christ as the Chief Minister of his church on earth, he proceeds to say,—“He has provided by keeping up a succession of men, who derive *authority in unbroken series* from the first teachers of the faith, for the continued preaching of his word, and administration of his sacraments.” \*

\* “You have no right, when you sit down in the sanctuary, to regard *the individual* who addresses you, as a mere public speaker, delivering an ha-

rangué, which has precisely so much worth, as it may draw from its logic and its language. He is an ambassador from the Great Head of the church, and derives an authority from this Head, which is *quite independent of his own worthiness*. If Christ remain always the minister of his church, Christ is to be looked at through his ministering servant, *whoever shall visibly officiate*. And though there be *a great deal preached, in which you cannot recognize the voice of the Saviour*' and though the sacraments be administered by *hands which seem impure enough to sully their sanctity*; yet shall we venture to assert, that no man, who keeps Christ steadfastly in view, as the 'minister of the true tabernacle,' will ever fail to derive profit from a sermon, or strength from a communion." \* \* "The *ordained* preacher is a messenger, a messenger from the God of the whole earth. *His mental capacity may be weak*—that is nothing. *His speech may be contemptible*—that is nothing. *His knowledge may be circumscribed*—we say not, that is nothing, but we say that, *whatever the man's qualifications*, he should rest upon *his office*." \* \* "Whoever preaches, a congregation would be benefitted, if they sat down in the temper of Cornelius," &c. \* \* \* "If wheresoever the minister is himself *deficient and untaught*, so that his sermons *exhibit a wrong sys-*

*tem of doctrine*, you will not allow that Christ's church may be profited by the ordinance of preaching, you clearly argue that the Redeemer has given up his office, and that he can no longer be styled 'the Minister of the true tabernacle.' There is no middle course, between denying that Christ is the minister, and allowing that whatever may be *the faulty statements of his ordained servant*, no soul, which is hearkening in faith for a word of counsel or comfort, shall find the ordinance worthless, and be sent empty away." \* \* "We behold the true followers of Christ enabled to find food *in pastures which seem barren*, and water where *the fountains seem dry*. They obtain, indeed, the most copious supplies—though, perhaps, even this will not always hold good—when the sermons breathe nothing but truth, and the sacraments are administered by men of tried piety and faith. But when *every thing seems against them*, so that, on a carnal calculation, you would suppose the services of the church stripped of all efficacy, then by acting faith on the head of the ministry, they are instructed and nourished, *though in the main the given lesson be FALSEHOOD, and the proffered sustenance little better than POISON.*\*

This passage speaks for itself. It proceeds up-

\* Sermons, p. 44—48. Lond. ed.



on the supposition, that the whole constitution and virtue of the christian ministry resides in the act of ordination. *Knowledge* is nothing! *Moral character* is nothing! *Personal piety* is nothing! *Sound doctrine* is nothing! The mysterious gift, conferred in ordination, is EVERY thing! In the performance of this ceremony, the hands of the officiating prelate, to use the language of another, “become a sort of Leyden jar of spiritual electricity,” communicating the divine virtue by personal and physical contact. But how utterly ridiculous do such views appear, when brought soberly to the tests of reason, and scripture? If there is a new character, or divine virtue, communicated in ordination, *what is it?* What are its nature, and properties? And where is *the evidence* of the fact, that it is conveyed in the manner alleged? No one pretends to have *seen* it—the *person* ordained is *not conscious* of having received it—nor can *others* perceive, that any alteration has occurred, in consequence of it, either in his physical or moral nature. He is the same person, in his external appearance, and in all his mental and moral endowments, afterwards, that he was before. He exhibits no increase in the measure of his wisdom, of his knowledge, or of his piety and purity of life. If he was ignorant and graceless, *before* the ordaining hands

were laid upon him, he is equally so, when they are removed. "In a word," this mysterious quality supposed to be communicated in ordination," "appears to be a *non-entity*, inscribed with a very formidable name—a very substantial shadow; and dispute respecting it, appears about as hopeful, as that concerning the 'indelible character' imparted in the unreiterable sacraments of the Romish church; of which Campbell archly says, —'As to the *ubi* of the *character*, there was no less variety of sentiments—some placing it in the *essence* of the soul, others in the *understanding*; some in the *will*, and others more plausibly in the *imagination*; others even in the *hands* and *tongue*; but, by the general voice, the *body* was excluded. So that the whole of what they agreed in amounts to this, that, in the unreiterable sacraments, as they call them, something, they know not *what*, is imprinted they know not *how*, on something in the soul of the recipient, they know not *where*, which never can be deleted.'"\*

As this "grace of ordination" is neither cognizable by the senses, nor capable of being ascertained by consciousness, it surely cannot be fairly demanded of us, that we should believe in it, unless it is clearly set forth in the Bible as an object of faith. When we turn to this quarter for

\* Ed. Rev., April, 1843, p. 270 Am. ed.

information, however, we find the matter of ordination to be one of the simplest and plainest of all imaginable things. In the teaching of the sacred writers, it is referred to but seldom; and when it *is* brought into view, there is nothing said, in the way of direct instruction, as to its nature and importance—nothing, as to its imprinting a new character, or imparting to the subject of it any thing which he did not before possess—nothing, which even prescribes any particular *form* of it as indispensable. In short, there is no proof to be found in their statements that ordination is any thing more than a ceremony of *inauguration*, or *induction to office*—performed upon the ground, that the subject of it is supposed to be *already qualified* for the performance of its duties. In the few cases in which it is noticed, there are no less than *five* different words employed to express it; and these are words which are generally rendered by the English verbs *to make, to place, to be made, to choose, to constitute or appoint*. See Mark iii. 14. John xv. 16. Acts i. 22. Acts xiv. 23. Titus i. 5. They all indicate the general idea of *appointing to, or placing in office*, and nothing more. This is their popular meaning; and their indiscriminate use affords sufficient proof, that nothing more was intended to be described than occurs in any case, when an individ-

ual is *appointed, inaugurated, set up, or placed* in office.

I know, therefore, of no better way of exhibiting the true nature of this ceremony, than by adverting to what occurs in any case of investiture with *civil* office. Let it be the case of the Chief Magistrate of our own country. The constitution provides for his inauguration, or induction, in a public and formal way. He takes the oath of office, as administered by the Chief Justice; and, from that time, he is regarded as *in* the chair of state, and invested with all the powers which appertain to this elevated and responsible station. Now, in this case, what is the nature and effect of the ceremony, through which the individual passes? Does it alter the personal character of the man? Has it any tendency to qualify him, either in body or mind, for the duties he is called to perform? Instead of this, he is supposed to *have* the necessary qualifications *before* his inauguration. Upon the supposed ground of his possessing them, he has been nominated and elected by the people; and the ceremony in question is nothing more, than a visible and formal introduction to the office, to which, by the constitutional provisions, his way is already prepared.

If ordination to the ministry means any thing *more* than this, we profess ourselves unable, ei-

ther to understand it, or to find any authority on which it can rest. It is a public and formal declaration, on the part of those who perform it, that the subject is qualified for the office, and ought to be so regarded and received by the churches. Instead of imprinting a new character, or imparting new powers, it proceeds upon the assumption, that the appropriate character, and the necessary powers, are *already present*. And the only important respect, in which it differs, in its nature, from a case of civil investiture, is, that it is a *religious observance*—it not only has respect to an office, established for religious purposes, but is accompanied with prayer to God for his blessing upon the person, who is set apart to its responsibilities and duties. With this view, the tenor of the New Testament fully agrees. When ordination is referred to there, it is only *incidentally*, as a matter of history—no explanations are given as to its nature—no commands are issued enjoining its observance—no stress is laid upon it, as communicating any thing essential. But, while there is no effort towards challenging the special attention of the reader to *the mere act of ordination*, there are *other things*, in regard to which the instructions are full, explicit, and earnest to the last degree. Sufficient care is taken to inform us, what a minister of Christ *must be*; and

yet, among all the enumerated particulars, there is *not one*, which can be supposed to be communicated in ordination. He must be "blameless," "of good behaviour," "apt to teach," "given to hospitality," not "covetous," nor "greedy of filthy lucre," not "given to wine," neither "a brawler," nor "a striker," but "gentle unto all men," "in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves," &c. &c. These are things, in regard to which there is no room left for misapprehension and mistake. They are not referred to incidentally, but are put forth in the way of direct instruction. They are repeated, enlarged upon, inculcated by 'line upon line and precept upon precept.' And is it not marvellous, if there is something communicated in ordination, more vital to the ministerial office than all these, that no allusion to it should be found in the writings of the very persons by whom these instructions were delivered? Surely, if there is any conclusion to be drawn from their teaching on this subject, it is, that our hope, in reference to a succession of true ministers, must rest, not on any thing communicated in ordination, but on the moral and religious character, together with the mental endowments, of those who, by means of this ceremony, are introduced to the work.

Perhaps it may be thought by some, that, if

these views are correct, there is *no need* of ordination—that the effect of our doctrine is to turn it into an empty, idle, and unmeaning formality—and that, to be consistent, we must take the ground, that it is *not essential* to a true and valid ministry at all. To this we reply, that, while it is not the thing which *makes* the ministry, or confers the ministerial character and qualifications, it is nevertheless an observance of great importance in the *raising up* and *regulation* of the ministry. It is eminently proper, for the sake of good order, and for defending the churches against incompetent and unworthy teachers, that those who are *in* the office should judge of the qualifications of those who have it *in view*—that they should superintend their training and preparation—and, at the proper time, set them apart, and commend them to the public regard and favor, in the way which is sanctioned by scriptural example. This is so clearly reasonable in itself, and so manifestly in accordance with scriptural usage, that, under ordinary circumstances, no one ought to be received as a minister of Christ, whose mission is not authenticated in this way.—If we are required to go farther than this, and to answer the question categorically, whether there *can* be a true ministry, under any supposable circumstances, *without* ordination? we are still unable to perceive,

that any formidable difficulty presents itself in our way. We reply, without hesitation, in the affirmative. To be in possession of all that belongs to the ministerial character, in the sight of God, is one thing—the *certification* of this fact to men, so far as it can be done by those who are already in the office, is another thing. The certification does not confer *the character*, and yet, where a ministry exists, it ought not to be dispensed with—the person who should *wish* to *have* it dispensed with, in his own case, would furnish probable evidence, in this circumstance alone, of a state of mind in connection with which the proper character could not be supposed to exist. But, if a case were to occur in which no existing faithful ministry could be found, it would not be necessary, for this reason, that the ministry should be forever extinct. Faithful preachers of the Gospel might still be raised up, by the word and spirit of God, who, without any imposition of hands on the part of men, might be honored and accepted, in the work of turning many unto righteousness. Men *have* preached acceptably, without ordination, and they may do it again. Stephen and Phillip were among the number, in apostolic times—so were the “men of Cyprus and Cyrene,” who were the means of turning “a great number” to the Lord, in Antioch—and so were multitudes of others in



the primitive church: it is said of the christians generally, who were dispersed from Jerusalem, that they “went every where *preaching the word.*” The truth is, that ecclesiastical power is lodged, by the Head of the church, not with *the ministry*, but with THE PEOPLE—THE BODY OF THE FAITHFUL, in their associated state. And, if times and circumstances come, in which there is either no ministry at all, or the existing ministry become universally corrupt, they are perfectly competent to retire upon their original rights, and to see that a ministry, of appropriate character and gifts, is raised up among themselves. *A State*, in a similar position, would not allow the doctrine of personal succession to interfere with the choice of persons to administer its affairs; and there is no reason why *the Church* should be cramped, by a less convenient and liberal rule.

It may occur to you, perhaps, that I have dwelt longer on this part of the subject than was needful; and I can justify myself, in consuming so much of your time on so plain a case, only by the fact, that the point in question is a *vital* one, in that scheme of succession which we are opposing. The doctrine is, that acts of ordination, performed in succession, are the true and only links of the chain, along which the ministerial character descends—that the imposition of hands, by a bish-

op, is what *makes* a man a minister of Christ, and that nothing else *does*—and that this effect follows, with equal certainty, whether the subject be a true servant of Christ like Paul, or a servant of the Devil like Judas. So that, the moment we deprive ordination of the mysterious power which is thus ascribed to it, and convert it into the plain thing which all men understand a ceremony of inauguration to be, we have inflicted a wound upon the succession scheme which it cannot survive—we have taken away the cornerstone of its foundation—and, having nothing to support it, the superstructure must fall to the ground.

Having thus adverted to *the nature* of ordination, we proceed, in the line of our argument, to say, that *there is no evidence whatever that* THE AUTHORITY *to ordain was committed* EXCLUSIVELY TO THE APOSTLES, *or to any set of* CHIEF PASTORS, *belonging to a higher grade than that of presbyters, or parochial pastors.* If there is such evidence, in the teaching or history of the New Testament, it will not be difficult to find it. The point which it would go to establish is an important one; and we may expect to see it presented too prominently and plainly to admit of any mistake. And yet, we may read the sacred record from beginning to end, with never so much attention and care, and

be compelled to confess, when we have done, that we have not found a line, or sentence, which even *looks* in this direction. We may go back to the original appointment of the Apostles, as the account is written in the Gospel by Matthew, and repeated by Mark and Luke—or we may go to the instructions which they received from the lips of Christ, after his resurrection, and immediately before his ascension to heaven—and we shall not find the slightest evidence, that *any thing ever passed between their Divine Master and them on the subject of ordination at all*: there is an unbroken silence in regard to the whole matter!

I know it will be said, here, that the ordaining power may be considered as fairly *included* in the terms of the Saviour's final commission. And this presents us with another specimen of the shifts which are resorted to, in supporting the cause of prelacy. When, in order to make room for a prelatial succession, the object is to show that the apostles *could have* successors, we are told, in regard to a variety of things which are *expressly referred to* in scripture—such as working miracles, bearing eye-witness to the resurrection, &c.—that they were no part of the apostolical office. But now, when the particular object is to magnify the ordaining power, and to confine

it to the apostles, we are directed for the proof, that it was committed to them, and to them alone, to a declaration, in which there is *no reference to it at all!* That the apostles *did* ordain we grant; but that the right to perform this ceremony was ever lodged with them, either *expressly* or *exclusively*, we deny. And we call upon those who make the assertion to bring us the evidence. There is not *a word* on the subject, either direct or indirect, in the language of the commission already referred to. Read it again, and see—"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." Observe the emphatic words, and then say, whether a mind unwarped by prejudice could ever have drawn from this passage any thing like a doctrine or precept on the subject of ordination. If ordination, by the imposition of particular hands, is that important thing which prelatists suppose—if, in one form of it only, it is that *essential* rite without which a ministry cannot exist, and be perpetuated—is it credible, that the Head of the church would have left us to ascertain the fact *by inference*, instead of declaring it expressly? To our minds, the silence of the as-

ending Saviour on this subject, is in perfect keeping with the views of ordination we have already expressed. His mind did not dwell upon this ceremony as being, in any of its relations, of fundamental importance. Regarding it as a mere form, he did not think it expedient to bring it into view, in connection with the greater things of which he had to speak. It was one of those matters which might be safely left to the judgment and discretion of his church in after times; and he therefore departed from the world, without advertng to it at all. It is a perfectly gratuitous assumption, therefore, that the power of ordaining was committed exclusively to the Apostles. When they performed this ceremony, they did it—not as belonging to a particular *grade* in the ministry—nor in consequence of any particular *injunction* laid upon them in reference to it—but on the general ground of the natural propriety and fitness of the thing itself, and in conformity with the usage which was common in all cases of appointment to office, whether ecclesiastical or civil. With ordination, as practiced in the Jewish Synagogue, they had long been familiar: and it *required* no direct instruction, to suggest to their minds the propriety of setting apart teachers, in the christian church, in the same way.

We have thus offered, what we think should be

regarded as proving clearly, that the ordaining power was not committed by Christ exclusively to the Apostles. And, as going to strengthen the general conclusion at which we are aiming, we now say, farther, that this power *actually was exercised by OTHER PERSONS than the Apostles*; and by persons, who could not be supposed to be of a superior grade in the ministry to *presbyters*, or *parochial pastors*. We can even find a case, in the New Testament history, in which AN APOSTLE was set apart to his work, by the imposition of hands, under circumstances which render it certain, that the ordainers were persons on whom the apostolic office had not been conferred. You will find what I refer to, in this remark, in Acts xiii. 1—3. “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.” How completely does this *reverse* the order of things, which prelatival arguments are intended to establish? If Paul had been *the ordainer*,

and the other persons mentioned *the ordained*, the transaction might have been in keeping. But that he, who was “not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles,” should have received ordination at the hands of persons who were never raised to the same office, is certainly adapted to awaken suspicion as to the prevalence of prelatical views in the apostolical college!

This case, as it presents itself to the reflecting reader, is so entirely fatal to the whole high church system, that there is no security but *in denying* that this *was* an ordination. This is accordingly done. Paul, it is said, had been a preacher of the gospel before this; and this was nothing more than the destination of himself and Barnabas to a particular field of labor. But where shall we go to find the characteristics of an ordination, if they are not to be found in connection with this transaction? And what use can there be in arguing with those, who insist upon any thing more, as essential to an ordination scene, than is embraced in *separation* to the work of the ministry, by the *imposition of hands*, accompanied by *fasting* and *prayer*. It may serve a purpose, to say, that this was not an ordination; but, if a thing is to be known by *its properties*, it could not have been any thing else. It matters not, as to this point, whether Paul had preached

the gospel before this or not—that he had, we do not doubt. After receiving the Holy Ghost, at the time of his conversion, he began at once to preach the faith he had endeavored to destroy. He continued to do this, for a while, among the Hebrews and Grecian Jews. But, when the time came for him to go to *the gentiles*, agreeably to his original appointment, he was set apart by a human ordination. The words of the Holy Ghost are significant—“Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work *whereunto I HAVE called them*” —clearly implying, that they had been called *before* this; and that what was now done, was their visible and formal introduction to the work to which the call related. As corroborating this view, let it be remembered, that Paul is never called *an apostle*, till after this transaction; nor was he known before this, by his *new name*. SAUL was the name he bore, up to this event; but immediately afterwards, he is called PAUL, Acts xiii. 9. And we see not how these things are to be accounted for, but on the supposition, that he was now set apart to that ministerial and missionary work among the gentiles, to which he was called, at the time of his conversion. Indeed, the correctness of this interpretation is not denied by the most eminent episcopal writers. Lightfoot says,—“The Lord did hereby set down a plat-



form of *ordaining* ministers in the church of the gentiles to future time." Archbishop Wake says,—“ Thus Paul, though he was called to be an apostle, not by man, but by Jesus Christ, was yet *consecrated to be an apostle, by the ordinary form of imposition of hands*, after he had preached in the church for some time before.” And the following are the words of Skelton,—“ So sacred a thing is the succession of *ordination*, that the Holy Ghost, who had already enabled Barnabas and Saul to preach the word, ordered them to be separated for the work whereunto he had called them, by fasting, prayer, and the imposition of hands.”\*

It is proper to say, farther, in relation to this case, that the attempt is sometimes made to escape its fatal bearing upon the exclusive right of the apostles to ordain, by taking refuge in the supposition, that Simeon, Lucius, and Manaen, who performed the ceremony, belonged to the *apostolic order*. The words “ prophets and teachers,” it is said, indicate nothing certain in regard to their *rank*—they *may* have been persons who had been consecrated, by other apostles, to the highest ministerial grade. But, in answer to this, it is sufficient to refer to the New Testament list of official *names*, and see where the apostles are

\* See these, and many others, in Smyth, p. 176.

placed, in their relation to others. “And God hath set some in the church; FIRST *apostles*, SECONDARILY *prophets*, THIRDLY *teachers*,” &c. 1 Cor. xii. 28. Precisely the same order is observed in Eph. iv. 11. And, in view of this, who can believe, that the persons named above would have been called “prophets,” and “teachers,” if they had been “apostles”? The truth is, that they were ministers of the gospel, who were officiating at the time in Antioch—they preached to the people; and, in this capacity, were “teachers,”—some, and perhaps all of them, possessed the gift of prophecy, which was not uncommon in the primitive church, and were therefore “prophets.” And the Holy Ghost, without intimating that the power of ordaining belonged to any particular order, directed them to set apart two, one of whom was, from that time, the highest in the list of apostolical names.—While this record remains, it will be in vain to say, that the ordaining power was confined to the apostolical order.

Nor is this the only case, which bears upon the same point. The ordination of TIMOTHY, notwithstanding all the efforts which have been made to get rid of so troublesome an example, must stand forever as perfectly decisive. “Neglect not the gift that is in thee,” says Paul, “which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on

of the hands of *the presbytery*''; yes, my hearers, by the laying on of the hands of THE PRESBYTERY—a most annoying sound, in the ears of those who are for confining the right of ordination to prelatical bishops! To admit that the passage means what it says, would, of course, be fatal. And hence, we are put to the task of defending its obvious meaning against as many, and as formidable objections, as human ingenuity can devise. How valid these objections are, you shall see.

We are told, as in the case of Barnabas and Saul, that this imposition of the hands of the presbytery on Timothy, was NO ORDINATION. This is one of the grounds taken by Bishop Onderdonk, in his *Episcopacy Tested by Scripture*. He professes to look at the passage calmly, and candidly; and is not able to see, in the description which it gives, any certain evidence of an ordination scene. What certain persons can see, however, depends very much upon what they *wish* to see. And, as a curious illustration of the truth of this remark, we find, that the same eyes that can detect no ordination, here, can discern such a transaction with perfect distinctness, in other places, where common eyes would certainly fail to discover it. They can see, for instance, that the twelve apostles entered, first, upon the office of *Deacons*—

that, afterwards, they were ordained as *Priests*, or *Presbyters*—and that, finally, by another ordination, they were elevated to the still higher grade of *Bishops*, in the prelati- cal sense. The following is the curious passage, in which this view is presented—“We have seen, that ‘the twelve’ had at first the right only to preach, and baptize; which made them DEACONS in office, according to St. Paul’s standard, though, like “the seven,” without the *name*: there being as yet no occasion, they did not act as almoners; or rather, if fanciful, it is nothing worse, to allege that this diac- onal function *was adumbrated in their distributing the provisions, when Jesus fed the multitudes*. After serving in this lower ministry, “the twelve” received the power of the keys; by which promo- tion they attained the “good degree,” and were commissioned to the “good work” of PRESBYTER BISHOPS. All this occurred, before the death of our Lord. Afterward, after his resurrection, the eleven were commissioned a third time; Christ “breathed” on them, and said, “Receive the Holy Ghost”; they thus obtained a further, and of course, a higher power of the keys.”—“This *third* commission made the apostles more than they were before; more than presbyter bishops, which they became, on acquiring their first pow- er of the keys; in other words, it made them

APOSTLE BISHOPS, OR BISHOPS PROPER.”\* It thus appears, that what is equivalent to two successive ordinations can be found in passages, on the face of which there is no reference to the subject at all, while no traces of such a transaction are to be seen in the formal *laying on of the hands of a presbytery*! But, seriously, if this was not an ordination, where shall we find one? and by what marks shall we know it, when we do find it? We cannot help thinking, that, if the passage had read “with the laying on of the hands of AN APOSTLE,” instead of “the hands of the *presbytery*,” the essential features of an ordination ceremony would have been seen, distinctly, by those to whom they are now invisible!

Another attempt is made to escape the legitimate bearing of this passage, by alleging, that the word “presbytery” means *the office* to which Timothy was ordained, and not the *persons* who ordained him; so that the passage would read—“with the laying on of hands to confer the *presbyterate*” or presbytership, or the clerical office. There are not many writers of reputation, it is true, who venture upon this ground. And we ask those who do, to point us to any other place in the New Testament, in which the word translated “presbytery” is used to signify *the office*, as

\* Ep. Examined, p. 243.

distinguished from an assembly of *the persons* by whom the office is filled. If the word had been Πρεσβειον, the interpretation in question might be sustained; but Πρεσβυτεριον is uniformly employed to designate *the senate*, or *council*, of the officers, and not the *office* itself. See Luke xxii. 66, and Acts xxii. 5, where it is applied to the sanhedrim, or council of the elders.—Besides, if Timothy was ordained to *the presbyterate*, or the office of *presbyter*, what then becomes of the pretension, that he was *a prelatical bishop*? This, be it remembered, is a favorite position in the episcopal scheme. It is constantly and zealously maintained, that his *rank* was that of *an apostle*, and that he was *the apostolical bishop of Ephesus*. To give *this* up, would seem to most of the friends of prelacy, like surrendering their cause. And yet it *must* be given up, if Timothy's ordination was only to the *presbyterate*. This would place him in the *middle* grade of the hierarchy, and thereby annihilate his claim to the possession of prelatical power, either in Ephesus, or any where else.

Once more, it is objected, that, even supposing this to have been an ordination, and the word “presbytery” to refer to the persons concerned in the transaction, it cannot, after all, be proved to have been a *presbyterian* ordination—that, though the hands of *presbyters* were laid on Timothy, still

there is good reason for believing that he was ordained, not by a “presbytery,” but by a *prelate*! One would think, indeed, that the attempt to establish a position, so directly contradictory of the fact stated in the record, were rather adventurous; but any thing, rather than admit that presbyters have a right to ordain. Paul, in his *second* epistle to Timothy, chap. i. v. 6, thus writes,—“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.” Here, it is said, we find the true source, and virtue, of Timothy’s ordination: it was *in Paul*, and not in “the presbytery”: Paul was an *apostle*: he belonged to the *superior grade* in the ministry: and he was the one, who really performed the ceremony, and gave it all its validity, while the presbyters imposed their hands merely as a sign of *concurrence*, or *approbation*. This would, no doubt, answer very well; but the difficulty lies in the proof. This reasoning takes for granted the very thing to be proved; and that is, that the virtue of the ordaining power resided exclusively with the apostles. This is what we deny; and we say, that these passages, which refer to Timothy, do not contain a tittle of evidence that Paul had any more efficient concern in his ordination than the rest. “The gift” which he had received is as-

cribed, just as fully, in one case, to the laying on of the hands *of the presbytery*, as it is, in the other, to the putting on of the hands *of the apostle*. And who has a right to say, in view of this fact, that the presbytery was *nothing* in the transaction, and that the apostle was *every* thing? If we suppose that the virtue of the ordaining act resided in the presbytery as a body, and that the apostle refers to the laying on of *his* hands as *one* of the presbytery, and especially as *the presiding member*, then the two passages are consistent with each other, and the view presented is in perfect harmony with presbyterian ordinations, as they always occur. But, if we suppose that the whole virtue of the act was with *the apostle*, and that the presbytery only *concurred*, then we make the record affirm, that Timothy received a gift, at the hands of the Presbytery, which, in point of fact, he did not receive from them at all, either in whole or in part, but altogether from the hands of a single individual. It is perfectly gratuitous, therefore, to say that the apostle was *the ordainer*, in any sense which did not apply as fully to all concerned; and the case remains, as furnishing indubitable proof, that the ordaining power *was* exercised, in the primitive church, by *presbyters*, as well as by *apostles*.

There is *a criticism* sometimes resorted to, for



the purpose of showing that Paul's agency in this ordination was of a higher kind than that of the presbytery, which deserves a passing notice. It is said, that the apostle himself makes a distinction, thus,—“*by* the putting on of my hands”—“*with* the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.” The word *δια* (by,) it is alleged, signifies emphatically *the cause* of a thing; while *μετα* (*with*) denotes *concurrence*, or *agreement*; and this difference, in the form of expression, is supposed to imply, that Paul was the efficient ordainer, while, on the part of the others, there was merely consent.—Any one who desires to see the argument, drawn from this distinction, reduced to *less than nothing*, may find it disposed of to their satisfaction, in Dr. Mason's Essays on Episcopacy.\* In testing the truth of the assertion, “that *δια* always signifies emphatically *the cause* of a thing,” he refers to the following examples—“It is easier for a camel to go *through* (*δια*) the eye of a needle,” &c.—“Jesus went *through* (*δια*) the cornfields”—“And again he entered into Capernaum, *after* (*δια*) some days.” And, in reference to these cases, he inquires,—“What *cause* does the preposition *δια* express here? Does it signify emphatically, *the cause* of the needle's eye? or of the cornfields? or of the days? or *the cause* of

\* Works vol. iii. p. 156, &c.

the camel's going through the first? of our Lord's going through the second? or of his spending the third before he went into Capernaum"? These inquiries point us, at once, to the utter absurdity of this whole criticism, and therefore of the argument, which is founded upon it.

The general conclusion, then, to which we are conducted, in respect to the ordaining power, is, that it *did not reside with the apostles exclusively*, but was exercised, also, by those who had attained to no higher grade than that of *presbyter*. This, we believe, is the *only* grade of ministerial character and office, which is known to the New Testament. The apostles, in their character as apostles, had no equals, and no successors—they were special messengers of Christ, for the performance of a special work—and, when their work was done, the necessity for their special endowments, and prerogatives, passed away. But, in respect to any part of their work, which was to be of permanent duration—such as preaching the gospel, administering the ordinances, setting apart others to the ministerial office, &c.—they stood on the same level with all the other elders, or presbyters, who labored in company with them.

Their position is defined with sufficient clearness, by the Apostle Peter, when he says,—  
“The elders which are among you, I exhort, *who*

*am also AN ELDER.*” The *grade* to which he belonged is thus designated by himself; and what is it? Is it the grade of a *prelate*? Is it the grade of one, who is appointed *to rule* presbyters, as well as to govern churches? Or is it the grade of a presbyter, or parochial pastor? His own view of the matter is clear. He was an apostle of Christ—he was sent, by the great Lord and Master of all, upon a special mission—he was commissioned to do, in many respects, an extraordinary work—and was therefore endowed with many extraordinary qualifications. But, in reference to the standing work of the ministry, in which other elders were engaged, he was “*also an elder*”; and, without any disarrangement of established ranks and orders, he could come and take his place among them—this was the class to which he belonged—this was the only office, in reference to the ordinary ministry of Christ, which he sustained. The only difference between him and others, was, that he was an elder under the guidance of *inspiration*—an elder who could speak and write *infallibly*—and an elder who was chosen to be *an eye-witness* of the resurrection of Christ.

The names and titles, which are given in scripture to preachers of the gospel, are not names of different *grades*, but different names which are

applied to *one* and the *same* grade; and these names are descriptive of the different aspects, in which this office and work may be viewed. The state of the case is well presented, in the following extract from the constitution of the Presbyterian church—"The *pastoral* office is the first, in the church, both for dignity and usefulness. *The person* who fills this office, hath, in scripture, obtained different names expressive of his various duties. As he has *the oversight* of the flock, he is termed BISHOP. As he *feeds* them with spiritual food, he is termed PASTOR. As he *serves* Christ in his church, he is termed MINISTER. As it is his duty to be *grave* and *prudent*, and an example of the flock, and to govern well in the house and kingdom of God, he is termed PRESBYTER, OR ELDER. As he is *the messenger* of God, he is termed THE ANGEL of the church. As he is *sent to declare the will* of God to sinners, and to beseech them to be reconciled to God through Christ, he is termed AMBASSADOR. And as he *dispenses* the manifold grace of God, and the ordinances instituted by Christ, he is termed STEWARD of the mysteries of God."\* Besides these, are the terms "prophets," "teachers," "evangelists," &c., all of which have their applications in the same way. And it would be just as reasonable

\* Form of Government, chap. iii.

to say, that each and every one of these names is the name of a distinct and separate grade in the ministry, as to say that there are *three* grades, among which the entire list is to be divided.

We have thus presented, all that we intended to say, in refutation of the claim, that prelatial bishops have succeeded to the apostolical *office*. We have seen, that, in many respects, the characteristic nature of this office was such as to render its perpetuation impossible; and that, in those respects in which the apostles *could* have successors, they were of no higher grade than that of elder or presbyter. In respect to their extraordinary work, and the endowments which qualified them for it, there are none like them, and never will be; but, in the office of preaching, baptizing, and all else that is permanent in the administration of the gospel, there *is* a succession, the line of which will never run out until “the mystery of God” in respect to our world is “finished.” Of the nature of this succession, we shall have occasion to speak hereafter. And, in its reality and true value, we shall find it—not in necessary and exclusive connection with those, on whom prelatial hands have been imposed—not in the character and doings of the arrogant and bigotted hierarch, who appropriates the apostolical character to himself, and looks upon those who reject

his claims as beyond the ordinary possibility of salvation—not in the person of the Arch, or Lord Bishop, with his £50,000 a year, his princely retinue, his vicar general, his domestic chaplains, his chancellors and their attendants, his registers and their clerks, his commissaries, surrogates, and other attendants, amounting in all to hundreds—but in the humble, self-denying, and faithful labors of those who can truly say,—“We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake.” This is the spirit of the apostolical office, so far as it was intended to be permanent; and, where *it* lives, the *apostles* live, in those who succeed them. But where there is more of pride, of pomp, and of external show, than of active, prayerful, and persevering labors for the salvation of men, there is no apostolical *succession*, because there is no apostolical *character*—the vitality of their office is gone—and what remains, is of no value in the sight of God, and should be so regarded in the judgment of men.



## DISCOURSE V.



NO TRACES OF A PRELITICAL BISHOP, IN THE JEWISH HIGH-PRIESTHOOD—IN TIMOTHY—IN TITUS—NOR, IN THE ANGELS OF THE SEVEN CHURCHES.

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PHIL. i. 1. Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus, which are at Phillippi, with the bishops and deacons.

IT is not so much on account of any thing which this passage contains, as on account of what it does *not* contain, that I introduce it to your notice, in connection with the general subject which we are now discussing. We can easily account for it, on *unprelatical* principles, that the apostle, in addressing the church at Phillippi, should have recognized no officer of a *higher grade* than that of “bishops,” who are acknowledged to have been parochial pastors; because, in our judgment, there was no officer of a superior rank, in the primitive church, whom he *could* address. But, on the supposition that the pastors



and deacons, together with all the church, were under the supervision and government of a chief ruler in the character and capacity of *a prelate*, how is it to be explained, that no reference is made to him, either in the apostle's salutation, or in any of the subsequent parts of the epistle? Nor is this a solitary case. The course of the apostle, in relation to this point, is without any variation: he addresses the "saints," the "deacons," and the "pastoral bishops"; but never whispers the name, or makes any allusion to the office, of *the prelate*. And we now put it to the intelligent and candid inquirer after truth, whether such an omission *could* have occurred, if prelacy had been in existence when the Epistles were written? Would such a course, on the part of the apostle, have been natural? Would it have been even *respectful*, to have sent his salutation to all others, and to have uttered no expression of regard for the chief pastor, to whose care and management the interests of the whole church were committed?

Indirectly, therefore, the text may be considered as reiterating our position, that "*there is no such functionary known to the New Testament at all, as a PRELITICAL BISHOP.*" We have seen that he is not to be found there by *name*—we have proved, as we think, that he cannot be traced, in

any of the features of the *apostolical character and office*.—And we proceed, now, to show, that he does not appear, either in THE HIGH-PRIESTHOOD of the *Jewish economy*—in TIMOTHY, or TITUS—or in THE ANGELS of the *seven churches*. We know of no other important points than these, which remain to be examined; and we shall advert to them, briefly, in the order in which they are here presented.

The argument for the prelatical office, which is drawn from THE HIGH-PRIESTHOOD of the Jews, is stated by those who use it, in the following manner;—“The Mosaic dispensation was figurative of the christian”—“The priesthood of the law, was typical of the priesthood of the gospel”—“Why, then, should not the orders of the priesthood under the old economy, be supposed to typify those orders that were to be established under the new”?—“What the high-priests, the priests, and the Levites were in the temple, such are the bishops, the presbyters, and deacons, in the church of Christ.”

Now, to test the soundness of this argument, let us see, in the first place, whether the premises are well and securely laid. That “the Mosaic dispensation was figurative of the christian” we grant; and that “the priesthood of the law was typical of the priesthood of the gospel,” we do not

deny, provided the word "priesthood," as applied to the gospel, be understood in its New Testament sense. But the gospel priesthood, of which that of the law was typical, was not *the christian ministry*, but *the priesthood of Christ*. This is undeniably evident, from the tenor of all scripture. There is not a passage to be found, containing the remotest allusion to *the ministry* of Christ under the notion of a priesthood, while to exhibit and illustrate the *priesthood of Christ himself*, is the main object of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Speaking of Christ, Paul says,— "This man hath an unchangeable *priesthood*"— "such a *high-priest* became us"—"the Son of God abideth a *priest* continually"—"Christ being come, a *high-priest* of good things to come," &c.—Nor is it difficult to see *what it was*, in the character and work of Christ, that the Old Testament priesthood was intended to prefigure. The type had reference, not to orders or grades of office, but to *the priestly work*—which was, to *offer sacrifice* for sin, and to *make intercession* for the people. This work, under the Jewish law, was divided. The offering of the sacrifice was performed, by the lower priests, in the outer court—after which, the high-priest alone entered the inner sanctuary with the sprinkling of blood, and interceded for the congregation before the mercy

seat. But Christ, as the antitype, performs, in his own person, the entire work. "Once, in the end of the world," says Paul, "hath he appeared to put away sin by *the sacrifice of himself*"; and again—"Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, there *to appear in the presence of God* for us." This finishes the work of Christ as a priest; and, beyond this, there is nothing which the legal priesthood was intended to foreshadow. The typical allusion has run out in Him; and we therefore hear nothing more of any thing *priestly* in any other direction: neither the name, the character, nor the office are ever introduced, as applying to "the ministry of reconciliation."

But even granting, for the sake of argument, that the Old Testament priesthood *was* typical of the New Testament ministry, it is plain enough, that the likeness between the type and the antitype would fail *at the point where it is most needed*. Between the High Priest as *the only one of his order*, and the Pope of Rome, who claims to be the only head of the church on earth, a likeness might be supposed to exist; but we look in vain for any such resemblance in the order of prelatial bishops. They are not *one* but *many*: their number may be extended indefinitely: with

a single prelate, their system could not exist, and be perpetuated : so that, instead of a likeness, we here find a perfect dissimilarity. The high-priesthood *must* have *but one* incumbent, and the bishop's order *must* have *more* than one ; and, if so, how could the former be the type of the latter ? There is no getting rid of the difficulty, which this view of the subject presents. If a type and an antitype must resemble each other at all, then it is not possible, that the one high priest of the Mosaic economy was intended to prefigure the hundreds of bishops, who are in office, at the same time, in the prelatical system.

We do not dwell upon this claim, however ; because we perceive that the friends of prelacy are becoming less disposed to urge it themselves. Great stress has been laid upon it, heretofore ; but, in most of the recent publications we have seen, it is either passed over entirely, or brought into view as of secondary importance.

We pass, therefore, to the argument for prelacy derived from the supposed character and office of TIMOTHY : it is alleged, that he was *a prelatical bishop*—and that, as such, he was stationed *at Ephesus*. We shall advert to the grounds on which this allegation is put, and see whether they are broad and firm enough to support it.

Was Timothy *an apostle* ? It is affirmed that

he is so called, expressly; and that this proves, that he was of that upper grade in the ministry, to which modern bishops belong. In the refutation of this claim, however, I need not occupy your attention long, since the main points which it embraces have been already considered. The only passage in which Timothy is supposed to be called an apostle, is the one in Thess. ii. 6; where Paul, in using the phrase "the apostles of Christ," is said to refer to Timothy, and Silas, in connection with himself. We have shown, in another place, that this view is founded on an erroneous interpretation of the apostle's language; and the considerations there advanced need not be repeated.\* We only add, that, where Paul speaks of himself and Timothy together, and calls himself *an apostle*, he is careful to call Timothy by *another name*. There are two instances of this, which are so marked, as to forbid the supposition, that they could have occurred otherwise than by design. "Paul *an apostle* of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy *our brother*," 2 Cor. i. 1. Precisely the same form of expression occurs in Col. i. 1. And nothing could be more decisive as to the fact, that, in the judgment of Paul himself, Timothy was *not* an apostle, in

\* See pages 92, 93, to which the reader is requested to refer.

the sense in which this name and office appertained to himself.

But, if it were true, that Timothy was called an apostle, would this make him *a bishop*, in the prelatical sense? To say that it would, would be to beg the whole question in dispute. It is yet to be proved, that apostles and prelates are identical, either in name, or office. We deny that they are, and have assigned our reasons. An apostle is one who is *sent*—Timothy might have been sent by Paul, as he was, on more than one important mission, and yet not have belonged to the highest of three ministerial grades. The truth is, the word “apostle” determines nothing whatever, as to rank or order. On the supposition that there were three grades in existence, an individual might have been an apostle, and yet have belonged to the lowest as well as the highest.

Again, however, we are told, that Timothy must have been a bishop in the prelatical sense, because he is addressed by Paul in language which shows that the power of ordaining, and governing the churches, was committed to him *personally* and *singly*. The specimens are such as the following—“this charge I commit unto *thee*, son Timothy”—“these things write I unto *thee*, that *thou* mightest know how to behave *thyself* in the house of God”—“that *thou* mightest

charge some that they teach no other doctrine"—“the things which *thou* hast heard of me, the same commit *thou* to faithful men,” &c. On these passages we remark, that, as the epistles which contain them were addressed to Timothy as an individual, it would have been strange indeed if the apostle *had not* addressed him personally and singly; and that, as to the things themselves which he was empowered and directed to do, they were nothing more than might have been appropriate, on a variety of other suppositions, as well as on the supposition that this office was identical with that of a modern prelate. Others have as good a right to make suppositions, to suit the case, as the friends of high church episcopacy. We will suppose, then, that Timothy was, what he is expressly declared to have been, “*an evangelist,*” 2 Timothy iv. 5—that he travelled from place to place, sometimes as the companion of Paul, and sometimes by himself, though acting under the apostle’s authority and direction—and that the counsels and charges, which he received, were in reference to this extraordinary work. Is there any thing incongruous in this supposition? Does it involve any contradiction, or absurdity, whatever?—Again, we will suppose that Timothy was, what a bishop is understood to be, in the Lutheran church, or among the Wes-



leyan Methodists—not a prelate, by divine right—not a distinct order, as essential to a true ministry—but a superior, to whom certain duties are committed, in the way of superintendence. If this had been his position, would any of Paul's instructions to him have been out of place? And, so far as these instructions are concerned, have not the Lutheran, and the Wesleyan, as fair a claim to Timothy as the advocates of prelacy?—And, once more, we will suppose, that Timothy was nothing more than a presbyter, on the purest principles of presbyterian parity; and that, as such, he was directed by Paul to “do the work of an evangelist.” If this was the state of the case, as we believe it was, there is still room for all that was said in the apostle's addresses. His language is in no respect different from what we should regard as perfectly appropriate, in sending an evangelist to any new field, where churches were to be gathered and established. We should address him as an individual; and we should tell him to “lay hands suddenly on no man,” and to “commit” what he himself had received “to faithful men, who should be able to teach others also.” As well might it be inferred, therefore, from the language which we use on such occasions, that we regard all our missionaries as invested with superior ministerial power and rights, as

that Timothy was so regarded by Paul, because he addressed him in the manner above referred to.

If there is any virtue, then, in having Timothy as a predecessor, it may be allowed, as fairly to others, as to prelatical bishops.

Besides, it is worthy of remark, that the apostle confers no higher power upon Timothy than he conferred upon some others, for whom the prelatical character is not claimed. Take, as an instance, his charge to the church at Corinth. His language to them, on the subject of exercising discipline, is much *stronger* than the language he uses to Timothy. He commands them, not only to “*receive an accusation,*” in regard to a certain person, but to try the case, and carry it out even to excommunication—which is the highest act of discipline known in the church. “In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,” he says, “when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, *to deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh,*” &c. Here the reins of discipline are put into the hands of a plurality—of certain persons “gathered together”—and whether we suppose them to have been the ministers of the church, or the members at large, it matters not: in either case, according to the reasoning from the powers of Timothy they must have been prelatical bishops!

But it is still affirmed, that Timothy *was* a bishop—not only a missionary, but a *diocesan* bishop—and that *Ephesus* was his diocese. We can scarcely turn to a writer on episcopacy, by whom this is not asserted; and the assertion is generally unaccompanied by any attempt to support it by proof. The truth of it is supposed to be so evident, that no well informed person can be expected to deny it. Timothy was bishop of Ephesus! This is the declaration; and those who will not receive it are regarded, either as ignorant, or obtuse, to a hopeless degree. Still, we cannot help inquiring, whether, in giving him this title, there is not some mistake? We have already seen that, by the confession of all modern prelati- cal writers, a *bishop*, in New Testament times, was a *presbyter*—the overseer of a particular flock, and not the ruler of ministers and churches. And, if this is so, and Timothy was *bishop* of Ephesus, what becomes of his *prelati- cal* character? The reply to this will probably be, ‘*names are nothing*’—‘we inquire only after *things*.’ But, if Timothy was not known among the Ephe- sians as their *bishop*, in what character, and by what name *did* they know him? What was his title? If it was not ‘Timothy, *our bishop*,’ what can we suppose it to have been? Was it ‘Timothy, *our apostle*?’ This will hardly be contended

for ; and, if not, must we come to the conclusion, that he was known among them, as Bishop Onderdonk says all prelates are known in scripture ?—

“ INDEPENDENTLY OF ANY NAME AT ALL ”!

As to his location in Ephesus, there is not the slightest evidence, that he ever had a fixed residence there, in any capacity. There is but one passage which speaks of him in connection with Ephesus at all; and that, by a fair interpretation, affords conclusive proof of the contrary. It is the passage, in which Paul says,—“ I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia.” If this does not imply, that Timothy was, in general, the traveling companion of the apostle, and that he was not located permanently at Ephesus, we confess ourselves unable to understand the import of the plainest language. For why exhort him “ to abide,” in the place to which he belonged ? Where should a prelate abide, but in his own diocese ? Does the bishop of New-York need an exhortation *to abide* in New-York ? A most undutiful son in the faith Timothy must have been, if it required the beseeching of his spiritual father, to induce him to remain on the very field of duty to which he was appointed !

On this point it is playfully, but forcibly, said by Jean Daille—“ Who, without the assistance of an extraordinary passion, could ever have di-

vined a thing *so fine and rare*; or have imagined, that to beseech a man to abide in a city, implied the settling him the bishop of it, archbishop of the province, and primate of all the country? Without exaggerating, the cause of our hierarchial gentlemen must needs run very low, that they should be forced to have recourse to such pitiful proof. For my part, viewing things without passion, from the apostle's saying that he besought Timothy to abide at Ephesus, I shall rather conclude on the contrary, that he could *not* be the bishop of that place." \* \*  
"To beseech him to stay in a place where he is fixed by his charge, and which he could not quit, without offending God and failing in his duty: to speak the truth, that is a request that is *not very obliging*; for it evidently presupposes, that a man does not lay his duty much to heart, when he needs to be entreated to do it." †

If the powers which Timothy was to exercise in Ephesus are proof, that he had a fixed residence there as diocesan bishop, why will not the same argument answer in other cases? Why will it not follow, for example, that Paul and Barnabas were the resident prelates of Lystra, of Iconium and of Antioch? What was done

† Quoted by Powell, p. 53.

by Timothy, in Ephesus, that was not done by them, in these several places, in which they sojourned? Clearly nothing, which involved the possession of any higher prerogative: so that the same principle, which locates Timothy as the diocesan of Ephesus, would make each one of the apostles sustain the same relation to every place, in which they exercised their apostolical functions.

But, if there were nothing else against it, this whole figment in regard to Timothy's diocese, would be demolished by the fact, that, in Paul's valedictory address to the elders of Ephesus, he makes no allusion, either to him, or to any other one, occupying the station which he is supposed to have filled. This is an aspect of the subject, in regard to which there can be no mistake. Think, for a moment, of the marked and interesting circumstances under which this address was delivered. Between the apostle and the Ephesian church, there existed a bond of mutual attachment, which was strong and tender. Its ministerial officers were now before him; and the circumstances were such as to indicate, with sufficient certainty, both to him and to them, that they were never to meet again. Surely, he will now give them a word of counsel, applicable to all the relations they sustain. As an appropriate designation of

their office and character, he calls them “bishops”—he speaks of “the flock,” over which the Holy Ghost had appointed them overseers—he charges them, to take heed to themselves, and to all the flock, and “to feed the church of God”—but he utters not a word, from which it can be inferred, that they either were, or expected to be, under the direction and control of any ecclesiastical superior. Now if Timothy, his own son in the faith, was their diocesan, how is this to be accounted for? Is it credible, that such a charge was given, under such circumstances, containing no allusion to him? To say that Timothy was *absent*, at the time, would not alter the case: it would still be unaccountable, that the whole care and management of the church should be committed to the presbyters, without any thing to signify that the resident prelate was to have any concern in the matter.—Nor would it neutralize the objection, to say, that this interview between Paul and the elders of Ephesus, occurred *before* Timothy became their diocesan. If this was the fact, then Ephesus was *without* a prelate, at the time referred to—the organization of the church, there, was still defective—the most important officer of all was still wanting. And who can believe that, in this state of the case, Paul would have given them his final charge, without advert-

ing to the necessity of their having an ecclesiastical superior—without promising to appoint one, or directing them to choose one from among themselves—without even intimating that the presence of such a superior was desirable, or that his office had any place, by divine authority, in the proper constitution of the church? We feel compelled to unite with Daillé, in saying, that “the cause of our hierarchial gentlemen must needs run *very* low,” when it becomes necessary to maintain, under these circumstances, that Timothy was bishop of Ephesus, in the modern prelatial sense.

And if Timothy was not, in this sense, the bishop of Ephesus, are there any better or more cogent reasons for believing, that Titus was bishop of Crete? This is the next ground, on which a stand is attempted to be taken in defence of prelacy. And, as if to make it sufficiently broad, we are told of “*the large island* of Crete”—an island of “*one hundred cities*”—all committed to one man, to “set in order,” and “ordain elders in every city”! Surely he must have been a prelatial bishop! One would think, that this field was large enough for an archbishop. What bishop of modern times has ever had such a diocese? Manifestly, the argument drawn from the extent of the territory and population proves too much.



But who says that Titus was bishop of Crete, in the sense in which the word is here to be understood, or in any other sense? Is there any passage in the New Testament, which declares that this was the fact? This is not claimed, by those who make the assertion; but, as usual, we are told, that there are certain things from which it may be inferred. And the passage which is relied upon, mainly, is that in which Paul says to him—"For this cause, left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee." Titus i. 5. This is taken in connection with another, in which he is directed to admonish heretics, and to reject them, if they do not renounce their errors. Chap. iii. 10. From all this it is supposed to be evident, that the powers of ordination, and of discipline, were committed to his single hands—and that Crete was appointed to him, as the diocese, within which, these powers were to be exercised.

In regard to the first of these allegations, it is the same that we have already refuted, in the case of Timothy. As Paul was writing to Titus, as an individual, it would have been strange if he had *not* addressed him personally and singly. And, as to the substance of the charge which he gives him, it is nothing more than would be ap-

propriate on presbyterian principles, in designating an individual to any particular field, where churches were to be organized, and brought into a settled and permanent state. The truth is, that Titus was left, for a while, in Crete, as Timothy was besought to abide in Ephesus, to execute, under the direction of the apostle, what he could not stay to finish himself; and that, in this itinerant and extraordinary capacity, he was expected to exercise a general supervision over all that was needful to be done, in carrying out the plans which the apostle had laid. If his instructions prove that he was a prelate, or that no one but himself was to ordain and exercise discipline in Crete, they prove, with equal conclusiveness, that no one but himself was *to preach* within this field. Pursuing the same personal style of address, the apostle says—"speak *thou* the things that become sound doctrine." If the word "thou," when applied to ordaining and exercising discipline, means that *he alone* was to do these things, of course the same word, when applied to preaching, must mean that he alone was to preach. But, granting that he did ordain alone—which never can be shown—would this prove that he belonged to an upper grade in the ministry, as compared with others? All that could be derived legitimately from this would be, that one min-

ister of the gospel, especially when acting under the direction of an inspired apostle, might properly set apart another of the same grade, to the performance of the same work—which few of the reformed churches would be disposed to deny.

As to the circumstance of Paul's *leaving* Titus in Crete, going to prove that Crete was *his diocese*, we marvel just as much, that this should ever have been dignified with the name of an argument, as that the beseeching of Timothy to abide in Ephesus should have been considered as proving that he was the prelate of that city, and its suburban dependencies. As in one case, so in the other, we may ask,—Where should a prelati- cal bishop be *left*, but in his own diocese? And does not the fact, that he was left in a particular place, sufficiently prove that it was not the place of his fixed and permanent residence? Titus, like Timothy, was an itinerant—he was Paul's companion in labor, and travel—and, having been with him in Crete, he was “left” there, to set in order the things that were still wanting, and which the apostle himself could not wait to adjust. It is plain too, from a subsequent statement, that, in leaving him behind, he had produced a separation between himself and his faithful coadjutor, which he was anxious should come to an end as soon as possible; for he says, chap. iii. 10,

“When I shall send Artemas unto thee, or Tychicus, be diligent to come unto me to Nicopolis: for I have determined there to winter.” It is evident from this, that, when the epistle was written, he was already agitating the purpose of relieving Titus from the temporary duties which he had assigned to him in Crete—that he had partly fixed, in his own mind, upon the person who was to take his place—and that, as soon as the arrangement could be completed, he expected him to leave Crete, and become his companion again, as he had been aforetime.—A plainer case than this, we think it would be difficult to present. And we are, therefore, wholly unable to find the likeness of a prelate in Titus, any more than in Timothy.

But there is yet another resource: we are told, that the order of modern bishops is to be found in *THE ANGELS of the seven churches of Asia*. “Each of those churches,” it is said, “is addressed, not through its clergy at large, but through its ‘angel,’ or chief officer”—“Unto *the angel* of the church of Ephesus write”—“And to *the angel* of the church in Pergamos write,” &c. “This individual, called ‘the angel,’” it is farther said, “is, in each case, identified with his church, and his church with him”—“he is made responsible, individually, for the errors of the respective

churches, and is commended individually for their respective merits"—and the question is asked, as if the answer must of necessity be on the side of prelacy—"Who then was 'the angel'? What was his office"? Bishop Onderdonk, after repeating what is said concerning him, and interpreting the language to suit himself, exclaims—"SURELY A DIOCESAN IS HERE"?

We do not wonder that he should think so; but the question is, whether the mind of an individual must not be pre-occupied with prelatical notions, in order to make the discovery? Is there any thing in the meaning of the word "angel," which renders it necessary to suppose that the person referred to was a prelatical bishop? Must it be so interpreted? Is there nothing else to which it *might* refer? And, if there is, must we not know, from other and independent sources, that there were prelates in the primitive church, before it will be fair to conclude, that they were the persons to whom these epistles were addressed? According to our humble notions of ministerial rank and order, it is quite as likely, and much more so, that these "angels" were *parochial pastors*, than that they were *diocesan bishops*. And what forbids the supposition, that this interpretation may be correct?

In taking up the record, as it is, we find that

“the angel,” whoever he may be, is associated with *a single church*—“Unto the angel of *the church*,” &c—not *the churches*. And, in view of this fact, we ask which supposition is the most plausible—the one which makes him a parochial pastor, or that which supposes him to have been a prelatial bishop? How could he have been a prelate, if his relations extended only to a single church? I know it will be said, in reply to this, that the phrase “the church” is to be understood, as it occurs in each of these cases, in a collective sense, as signifying more congregations than one—that in each of the cities mentioned, with their suburbs, there were many churches—and that taken together they were called, as a whole, “the church.” But, it must be remembered, that this is a thing to be proved—the record does not say so—we deny entirely that such was the fact—it is a mere figment to suit the emergency.

The only proof, attempted to be drawn from scripture, is in the case of Ephesus. There, it is said, there were several presbyters, when Paul bade them farewell at Miletus, which was many years before the book of Revelation was written; and that, where there were several presbyters, it is fair to conclude there were several congregations. But the truth is, no conclusion could be more unfair. It is no uncommon thing, now,

and it was much less so then, to find a plurality of preaching presbyters in connection with a single church. Besides, if our system be scriptural, as we believe it is, there were ruling presbyters in connection with every church, who did not preach; so that the plurality of presbyters in Ephesus can be easily accounted for, without supposing a plurality of churches.

Erroneous notions, in regard to the extent of these ancient churches, lies at the foundation of much of the false reasoning which occurs in the support of prelacy. And for the purpose of setting this matter before you in its true light, I ask your attention, in this place, to the testimony of one, who was qualified to judge, and who will not be suspected of a disposition to crowd episcopacy out of its proper place. I refer to Sir Peter King—nephew of the celebrated Mr. Locke, and Lord High Chancellor of England. As the result of his careful inquiry into the constitution, &c., of the church for the first three hundred years, he confesses that there was, then, “but one bishop to a church,” and “but one church to a bishop”—and that “the bishop’s cure was never called a diocese, but usually a parish, no larger than our parishes.” In regard to Ephesus, in particular, he says—“As for the diocese of Ephesus, there was but one altar, or communion table,

in its whole territory, at which they all communicated together; whence they are said to break the one bread.”—“The members of this church could also meet together in one place, to send up their joint prayers to God in Christ: and therefore Ignatius condemns all those of that diocese, who did not assemble together in that one place, with the rest of the members thereof, to send up their prayers to God.”—“So that, if to communicate together, and to pray together, be the marks of a particular church, then this bishopric was one.” He takes the same ground in regard to the churches at Smyrna, at Philadelphia, &c.; and his opinion is corroborated by other eminently respectable authorities, which we might adduce.

We contend, therefore, that these Asiatic churches were just what the record specifies—they were single churches, of no great or unusual extent—and those who insist upon understanding the record differently, are bound to sustain their interpretation by satisfactory reasons. If we must have prelatical bishops, let us see, first, that we have room for them: there is not space enough in any office, or sphere of duty, connected with an individual church: and, if this sphere is to be enlarged to suit the necessity of the case, let us see that it can be done consistently with facts.



On our principles, there is no difficulty. The angels in question were not diocesan, but *scriptural* bishops—they were the overseers of single churches—they were the pastors of the flock of God, whose business it was to feed them with the bread of life in the word and ordinances of the gospel.

In addition to this, I might refer you to other senses of the word “angel,” which would be quite as plausible as that which makes it apply to a prelatial bishop; but I shall only detain you, further, by giving a specimen of the loose and contradictory statements, into which the advocates of prelacy are betrayed, in hunting after this order where it cannot be found.

I have before me an argument, by Bishop M’Illvaine, in which he contends for the prelatial character of the angels of the seven churches, upon the express ground, that to them “was appropriated, during their life-time, the title of *bishops*, as a distinctive title of their special office.” This, he says, “is not disputed”; and he quotes Ignatius as evidence. “Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, who personally knew and conversed with St. John, writing to the church of Ephesus not more than twelve years after St. John had addressed the angel of that church, in the book of Revelations, expressly says that Onesimus was then *its bishop*—‘Who (he says) according to the flesh is

*your bishop.*'” It may be fairly presumed, that, when the author penned this sentence, he was not aware of the manner in which it may be turned against himself: he has, unwittingly, surrendered the very point in debate. The true argument in the case runs thus:—Ignatius was an acquaintance and personal friend of the Apostle John: during the time of John and the other apostles, as is confessed on all hands, the name “*bishop*” was the title, not of a prelate, but of a parochial pastor: the angels of the seven churches were then called “*bishops*,” as “the distinctive title of their special office”: therefore the angels of the seven churches were not *prelates*, but *parochial pastors*! If there is any defect in this logic, we should like to know where it lies.

Now turn, for a moment, to a position taken by Bishop Onderdonk, on the same subject. When pressed by one of his opponents to say, why the “*angels*” were not called “either apostles or bishops”?—on the supposition, that these were the appropriate names of the superior order—he answers in the following language—“These ‘*angels*’ were addressed just at the time, when, as we learn from other sources, the name of *apostle* was about being relinquished to those individuals so called in scripture, and the name *bishop* WAS IN TRANSITU from the second order to the

first; the former title was losing, or begining to lose, its more general application; and the latter had not yet acquired its final appropriation.” —“The dignitaries in question were addressed, when it was somewhat *too late* to call them apostles, and *too soon* to call them bishops”! This, we think, is a choice specimen of its kind; and, when taken in connection with the argument of Bishop M’Illvaine, it shows upon what dark, uncertain, and inconsistent ground these gentlemen are compelled to stand. One stakes the cause of prelacy upon the fact, that the “angels” were *called* “*bishops*”—the other is at no loss to assign a sufficient reason why they were *not* called bishops—and, in this state of antagonism, what safety can there be in following the footsteps of either? The position of the former destroys his own cause; and that of the latter, while it is a mere fancy, borders too closely upon the ridiculous, to be entitled to a serious refutation.

Having thus disposed of the last scriptural argument for the divine right of prelacy, I invite your attention, in conclusion of this part of the subject, to the three following considerations.

1. If prelacy existed in the church, as founded by our Saviour and his apostles, *how does it happen that we never meet with* A SECOND, *or* A THIRD ORDINATION, in scripture? that is, an ordination

from a *lower* to a *higher* grade—from a deacon to a priest, or from a priest to a prelate. If these orders were in being, such transactions must have been frequent. And is it credible, that, among them all, not a single one should have been noticed in the sacred record? Not only are the scriptures silent, as to any such occurrence, but also the uninspired history of the church for more than *two hundred years*. The advocates of prelacy have been challenged to produce an instance from any record, for the first two centuries—they have never done it, and never will. And, if there were nothing else, this would be enough to show that the prelatical system had no existence in the primitive church.

2. If the government of the church is prelatical, by divine appointment, *why is it that we never meet with an ordination in scripture performed by A SINGLE PERSON*. The system supposes, that the ordaining power resides in prelatical bishops as individuals; and yet there is no case recorded, in which a single individual officiated—there was always a *plurality* of ordainers. It may be said, I know, that some one of the number was the *real* ordainer, and that the others only concurred; or that *all* the ordainers belonged to the superior grade. But this is mere assumption. It takes for granted, too, the thing to be proved; and that

is, that there *was* a superior grade. Of this, we have yet to see the evidence. And, to our minds, the indications are strong, that no such grade existed, from the fact, that, while the ordaining power is supposed to be lodged with prelates individually, there is no example of a single person performing the ceremony.

3. If there were prelates in the primitive church, *why do the apostles never refer to them in any of their Epistles?* We have alluded to this already; and we now ask your attention to it distinctly. The apostles write to “the saints,” and to the parochial “bishops, and deacons”; but never record a syllable in recognition of that superior officer, who is supposed to rule over all these, and without whom neither the church, nor the ministry, can exist. They speak of the authority which parochial pastors are to exercise and of the duties which they are to perform—they speak of the deacons, and of their qualifications—they call upon the people to know their spiritual rulers, and “to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake,”—but, while dwelling on these topics, they never introduce the remotest allusion to any one occupying the place of a prelate. And we ask, in all sincerity, *could* this have been the case, on the supposition that a prelatical

order was then in existence? The thing is unnatural, to a degree which exceeds belief.

We must take the liberty, then, of again repeating our first and fundamental position; and of asking you now to receive it as an established truth,—that “*there is no such functionary, known to the New Testament at all, as a PRELITICAL BISHOP.*” We have sought for him in all the places in which he is supposed to be visible, and we cannot find him. He does not appear by “name,” by “character,” or by “probable intimation.

We feel prepared therefore to conclude this discourse, by saying, in the language of another,—“The whole system, as to *scriptural* authority, is built on a sandy foundation; and is buttressed up by *violent assumptions, strained or false analogies, forced interpretations*, and ultimately comes to be placed, by concessions of their own, upon mere *human and ecclesiastical authority*. This is its proper basis. In this view of the case, they have a perfect right, if they think it best, to adopt it, to advocate, and to recommend it to others.”—“But to claim a divine right for this system, and for this, exclusively of all others; and that so as to declare that no ministry, except ordained by these modern apostles, is valid; that all the ordinances of all the protestant churches in Europe, besides the church of England, are vain, and without the

promise of Christ: this, we say, is such a piece of blind and bigotted arrogance, as to deserve severe exposure and rebuke. It is designed to promote a spirit of exclusiveness and intolerance: may such designs perish forever! and may all ministers learn that they are brethren; and that all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity are one holy, catholic, and apostolical church, built, not upon the traditions of men, but 'upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone.' '\*

\* Powell.

## DISCOURSE VI.



TESTIMONY OF THE FATHERS—NO PRELITICAL BISHOPS  
DURING THE FIRST TWO CENTURIES—RISE OF PRELACY.

MATT. xv. 9. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

A LARGE proportion of all the errors in religion, which have prevailed in the world, have resulted from allowing uninspired human authority to come in, in connection with the word of God, as a rule of faith. This was the rock, on which the Jewish people made shipwreck of all the precious interests involved in the covenant, which God had made with their fathers. He gave them a plain revelation, to be the guide of their faith and practice; but, instead of adhering to it exclusively, they, in process of time, received the traditions of men, as being of equal, and even of paramount authority. And this, more than any thing else, was the occasion of that extensively irreligious condition, in which they were found at the coming of their Messiah; and which led, through the



judgments of heaven, to their final downfall as a nation.

To say that the multiform heresies and abominations, which have appeared in connection with the Papal hierarchy, are to be referred directly to this source, would only be to utter what is too plain to require proof. And the same thing we are now compelled to say—though the remark may not be applicable to the same extent—of that lower, less complicated, it may be, but equally unscriptural hierarchy, the succession in which we have undertaken to discuss. It is one of those impressions that we cannot resist, if we were to try, that, if the claims of prelatial bishops to an exclusive place in the line of apostolical succession had never been referred to any other tribunal than the holy scriptures, they would long since have been set aside by common consent. There is nothing there, in support of these claims, which is so obvious and tangible as to command the assent of unprejudiced and reflecting minds. And this remark we do not venture, without having examined the ground upon which it rests. We have gone with the advocates of prelacy to the strong holds of their system, so far as scriptural arguments are concerned; and we have seen, that, when assailed with the simplest weapons of truth and argument, there is not one of their num-

ber that can stand. There is no such thing as a prelatial bishop to be found in the word of God, either with, or without a name. And this, we are confident, would soon be the judgment of all candid inquirers after truth, if the controversy were not renewed, and kept up, on another field.

But it is always an advantage to a weak cause, to escape from a rule of judgement which is plain and determinate, to one which is ambiguous, or difficult to be defined; and if, in some of its points, it is so indeterminate and inconsistent with itself as to amount to no rule at all, the advantage is so much greater—the controversy may then be kept up interminably—and a show of reason may be given to that, which, in point of fact, has no foundation to support it. This, accordingly, is the management resorted to, in supporting the system of high church episcopacy. Many of the advocates of this system admit, that it cannot be established by an appeal to scripture alone. Here I have only to recall to your recollection the acknowledgements of Tomline, Palmer, Hammond, Dodwell, Beveridge and others, which have been already quoted.\* These and other authors, not only speak of the scriptural evidence for episcopacy as “doubtful,” “faintly traced,” not “exactly recorded,” &c.; but they point us

\* See pages 45-47.

distinctly to “*the Greek and Latin Fathers,*” as the source from which the true and satisfactory evidence is to be derived. The ground of the controversy is thus shifted, from the scriptural platform, to mere human authority, uninspired, and therefore fallible—to such authority as stands in the same category with “the commandments of men,” referred to by our Saviour in the text, and “the traditions of men,” against which the churches are warned by the Apostle Paul.

And to give you an idea of the extent to which prelatical writers expect us to defer to this authority, I furnish you with the following expositions from the fountain head. In Tract No. 90, of the Oxford series, we find the following language,—“In the sense in which it is commonly understood at this day, *scripture is not*, on Anglican principles, *the rule of faith.*”—“We do not make scripture the rule of our faith, but that other things, in their kind, are rulers; likewise, in such sort, that it is *not safe*, without respect had unto them, *to judge things by the scripture alone.*”—Mr. Newman says,—“Catholic tradition is *a divine informant* on religious matters; it is *the unwritten word*. These two, the Bible and catholic tradition, form *together* a united rule of faith.”—The Gentlemen’s Magazine for March 1843, speaking of the church of England, says,—“Her standard of ap-

peal in matters of doctrine and discipline is Holy scripture, *as interpreted by the voice of the ancient church.*”—We add but another specimen, which is from Mr. Keble on Primitive Tradition—“How much more dutiful, with all seriousness, to use our privilege of belonging to a church, which, on the one hand, refers us to scripture as the standard and treasure of all necessary doctrine, on the other hand, ties her doctors AS MUCH AS THE COUNCIL OF TRENT DOES, *to expound scripture according to the consent of the ancient fathers.*”

We have taken no pains in making these selections; but have used those which happened to be nearest at the time. Others, of a similar tenor, might be produced to any extent. These are sufficient, however, to give a fair representation of the ground which is taken in relation to this point, by the advocates of prelacy and apostolical succession. Their doctrine, when set forth in its mildest form, is, that, as men may differ in their judgment as to what the scriptures teach, it is right and safe, to call in the ancient fathers as umpires, and let them decide—that, as they lived so near to the apostolic age, they must have known what the opinions of the apostles were, or how their writings were understood by the earliest churches—and that this is a consideration of so much weight, that we are bound to receive their

opinions on matters of faith and practice as correct, even if the scriptures should seem to us, in our private judgment, to inculcate a different lesson. So that, if they shall say that prelatical bishops are a distinct and superior order in the christian ministry, or shall speak of such bishops as existing in their day, we must accept this, as proving beyond all controversy, that such an order is of divine institution, whatever the scriptures may, or may not say, in relation to it. In this way, the very thing is done, which our Saviour charged upon the Jews: the word of God is made void by the traditions of men: and we are drawn away from a rule of faith which is plain, brief, and easily understood, to another, which is scattered through scores of folio volumes—written in dead languages, which few understand—inaccessible from the nature of the case to nine hundred and ninety-nine out of every thousand persons that live—containing puerilities, fancies, and contradictions without number—and affording discordant materials, from which persons of almost every shade of sentiment, may draw something, which will seem to support the theory which they desire to establish.

Now to all this, as a matter of principle, we entirely demur—not only, because it undervalues and dishonors the word of God, but because it

ties us to a rule of faith, which is far more likely to lead us astray, than to conduct us rightly. We could prove, from the testimony of the very fathers who are appealed to in this controversy, that, in their days, it was regarded as apostolical, *to worship the reliques of departed saints—to pray for the dead—to make the sign of the cross—to use consecrated oil*; nay we could prove that they received it as apostolical to believe, that, wherever *wood* is mentioned in the Old Testament, as the material of which any thing is composed, we are to regard it as a type of *the cross* of Christ—such as the wood of the *rods*, which Jacob stuck in the troughs before Laban's sheep, and the wood of the *staff*, with which he passed over Jordan, and the wood of the *ladder*, which he saw in a dream! any one who wishes to be satisfied on these points, will find enough for his purpose, in extracts from the writings of the fathers, contained in Vol. i. of the Miscellaneous Works of Dr. Middleton. In Taylor's Ancient Christianity, too, there is enough to satisfy the most incredulous, that, among the earliest of the fathers, it was regarded as apostolical, to advocate *the celibacy of the clergy*, and to hold this up as a virtue of the highest order. And surely, if authority was claimed for such absurdities as these, it is not wise to rely upon their interpretation of scripture, or their testimonies as

to apostolical usages, in reference to any thing else.

We beg you to understand, however, that, in adverting to these facts, we are not prompted, in the least degree, by a desire to escape from any legitimate effect which the testimony of these ancient writers is adapted to produce. Considered as fallible men like ourselves, who have no rule of faith to present, and whose judgment should be taken under all the circumstances for what it is worth, we are perfectly willing to admit them as witnesses upon the stand in the trial of this cause. We ask your attention to the following passages, as presenting the exact truth in the case.—“The Fathers will receive, and ought to receive, just the degree of respect that we should pay to any other men, and no more: that is, their authority will be in proportion to their knowledge, good sense, freedom from prejudice, honesty, and opportunities of forming a judgment. It may be supposed, indeed, that the last circumstance, considering their proximity to the apostolic age, would give them a decided superiority over every other class of writers; but, it is very possible, that their disadvantage in other respects may depress their authority in the greater number of cases below that even of a third-rate student of scripture of a later age—just as a man,

with bad eyes, may not see an object so clearly at fifty yards, as another, with good eyes, may see it at half a mile. Now, almost all the fathers had very bad eyes; and, what is worse, they attempted to remedy the defect by still worse spectacles."—"The reason of this phenomenon is not far to seek. Many of the fathers, indeed, were men of unquestionable genius, and of large erudition (such as it was;) and small portions of many of their writings may be read with profit. But they were all more or less tainted—most of them deeply—with the false maxims and pernicious prejudices which characterised their day; and from the influence of which, without being more than human, it was impossible that they could be free. This is no disparagement to their genius, or their learning, any more than it is disrespectful to Descartes or Kepler to affirm, that having been early imbued with false principles of science, they constructed theories which we do not feel bound to reverence, because we reverence the *men*. We can separate Descartes from his 'vortices,' and Kepler from his fanciful analogies between the laws of the planetary system and the 'five regular solids.' In like manner we may well despise *the interpretations* of Origen, without despising Origen himself."\*

\* Ed. Rev. for April 1843 p. 285.



In proceeding to take the testimony of the Fathers as to the constitution of the ministry in their day, it is all important that a definite understanding should be had as to what certain words and phrases, which are likely to occur in the course of the examination, shall be considered as implying.

If I should ask them, for instance, whether there were BISHOPS in the church of Christ in their time, and they should answer in the affirmative, the friends of prelacy must not insist upon the word *bishop* being so interpreted as to mean something *entirely different* from the sense which it bears in the writings of the apostles. There is, at this point, one of the most remarkable instances of shifting the use and meaning of terms, which the progress of any controversy has developed. And, if we could only prevail upon the advocates of diocesan episcopacy to be consistent with themselves, in regard to the import of the word "bishop," we should hear but little more of what the Fathers have to say in support of their cause. When we go with them to the apostolical epistles, to see whether a prelatial bishop can be found there, they tell us that we must not look for him under the *name* "bishop"—that the word "bishop," as used by the apostles, *does not mean* a prelate—that this is the scriptural name for the *second* order, and not for the *first*. But, the mo-

ment we turn from the apostolical writings, to the writings even of those fathers who personally knew and conversed with the apostles, behold the meaning of the word "bishop" is entirely changed! It signifies, in their mouth, a wholly different thing from that which it signified in the mouths of their inspired instructors. A bishop, now, is not a parochial pastor, but a prelate—instead of pointing the reader to a *middle* grade in the ministry, it points him to a *superior* one. The song, that '*names are nothing,*' is now hushed; and a name not only becomes every thing, but, without any notice of the change, is made to bear a new and unheard of sense.

I know it is said, in justification of this course, that, after the apostolic age, the name "bishop" was taken from the second order in the ministry and appropriated to the first; and this would no doubt answer to the exigency of the case exceedingly well, if the fact could be established. But where is the witness? when did the change occur? and by whose authority was it made? What was the name of the person or persons who ventured, even before Clement and Ignatius wrote, to mar the scriptural phraseology, by taking the word "bishop" from the place which the apostles had assigned to it, and turning it to a different use? To these questions, the common answer

is,—“*we learn it from Theodoret*”! “THEODORET,” says one, “*a christian writer who flourished ONLY about two hundred years AFTER those times*”!! This is the only witness brought to support such an important position. Theodoret flourished in the *fifth* century; and to him we are referred for testimony to an event, which is supposed to have occurred more than three hundred years before he was born! With those who can be satisfied with such proof as this, it is useless to reason. The unprejudiced inquirer will go with us, when we say, that, Theodoret to the contrary notwithstanding, it is fair to believe, that the earliest christian writers use the word “bishop” in the same sense in which it was used by the apostles.

Another thing to be considered, in taking the testimony of the Fathers, is that when they speak, as they sometimes do, of Bishops, Presbyters, and Deacons, we are not to suppose that they refer of course to three distinct *grades* in the ministerial office. Generally, as we shall see, they adopt the scriptural enumeration, and say, “Bishops and Deacons,” or Presbyters and Deacons; but, in a few cases, these names will all be found together, and in succession. Such passages are seized with avidity, by the advocates of prelacy, and are held up as affording conclusive proof of a

ministry of three orders. The Fathers, they say, speak of Bishops, Presbyters, and Deacons; and what more do we want? I answer, we want a great deal more; because we have already shewn, what indeed no one denies, that “bishop” and “presbyter,” in the language of scripture, are titles, not of different grades, but of one and the same grade; and it is not to be believed, without proof, that the Fathers, who lived near to the time of the apostles, intended to use them in any other sense.

And, if it is asked why they should use the names “bishop” and “presbyter” together, if they refer to the same grade, I answer, because, while every bishop is a presbyter, it does not follow that every presbyter is a bishop. A bishop is an overseer—he is the appointed pastor of a particular flock. But, besides him, there may be preachers of the gospel who are not pastors, and who belong to the grade of presbyters as well as he. Of such, there were many in the primitive church, as there are many in all the denominations of protestant christians at the present day; and that these should have been sometimes enumerated by the Fathers, in connexion with the parochial bishops, is nothing more than the circumstances of the case would lead us to expect.

With these remarks, then, we proceed to a

brief examination of this far-famed patristic tradition, which prelati- cal writers regard with so much veneration, and which is so essential to the support of their cause. And, that no exception may be taken to our course, we shall bring into view their own selections from these ancient writings—giving them in the words of their own translation—presenting them in the order of importance which they assign to them—and not stopping to discuss the question, in reference to particular passages, whether they are genuine or spurious; adding, of course, such other passages, as may seem to be necessary, in placing the true meaning of these writers before you.

I shall confine myself to the selections used by Percival, in his treatise on apostolical succession, which is circulated as a standard work.

He begins with CLEMENT—called Clement of Rome, to distinguish him from another of the same name, of Alexandria. He flourished about A. D. 100; and is generally supposed to have been the person referred to by Paul, Phil. iv. 3. The following is all that is relied upon from him—“It will behoove us, (christians,) looking into the depths of divine knowledge, to do all things in order, whatsoever our Lord has commanded us to do. He *has ordained*, by his supreme will and authority, both where and *by what persons*

*they* (the sacred services and oblations) are to be performed. For the chief priest has his proper services, and to the priests their proper place is appointed; and the layman is confined within the bounds of what is commanded to laymen." It would no doubt be difficult for an unpracticed eye, to discover the reason for resorting to this passage, since, on the face of it, there is not the remotest allusion to the subject under consideration. What Clement does not say of himself, however, he is *made* to say, thus,—he refers to a three-fold ministry, as existing under the Jewish dispensation; and, in doing this, his object must have been to indicate the existence of the same number of orders in the christian ministry! You will not expect me to occupy your time in exposing the weakness of such reasoning as this.

But let us hear what Clement *does* say in passages, which, of course, the advocates of prelacy never quote. I give you, here, the translation of Archbishop Wake. Speaking of the apostles, he says—"They went abroad, preaching that the kingdom of God was at hand. And thus preaching through countries and cities, they appointed the first fruits of their conversions to be *Bishops* and *Ministers*." The word which the archbishop here translates "ministers" is *διακονους*, *deacons*. So it is rendered in our version of Paul's Epistles;

and doubtless the reason why “ministers” was substituted for “deacons,” in translating Clement, was, that if the latter word had been chosen, it would have made him speak to the ear of the English reader exactly in the language of scripture—“bishops and deacons.” This is Paul’s own enumeration of ecclesiastical officers—meaning by “bishops” parochial pastors. He never referred to one of a superior grade; and Clement has followed his example.

In another place, Clement says,—“Wherefore we cannot think, that those may be justly thrown out of their ministry, who were either appointed by them (the apostles,) or afterwards chosen by other eminent men, with the consent of the whole church; and who have, with all lowliness and innocency, ministered to the flock of Christ in peace, and without self-interest, and were for a long time commended by all. For it would be no small sin in us, should we cast off those from their ministry (ἐπισκοπῆς) who holily and without blame fulfill the duties of it. Blessed are those priests, (ἱερεῖς,) who, having finished their course,” &c. Here is a still more glaring instance of so departing from the common translation of words, as to prevent the English reader from seeing, that Clement writes on the subject of the ministry, just as the apostles themselves did.

Why should the word *Πρεσβυτεροι* be rendered “priests,” instead of *presbyters*, if this was not the object? And why should *της επισκοπης* be rendered “their ministry,” instead of their episcopacy, or their place as *bishops*. Translate his words, as the same words are translated when used by Paul, and then he will speak just as Paul spoke. His allusion is to those, who occupied the place of *bishops*, or parochial pastors; and he pronounces his blessing upon them as *presbyters*—showing, conclusively, that in his time a bishop and a presbyter were one and the same person, as they had been in the time of the apostles.

From Clement, Mr. Percival passes to IGNA-TIUS, whom he calls “the friend and disciple of St. John, bishop of Antioch, A. D. 106.” And the following are the principal extracts from his writings.—“The Bishops appointed to the utmost bounds of the earth are the mind of Jesus Christ.” “I think you happy who are so joined to your Bishop as the church is to Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ to the Father; that so all things may agree in unity.”—“I exhort you that ye study to do all things in a 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.”—“Do nothing without



your Bishops and Presbyters.”—“He that does any thing without Bishops and Presbyters and Deacons, is not pure in conscience.”—“Attend to the bishop, to the presbytery, and to the deacons,” &c.

The force of these passages is supposed to lie in the single circumstance, that bishops, presbyters, and deacons, are named together. But we have already shewn, that there is no sufficient reason for supposing that these names were intended to indicate so many distinct *grades* in the ministry. Ignatius was writing, in all these cases, to particular churches; and he speaks to them, individually, of *their Bishop*. And what so natural, as to suppose that he means a bishop, in the scriptural sense? It is plain, from other considerations, that he can mean nothing else. He speaks of “the bishop and *the whole church*,” and of their coming “to the *same place*.” In his epistle to Polycarp, bishop of the church at Smyrna, he says,—“Let not *the widows* be neglected; be *thou*, after God, their guardian”—“Inquire after all *by name*. Do not proudly overlook the *men-servants*, and the *maid-servants*.” Do these sound like instructions to a diocesan bishop? or are they, manifestly, directions to the pastor of a particular church? How could a prelate be expected to individualize, in the manner here de-

scribed?—to inquire after each one in all his diocese “by name,” and attend to his personal desires and wants? The inference is unavoidable, that the bishop of Ignatius, like the bishop of Clement, is of no higher order than the overseer of a single church.

Another consideration, which settles the question in regard to the testimony of Ignatius, is, that he speaks of *presbyters* in terms which place them *too high*, to admit of their being under the government of a superior, in the character of a prelate. In his Epistle to the Trallians, he says—“be subject to your *presbyters* as to the APOSTLES of Jesus Christ”—“reverence the *presbyters* as the sanhedrim of God and COLLEGE OF THE APOSTLES.” To the Magnesians, he speaks of Sotio the deacon being subject “to the *presbytery* as to THE LAW of *Jesus Christ*.” And, in writing to the Smyrnians, he calls upon them to “follow the *presbytery* as THE APOSTLES.” It thus appears, that, while he speaks of a bishop and a plurality of presbyters in connection with each church, he puts the presbyters as high in rank and authority as is possible—that is, in the place of *the apostles*. And, if the people were to be subject to them as to the apostles, how is this consistent, in any possible way, with the idea, that the reins of government and

discipline were not in their hands, but in those of a superior bishop ?

The next father, on whom reliance is placed, is IRENEUS, A. D. 178. And he is quoted as writing thus—"Those elders in the church are to be obeyed, who have a succession from the apostles as we have shown, who, together with the succession, have received a certain true gift, according to the decree of the Father ; but the rest, who shun the chief succession, and are gathered together in any place, are to be suspected as heretics and persons of bad opinions ; or as schismatics, and conceited persons, pleasing themselves ; or, again, as hypocrites, doing this for the sake of gain and vain-glory ; and all these have fallen from the truth."—"The doctrine of the apostles is true knowledge ; and the ancient state of the church, and the character of the body of Christ, is according to the succession of bishops, to whom, in every place, they delivered the church."

The value of these passages is supposed to lie in the fact, that the writer speaks of bishops, and represents them as successors of the apostles. But here, the question returns,—What does he *mean* by a bishop ? And, it is somewhat strange, that any one should have failed to perceive, that, in reference to this point, the language just quoted explains itself. For the persons who are called

“bishops,” in the last part of the extract, are the same persons who are called “elders,” or presbyters, in the first: they are both represented as having a succession from the apostles; and, sharing as they do in this honor, the conclusion must be, that, instead of belonging to different grades, they are equals in office. This conclusion might be strengthened by almost any number of quotations from Irenæus. He is full of passages, which speak of bishops and presbyters, alike and indiscriminately, as having the apostolical succession. And, in one passage especially, he so interweaves the office of the presbyters with that of the bishops, that they cannot be separated: it runs thus,—“Obey those *presbyters* in the church who have succession, as we have shown, from the apostles; who, with the succession of *the episcopate* received the gift of truth,” &c. If this father had seen with the eyes of modern prelatists, he would not have expressed himself in such language. To say that presbyters have the succession of the episcopate (or bishop’s office) is just saying all that we contend for. It is granting that they belonged to one and the same order; and, as coming from Irenæus, it proves that in his day, as it was in scriptural times, the name bishop signified a presbyter, and not a prelate.

In addition to Clement, Ignatius, and Irenæus,

there are other fathers of the first two hundred years, to whom we might refer you. But we do not regard it as needful to extend the list; because it is not pretended, that any thing can be found in the authors of this period, more favorable to the cause of prelacy, than the passages just quoted. The three witnesses already examined, are those on whom the advocates of this system mainly rely; and if their testimony will not support the cause, it would be in vain to go to others, who speak in less explicit, or in more doubtful terms. You are therefore, now, in possession of the best and strongest evidence that can be adduced from the writings of the Fathers. And, on reviewing it, it would not surprise us, if those among you who have paid no particular attention to this part of the subject, should feel disposed to inquire,—Is this *all*? Is this the entire amount of that boasted proof, the report of which has rung the world over, as being sufficient to demolish the doctrine of parity in the christian ministry, and to establish the claims of diocesan episcopacy on an immovable basis? Yes; it *is* all: and the whole of it is not worth a rush, unless you take for granted the very thing to be proved—that the word “bishop,” as used by these writers, has a different sense from that which it bears in scripture, and must be understood to signify a

prelate, instead of a parochial pastor. This has not been proved, and never can be. And, while it remains *unproved*, the Fathers will continue to speak, *against* the hierarchy, and in favor of parity.

Before leaving this part of the subject, it may be proper to advert to the statement so often made by the advocates of prelacy, that *no one can tell* AT WHAT TIME, *subsequent to the apostolic age, diocesan episcopacy came into existence.* We will receive what they allege on this point, from the lips of Bishop M'Ilvaine. He says,—“It is notorious that at this present day, about eleven twelfths of those called christians in the world, are under the jurisdiction of an order of ministers called bishops, whose individual office embraces the essential particulars of that of the apostles, and whose succession they regard as derived by an unbroken chain from apostolic times.” Starting at this point, he goes backward on the line of history, and affirms, that, if this episcopal jurisdiction is an innovation upon scriptural usage, “history has preserved not *the slightest trace* of its beginning and progress”—“none perceived the usurpation”—“neither friend nor foe, advocate nor complainant, heathen, heretic, nor Jew, is known to have *observed* it”—and “without a *dream* of its being the unquestionable truth, it

continued till the sixteenth century *entirely unsuspected.*”

We have long ceased to wonder at any assertions which are ventured in behalf of this cause, however reckless and unsupported by proof; but we think that some deference was due, from the author of this language, to those who are acknowledged to have studied the history of the church and the world to some purpose, and yet have come to a very different conclusion. It would, at least, have been fair to have apprised the reader, that there are men of mind and learning who do not believe that these declarations are true.

As to the assertion, that “eleven twelfths” of the christian world are under the jurisdiction of prelatical bishops at the present day, it would not have been expedient, perhaps, to have gone into an exposition of the way in which the calculation is made. Either the Papacy is included in this calculation, or it is not: if it is, we care not to argue the question: those who choose this company are welcome to it; and we confess our inability to cope with them in the counting of numbers. If the Papacy is not included, then the result of the calculation is no where in the neighborhood of the truth.

The number of protestant christians in the world, may be estimated at *fifty-five* millions

Of these, about *twenty-four* millions, nearly one half of the whole, are Lutherans. These have Bishops by name : but they are not *prelatical* bishops, or bishops by divine right. It is no part of the Lutheran creed, that a bishop belongs to a higher *grade* in the ministry, and a presbyter to a lower. Luther himself was only a presbyter, and yet he consecrated their first bishop—three pastors uniting with him in the imposition of hands. And the Augsburgh Confession expressly declares, that, “according to the gospel, or *jure divino*, no jurisdiction belongs to bishops *as* bishops.” They are persons selected from among the presbyters, and set apart to an office of general supervision or superintendence ; but not regarded as forming a distinct and necessary grade in the constitution of the ministry.—The same thing is true of the Wesleyan Methodists. They have their Bishops, and also their Presiding Elders ; but neither of these are considered as belonging to a superior grade, established by divine authority : they are still presbyters in common with others, and are appointed to the office of superintendence from views of expediency alone. From the Lutherans, and Wesleyan Methodists, we might pass to the Moravians, the reformed churches of France, of Holland, of Germany, of Switzerland, &c.; and after passing round the



protestant world, and making up our statistics, we should find that the established Church of England, with her daughter in this country, is the only protestant church which maintains the divine right of prelatical episcopacy. All others left this invention behind them, when they escaped from Rome; and have reason to rejoice in the liberty with which Christ has made them free.

But the more important matter which concerns us now, is the allegation, that history has not preserved *the slightest trace* of the *origin* of prelacy; and that this may be considered as amounting to a demonstration, that it could not have been introduced, at any time subsequent to the apostolic age. This statement of the case proceeds upon the supposition, that we have no reason to believe that an event has occurred in past times, unless we are furnished with credible evidence of the fact, from *the history* of those times. But is this so? Let us apply the principle to some other things, which are not remotely connected with the present subject. Is there not an ecclesiastic, now in existence, under the name and occupying the station of an *archbishop*? Is it not granted by all, that, for such an office, there is no provision in the New Testament, and that, during the life-time of the apostles, it did not exist? Under these circumstances, how can we do otherwise than be-

lieve, that both the name and the office have come into use since? And yet, who can point us to the time, and the place, at which they were introduced, and detail the circumstances attending the event? This is one of the changes which history is not likely to record; for the reason, that they do not occur at once, and are not likely, therefore, to excite public attention at the time. They came on gradually and silently—they steal into existence, by slow and imperceptible degrees—so that there *is* no distinct line, on one side of which you can say they *are*, and on the other that they *are not*. After the sun has risen, we can say ‘it is day’; but in the twilight of the morning we find it impossible to distinguish accurately between the light and the darkness.

The following passage from Dr. George Campbell is worthy of notice, in this connection;—“There are very few, either protestants or papists, who with Baronius, and the other tools of ecclesiastical tyranny, pretend to assign to the metropolitcal or patriarchal authority an apostolical original, yet there is not a single objection that can be raised against the feasibility of an acquisition of power in the bishops over the presbyters, that does not operate with at least equal force against the feasibility of such an acquisition in the metropolitans over the bishops, and in the

patriarchs over the metropolitans; and I may add with equal reason, (as it came afterwards, in a great measure, to obtain,) in the Pope over the whole or greater part of the christian world. There is a gradation in the whole progress: the steps by which we ascend are exactly similar. *Nor is the origin of any one part of the system more unaccountable than of another.*”\*

Again, it is granted on all hands, as we have seen, that during the life-time of the apostles, the name “bishop” was used to designate a person of no higher grade than a presbyter: now, it is used to signify a prelate: a radical change has therefore occurred, in relation to this point; but who can tell *when*—by *whom* introduced—or by what *authority* sanctioned? Here, history is silent; and yet, who doubts the fact? I know it will be said, that *Theodoret* speaks of this change. But again the question arises, who was *Theodoret*? He lived more than *three hundred years after* the change is supposed to have occurred, and cannot therefore be a competent witness. He reports it as having occurred, but only says, in regard to the date of the event, that it was “in process of time”—which every one knows, as well without his testimony as with it. There is not a particle of historical testimony, therefore, as to

\* Ecclesiastical History, p. 149.

the particular period, within which this important change was introduced.

We join issue with the advocates of prelacy here; and pledge ourselves to show, that history has preserved traces of the rise of bishops as a superior grade in the ministry, which are far more distinct and full, than any traces which are to be found of the transfer of the name bishop from a parochial pastor to a prelate. If Theodoret is a good witness on the latter point, Jerome is far better on the former. He is put down as flourishing about A. D. 380, nearly a century earlier than Theodoret. For learning, as well as piety, he stood unequalled in his day. Erasmus says concerning him, that he was “without controversy the most learned of all christians, the prince of divines, and for eloquence that he excelled Cicero.” Bingham, author of the *Antiquities*, says that he “will be allowed to speak the sense of the ancients.” And the great Augustine remarks concerning him, that “Jerome knew every thing that was known by man.”

What, then, does Jerome say? The following passages are in place,—“A presbyter therefore is the same as a bishop; and before there were by the instigation of the devil parties in religion, and it was said among different people “I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephaz,” the

churches were governed by *the joint council of the presbyters*. But *afterwards*, when every one accounted those whom he baptized as belonging to himself, and not to Christ, it was decreed throughout the whole world that one, chosen from among the presbyters, should be *set over the rest*, and that the whole care of the church should be committed to him, and the seeds of schism taken away.”—“As to the fact that, *afterwards*, one was elected *to preside over the rest*, this was done as a remedy against schism,” &c.—“Our intention, in these remarks, is to show that among the ancients *presbyters* and *bishops* were THE VERY SAME. But that *by little and little*, that the plants of dissensions might be plucked up, the whole concern was devolved upon *an individual*. As the presbyters, therefore, know that they are subjected, *by the custom of the church*, to him who is set over them; so let the bishops know, that they are *greater* than presbyters MORE BY CUSTOM than by ANY REAL APPOINTMENT OF CHRIST.” Here, we think, is a *slight* trace at least, not only of the period within which bishops were elevated above presbyters; but also of the manner in which this distinction arose. Originally, Jerome says, they were “the very same”—the change was brought about “by little and little”—and it had its origin, in electing one presbyter “to preside over

the rest," as a remedy against schism. A more natural account of the way in which such a change might be supposed to occur, could not have been written. It is plain, full, and directly to the point—it comes from the most eminent man of his time; and was written less than three hundred years after the death of the last apostle.

Nor is Jerome the only one who has expressed himself on the same subject, substantially in the same way. Bishop Jewell represents Augustine, who was cotemporary with Jerome, as saying,—“The office of bishop is above the office of priest, *not by authority of the scriptures, but after the names of honor, which the custom of the church hath now obtained.*” A similar view is expressed by Hilary, (or Ambrose,) who flourished about A. D. 376—by Chrysostom, A. D. 398—by Theodoret, A. D. 430—by Primasius, who wrote about the same time—and by Sedulius, A. D. 470.\* They all agree with Jerome, that presbyter and bishop were the same at first, and that, in their day, a different arrangement had been introduced.

To the opinions of these Fathers, we shall now add some authorities from the most distinguished modern historians. Dr. Campbell says,—“From the imperfection of the ecclesiastic history of the

\* See Dr. Miller on the Christian Ministry, p. 205-208.

first ages, it is impossible to trace the progress of usurpation through its various stages, with all the clearness that could be wished. Enough, however, may be clearly discovered, when we compare the state of things in latter times, with what we learn from the sacred record, and from the genuine undisputed remains of the apostolic fathers, to satisfy us both of the reality and of the greatness of that usurpation.\*

Dr. Mosheim, who will be acknowledged to have studied the history of the church with care, in speaking of the first century, says,—“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.” \* \* “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.” \* \* “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

\* Ecc. Hist. p. 149.

of presbyters, in order to distribute among his colleagues their several tasks, and to be a centre of union to the whole society." Following the line of events into the third century, he goes on to say,—“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.”—Passing to the fourth century, he speaks thus,—“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 administration of ecclesiastical affairs; and afterwards they, by degrees, divested



even the presbyters of their ancient privileges, and their primitive authority." \* \* "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."

To the views of Mosheim, we add those of Gibbon, who had no favorite views of church government to support, and may therefore be supposed to write impartially. In his "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," he says, in reference to 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.”

\* \* “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 united councils. But the most perfect equality of freedom requires the directing hand of a superior magistrate; and

the order of public deliberation 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 tranquility, which would so frequently have been interrupted by annual, or by occasional elections, induced the primitive christians to constitute an honorable 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."

We here close our citation of authorities. They agree entirely as to the main facts in the case. And yet, in the face of their united judgment, we are gravely told, that the divine right of prelacy was never called in question for sixteen hundred years; and that, if any change did occur in the government of the church during this period, "neither friend nor foe, advocate nor complainant, heathen, heretic, nor Jew, is known to have observed it"!!!

The first step, in the course of innovation upon the scriptural model was the choice of one presbyter to preside over the rest : afterwards he became a standing president, and finally a president for life : to this president, in process of time, the name bishop was applied as his distinctive title. And, advancing from step to step, the usurpation grew, until it ended, not merely in diocesan episcopacy, but in popery itself.

Our argument against the divine right of prelacy is now finished. We have sought in vain for a prelatical bishop, in connection with the church as founded by our Saviour and his apostles. He does not appear, in the uninspired history of the first two centuries, any more than on the pages of the New Testament record. In the writings of the earliest fathers, as well as in the language of the apostles, bishops and presbyters are “THE VERY SAME.” And this is so obvious, that we are not surprised to hear even a prelate expressing himself in the following terms,—“I hope my readers will 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 our purpose.”\*

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

## DISCOURSE VII.



THE APOSTOLICAL SUCCESSION BROUGHT TO THE TEST OF HISTORY—CANNOT BE TRACED—NEITHER IN THE LINE OF THE ROMISH, NOR OF THE ANGLICAN CHURCH.

NEHEMIAH vii. 64. These sought their register among those that were reckoned by genealogy, but it was not found: therefore were they, as polluted, put from the priesthood.

THIS passage has reference to the mode of ascertaining the line of succession in the Jewish Priesthood. This office was hereditary in the family of Aaron; and the first-born of the oldest branch of this family was the high priest, when there was no ceremonial blemish to interrupt the natural order. Under these circumstances, all that was needful, in determining the claims of an individual to the priesthood, was a knowledge of his family relations. And that nothing might be wanting towards an easy ascertainment of these relations, every family was required to prepare and preserve a genealogical record—the original of which was lodged at Jerusalem, to be consulted when necessary. So that when a difficulty

arose, as to the claims of an unknown individual, he had only to produce his register, and all were ready to abide by its decision.

The case adverted to in the text, was a case in which the decision was *against* the persons whose names are mentioned in the history. Their title to the priesthood was disputed; and to establish it, they sought the register of their names in the genealogical tables, but they were not to be found. And, without farther ceremony, they were “put from the priesthood,” “as polluted”—that is, as not entitled, from this circumstance, to the honors of the office.

This was a righteous decision; because the rule of judgment was scriptural, and safe in its operation. And if those of our own, or of any other age, who claim to be the true and only successors of the apostles in the power of ruling the church and perpetuating a gospel ministry, could substantiate their claims by any such evidence as that which the application of such a rule would furnish, we should not think for a moment of calling their claims in question. We have no right, indeed, to demand evidence of precisely the same kind; but we have a right to insist upon proof which will be equally conclusive; because the interests involved are too momentous to be hazarded upon uncertain and doubtful grounds.

If there is any foundation in truth for the doctrine of prelatical succession, the consequence in relation to our country must be, that, of more than *two millions* of professing christians, less than *one hundred thousand* have any true connection with the church of Christ—more than *nineteen twentieths* are to be set down, as connected with an unauthorised and spurious ministry—their churches are to be regarded as no churches, their sacraments as no sacraments, and their hope of salvation as unsanctioned by the promises of God. In view of this state of the case, we fully agree in opinion with a living bishop, when he declares this question of apostolical succession to be “a question involving the eternal interests of millions.” And, where such interests are to be disposed of, we have a right to expect that every thing will be made plain: we may say, with good reason, to the few men among us who claim to be exclusively the successors of the apostles,—Produce *the evidence* of your claim, and let it be of such a nature that none can misinterpret or evade it. If you cannot point us to a register, in which your names are written by competent authority, or exhibit the signs of an apostle in divers wonders and miracles of the Holy Ghost, give us at least such proof as will demonstrate that you are

not mistaken—and then, we shall not hesitate to receive and honor your exclusive pretensions.

Our object in this discourse will be to show, that, even granting every thing else which this system claims, THE LINE OF SUCCESSION CANNOT BE TRACED—no prelatical bishop of the present day can be sure, on his own principles, that he is connected with the apostles by an unbroken series of valid ordinations.

No doubt if bold and confident *assertions* were to be accepted as evidence, the proof would be easy; for, accustomed as we are, in connection with this whole subject, to meet with strong and sweeping assertions which are unsupported by facts, we think that one of the choicest examples of this method of operating upon the public mind appears at the point at which we have now arrived. Dr. Hook says,—“This continued descent is *evident to every one who chooses to investigate it*”—“There is not a bishop, priest, or deacon among us, *who cannot, if he pleases, trace his own spiritual descent from St. Peter, or St. Paul.*” The Oxford divines say,—“As to the fact of the apostolical succession, that is, that our present bishops are the heirs and representatives of the apostles by successive transmission of their prerogative of being so, this is *too notorious to require proof. Every link in the chain is known, from*

St. Peter to our present Metropolitans." An author before me challenges the whole world to produce "*a flaw in the line of descent*"; and says,— "We can give you *the lists* of our bishops from the earliest to the present times." And, in a Dictionary of the Church, published in New York in 1839, we are told, that it cannot bear any dispute, that "*it is now more easily to be proved, that the Archbishop of Canterbury was canonically ordained, than that any person now living is the son of him who is called his father* ; and that the same might have been said of any archbishop or bishop, that ever sat in that or any other episcopal see, during the time of his being bishop."

That all the friends of diocesan episcopacy are so far deluded as to embrace this fancy, we do not mean to insinuate. On the other hand, we rejoice to know that thousands are found in their ranks, who not only dissent from the opinion expressed in the foregoing extracts, but even repudiate the notion as absurd.

The judicious Hooker admits, that ordinations have often occurred without a bishop to ordain, and says,—"*We are not simply, and without exception, to urge a lineal descent of power from the apostles by a continued succession of bishops in every effectual ordination.*"

Bishop Hoadley's opinion is thus expressed,—



“As far as we can judge of this, God’s providence *never yet, in fact, kept up* a regular uninterrupted succession of rightful bishops.”—“It hath not pleased God in his providence to keep *any proof of the least probability, or moral possibility*, of a regular uninterrupted succession; but there is a great appearance, and humanly speaking *a certainty* of the contrary, *that the succession hath often been interrupted.*”

Bishop Stillingfleet says,—“By the loss of the records of the British churches, *we cannot draw down* the succession of bishops from the apostolic times; that of the bishops of London, by Jocelyn, of Furnes, not being worth mentioning.”

Archbishop Usher quotes with approbation another author who states,—“The accounts given of British bishops, who stand at the head of the succession, were rather agreeable to *common fame and opinion* than any *certainty of history.*”

Archbishop Whately says,—“*There is not a minister in all christendom*, who is able to trace up, *with any approach to certainty*, his own spiritual pedigree.” We read of bishops consecrated when mere children; of men officiating, who barely knew their letters; of prelates expelled, and others put into their places, by violence; of illiterate and profligate laymen, and habitual drunkards, admitted to holy orders; and, in short,

of the prevalence of every kind of disorder and reckless disregard of the decency which the apostle enjoins. It is inconceivable, that any one, even moderately acquainted with history, can feel a certainty, or any approach to certainty, that amidst all this confusion and corruption, every requisite form was, in every instance, strictly adhered to by men, many of them openly profane and secular, unrestrained by public opinion, through the gross ignorance of the population among whom they lived; and that not one, not duly consecrated or ordained, was admitted to the sacred offices."

The present Bishop of Hereford remarks in a charge to his clergy,—“ You will exceed all just bounds, if you are constantly insisting upon the necessity of a belief in, and the certainty of, the apostolical succession in the bishops and presbyters of our church as the only security for the efficacy of the sacraments.”—“ To spread abroad this notion would be to make ourselves *the derision of the world.*”

We only add the following language from a recently published “ Plea for Episcopacy,” by the Rev. J. E. Riddle, himself also a minister of the church of England,—“ Whatever may become of the apostolic succession as a theory, or an institute, *it is impossible at all events to prove THE FACT of*

*such succession*, or to trace it down the stream of time. In this case the fact seems to involve the doctrine; and if the fact be *hopelessly obscure*, the doctrine is *irrecoverably lost*.”—“It is impossible to prove the personal succession of modern bishops, in an unbroken episcopal line, from the apostles, or men of the apostolic age.”

Now if there are names, among the living or the dead, worthy of being referred to as authority on such a subject, they are certainly some of those from whom these expressions of opinion have come. And yet, as if no such intimations had fallen from the lips of friend or foe, the dogmatic assertion continues to be repeated, without proof, that there is no difficulty whatever in tracing an unbroken line of valid episcopal ordinations from the time of the apostles to the present day.

It is not a little amusing to find the position taken by some modern defenders of the system, that the burden of proof lies upon those who *deny* the apostolical succession. ‘The final promise of Christ to the apostles,’ it is said ‘guarantees that there *shall be* a succession—if the succession has failed, the promise of Christ has failed also—we are entitled therefore to assume that it has *not* failed—and those who say that it has, are bound to shew when, where, and in what respects.’ Well and conclusively reasoned, no doubt!—if you

admit that Christ promised *just such* a succession, as that which this argument contemplates. For such a succession, however, we have shewn there is no starting point in the word of God : such a succession Christ never promised : and we find additional proof of this in the fact, that no sufficient evidence can be produced, that a succession of this particular kind has obtained and been perpetuated in the world.

In any chain, consisting of links depending upon each other, the strength of the whole is just equal in amount to that of the weakest part : the entire chain will bear no more than the weakest link is adequate to sustain : in proving that one is defective, therefore, you destroy the utility of all the rest, however perfect and massive you may suppose them to be. Now, in the chain of the apostolical succession, the links are so many successive acts of ordination, performed in a certain way, by one prelati- cal bishop upon another—each one depending for its validity upon that which immediately preceded it. In order therefore to establish the defectiveness of the whole, it is not necessary to travel along the entire line and inspect the condition of every part ; but only to prove, that there are one or more places, at which the links are unsound, or the chain broken. From any given point, at which this fact can be

established, the succession ceases—all that comes after this is worthless, on the principles of the succession scheme itself.

We proceed then, in accordance with these views, to examine some parts of the chain, which is supposed to connect the prelatical bishops of the present day with the apostles of Christ.

As the case is now generally presented, there are *two* lines of descent relied upon; or rather, in tracing backwards, the line has *two branches*—one running through the Papacy up to the apostles, through the first bishops of Rome; and the other running through the Anglican church, as distinct from the church of Rome, and connecting with one or more of the apostles, who are supposed to have preached the gospel, and established churches in the island of Great Britain.

In regard to *the first* of these, we find on inquiry, that, at the starting point, where every thing ought to be perfectly plain, there is such an entire want of evidence in support of the facts alleged, that we are thrown at once into a state of inextricable uncertainty and doubt. Prelatical writers themselves are not agreed, as to *which* of the apostles, was the head of the succession at Rome. Instead of assigning the position with confidence to either one, the phraseology generally is, “St. Peter, or St. Paul.” Here is the language of hesitation to

begin with : it is mere guess-work, as the phraseology sufficiently shows. Some, indeed, with an air of greater confidence, leave out the name of Paul, and speak of Peter alone, and without qualification, as having been the apostolical bishop of Rome. This is the opinion to which the advocates of the succession especially incline. But when we ask for the evidence, on which this opinion is based, we are furnished with nothing better than the most uncertain tradition. The challenge has often been given to the papacy, and to all others who claim to be the successors of Peter, as bishop of Rome, to produce any proof that he ever was at Rome at all—and they have never done it. The probability is that he never was; and that he did not reside permanently in Rome, is as certain as any thing can be, which depends upon circumstantial evidence. A large proportion of the book of the Acts of the Apostles is employed in giving an account of his labors—mention is made of him in different places; in Jerusalem, Samaria, Lydia, Joppa, Cæsarea, &c.—but not a word is said of him in connection with Rome. Paul, in writing from Rome, never speaks of him—even his last epistle to Timothy, in which he assured him that the time of his departure was at hand, though he sent salutations from all the brethren, from Eubulus, Pudens, Li-

nus, &c., he makes no allusion to Peter. It is passing strange, if, under these circumstances, he could have been the resident prelate of Rome.

But, supposing the alleged fact on this subject to be established by sufficient evidence, the question arises, who were Peter's *successors* in the bishopric of Rome? And here, when we collect and compare the opinions of prelatial writers, we find nothing but 'confusion worse confounded.' Dr. Hook and others, indeed, will read off the list, as if all were light and certainty, and will say,—“These great apostles (meaning Peter and Paul,) successively ordained Linus, Cletus, and Clement.” In opposition to this, however, there are quite as many, who affirm, that the order thus assigned to the successors is all a mistake—that the first bishop of Rome, after the apostles, was not Linus, but Clement—and some declare, that Clement and Cletus are both to be placed before Linus. Bishop Pearson thinks he has shown, that Linus died *before* Peter; and, if so, he could not have been one of his successors, in any part of the line.—Again Eusebuis, who is relied upon for authority that Linus was the first bishop of Rome, declares that he received the episcopate “*after* the martyrdom of Paul and Peter.” And, if this was the case, who ordained and installed him? If Peter and Paul were dead, when the

episcopate was conferred upon him, of course he did not receive it from either of them; and if not, who knows that the powers conferred upon him were prelatical powers? Perhaps, after all, he was set apart to his work by some body of humble presbyters; and, in that event, the virtue of the succession was tainted at its very source.

The truth is, it cannot be ascertained, with any thing like an approach to certainty, *who* was the first bishop of Rome. And, if it could, there would be an insurmountable difficulty still remaining; and that would be, to prove that the bishop of Rome who succeeded the apostles was the bishop *of a diocese*, as distinguished from the overseer of a particular church. It never has been shown, and it never can be, that there were more churches in Rome at this time than one. Lord King, to whom I have already referred, expresses himself in the following way,—“How large the diocese of Rome was, may be conjectured by that, 1. All people thereof could meet together to perform divine service, &c. 2. In this diocese, there was but one church or meeting place; for, when bishop Anterus died, all the brethren met together in the church to choose a successor.” This opinion, especially as coming from a man of real learning and closely connected with the hierarchy, is worthy of special regard.



To say the least of it, it is an opinion which never can be refuted; and therefore, even granting that Linus succeeded the apostles immediately, it remains to be shown, that the powers which he exercised in Rome were any higher than those which belong to the pastor of a particular church. If Lord King is right in saying, that, when a bishop died, “all *the brethren* met together in the church to choose a successor,” then it is certain that the bishops of Rome, at that time, were nothing more than parochial ministers. For who ever heard of “all the brethren” of a particular church meeting together to elect a prelatial bishop?

The same doubts which hang over the question, who was the first bishop of Rome? equally attend all investigations as to the *second* or *third* link in the chain. Dr. Prideaux says, “there is *no certainty* to be had.” Even Cabassute, the Popish historian, says, “it is a *very doubtful* question.” Dr. Calamy, in speaking of the tables of succession, declares that “the head of the Nile is not *more obscure* than the first part of these tables.” Stillingfleet says, it “is as *muddy* as the Tiber itself.” And Dr. Comber, in arguing with the defenders of the Papacy, says,—“Upon the whole matter, there is *no certainty* who was bishop of Rome next to the apostles, and therefore the Ro-

manists build upon *an ill bottom*, when they lay so great weight upon their *personal succession*." Apply this to the succession of the hierarchy, to which Dr. Comber himself belonged, and the remark will have equal weight. The high church system and the Papacy stand, in this respect, upon the same ground. They build alike upon an ill bottom; because they both rely upon a succession, which cannot be traced; and which, if it could, would make the Prelate of one, as well as the Pope of the other, a descendant of nothing higher than a parochial pastor.

But we will suppose, for argument, that every thing in regard to the first bishops of Rome was just as the advocates of prelacy would have it—that Rome, with its dependencies, was a diocese in the modern sense—that Linus was ordained as bishop of this diocese by Peter—that what he received from the apostle was transmitted to others after him in regular order—and that this succession was continued without interruption for centuries: still, there are numerous places, farther down in the chain, where, beyond a doubt, it was broken. To a few of these, only, will our limits permit us to refer.

We cannot proceed intelligibly, however, without stopping here, for a moment, to set aside a position, which is now resorted to uniformly by

the friends of the succession, to aid them in their passage along the line of descent: it is, that *the validity of ordination is not affected by the IMPIETY, or HERESY, of the person ordained*—that, *whatever* he may be, as to his creed or moral character, he is a true minister, if only the hands of a prelate have been laid upon him, and, therefore, that the right performance of the ceremony of ordination is the *only* thing, into which it is needful to inquire, in tracing the line of succession. This is *monstrous*, on the face of it; and, for obvious reasons, cannot be admitted.

We take an extreme case, for the sake of illustration. Suppose a man to be openly and avowedly *an atheist*. Would the imposition of hands make him a duly authorised and commissioned minister of Christ? Would he, *remaining* an atheist, be the actual depository of ‘apostolical grace,’ and the sure means of communicating it to his successors? This will hardly be pretended.—Suppose another individual to be a professed believer in the existence of God; but, at the same time, a professed unbeliever in *the divine origin and inspiration of the Bible*? Would ordination invest *him* with the ministerial character, and commission? Is there any such difference, between an atheist and a deist, that the imposition of hands could do for the latter, what it

could not do for the former?—Farther, suppose a man to receive the Bible as true, but to deny altogether *the divinity and atonement of Christ*. Would his ordination be valid? And, in consequence of such an act, could he be the means of transmitting a true ministry to succeeding ages? In other words, can a man be a truly commissioned minister of Christ, who makes it his business to DENY “the Lord that bought him,” and to bring “swift destruction” upon himself, and upon all who embrace the doctrine which he preaches? Once more, suppose an individual to be a nominal believer in all the fundamental doctrines of scripture; but notoriously, habitually, and without disguise, *abandoned to every species of immorality and profligacy*. Would a canonical ordination bring him into the ranks of the true ministry, and render him a safe link in the chain of succession?—Those who would answer these questions in the affirmative, may as well be left to themselves: they have embraced a form of delusion, which no human argumentation can be expected to remove.

It may not be amiss, however, to suggest, that ordinations *have been* set aside as invalid, for reasons *far less important* than those enumerated above; and that too, by authorities, to which high-churchmen are very fond of appealing. The

Apostolical Canons, which they often quote, expressly say,—“If any bishop, priest, or deacon, obtain his dignity *by money*, let him, and him who ordained him, be *deposed* and *wholly cut off* from communion, as Simon Magus was by Peter.” No. 22.—And the Council of Chalcedon, composed of six hundred bishops, which sat A. D. 451, say,—“If any bishop ordain *for money*, &c., let him that is ordained be *never the better for his ordination*.” Can. 2. These decisions are in accordance with scripture, and with common sense. No prelate, or other ordainer on earth, possesses the right of setting apart to the ministry of Christ, those whose faith or practice is in direct opposition to the plain principles of the word of God. All such acts are *null and void*, from the nature of the case.

With this principle for our guide, then, we shall find but little difficulty in conducting you to places, where the chain of succession is broken, and the succession itself irrecoverably lost.

To say nothing of earlier and less vital departures from “the faith once delivered to the saints,” we meet, early in the *fourth* century, with an extensive defection in respect to *the divinity of Christ*: I refer to the opinion broached by Arius, a presbyter of Alexandria; and known since, in the history of the church, under the name of Arian-

ism. He maintained that Christ was a mere creature; and this opinion prevailed so extensively, as to lead to the calling of the council of Nice, at which it was considered and finally condemned, A. D. 325. During the prevalence of this heresy, it was embraced and advocated by a large number of the existing bishops of the church. It is not to be doubted, that many, by whom the Son of God was thus denied and dethroned, were ordained by those who held the same opinion. Here, then, the conclusion is inevitable, that the succession was tainted, at many important points, at the same time. It must either be admitted, that one WHO DENIES Christ, may be a duly commissioned SERVANT of Christ, or that all the ordinations performed by the Arian bishops, were no ordinations at all. The former will hardly be contended for; and, therefore, the latter must be held to be the truth in the case.

Look at this fact, then, in its application to the succession. There can be no reasonable doubt, that a large proportion of all the episcopal ordinations existing in the world, are such as derive their virtue from the Arian line. For aught that can ever be proved to the contrary, his Grace of Canterbury, and of course all the bishops of this country, who have received their episcopal powers from him, have no other succession than that,

which has come through a race of pretended bishops, who deposed the Son of God from his mediatorial throne, and denied, at the same time, the divinity and personality of the Holy Spirit. If a lineal descent from such predecessors involves the idea of succession at all, it is a succession, not in the service of Christ, but in the work of disseminating error, and destroying the souls of men.

Leaving this part of the chain, we pass now to remark, that, unless we admit those to be duly commissioned ministers of Christ, whose lives are an open disgrace to his religion, and who live to no other practical end than to retard its progress, it will be impossible to carry the line of succession, untainted, through *the dark ages of* THE PAPAL REIGN. Let Bishop M'Ilvaine speak, in regard to the character of that system, which embosomed the succession for centuries. Alluding to the Pope, "sitting as God, in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God," he proceeds to say,—“The grand scheme of that singular potentate has always been, while graciously permitting the *name* and *show* of bishops and dioceses, to reduce all into abject dependence on his infallible will; he, taking the place, as he calls himself the alone vicegerent of Christ, the invisible head; and thus seeking to reduce all office and citizenship in the universal church, into one

consolidated mass of united confusion.” \* \*  
“Such is *the scheme of Satan*, against which the protestant ensign of our parent church was lifted up, and the old dioceses of oriental christendom, have been for centuries contending. This it was, that *kindled the persecutions* of the English Reformation; and *burned to death* those venerable bishops of Christ, Cranmer, and Latimer, and Ridley, and Hooper; not to mention the many confessors of lower place, but of equal faith and constancy. Had they only acknowledged the supremacy of the Pope they might have *died in their beds.*”

This, it must be confessed, is pretty harsh treatment, to come from one who is dependent on the Pope for his apostolical succession! The bishops and dioceses, it seems, which were made by the Papal authority from age to age, were nothing more than “*the name and show*”—the whole scheme was nothing else than “*the scheme of Satan*”—it was carried out, by kindling the fires of persecution, and burning to death the true servants of Christ—nay, the head and prime mover in this operation, not only claimed to be the vicegerent of Christ, but appropriated to himself the name and character of “*GOD*”—and yet, it is through him, and the bishops ordained by him and his legates, that the succession comes!!



Every bishop, therefore, in this country and in England, must trace his pedigree through bishops who had nothing more than "the name," and through a system of ecclesiastical tyranny and persecution, which is acknowledged to be the "*antichrist*" of the New Testament.

But there are many advocates of the succession, who are more tender of the reputation of "*our Lord God, the Pope,*" than Bishop M'Ilvaine. And this renders it expedient to enlarge a little, upon the character of the Papacy, during the dark ages, that you may judge how far a validly ordained ministry could come, through such a sink of iniquity, and of innumerable abominations. The difficulty is not to procure testimony, but to know what to select.

The opinion of the English church of the reformation, may be learned from the fact, that the *litany* of the Book of Common Prayer, published during the reign of Edward VI., contains the following petition,—“From the tyranny of the bishop of Rome, and all his *detestable enormities*, good Lord deliver us.” Even Baronius himself, who was a cardinal in the Romish church, acknowledges that, “for fifty Popes in succession, there was not a pious man.” And, in reference to the *tenth* century in particular, he writes in the following language,—“O what was then the face of

the holy Roman church! how filthy, when *the vilest and most powerful harlots ruled in the court of Rome!* by whose arbitrary sway, dioceses were made and unmade, bishops were consecrated, and (which is inexpressibly horrible to be mentioned!) *false popes, their paramours,* were thrust into the chair of St. Peter." \* \* "In these elections, no mention is made of the acts of the clergy, either by their choosing the pope at the time of his election, or of their consent afterward. All the canons were suppressed into silence, the voice of the decrees of former pontiffs was not allowed to be heard, ancient traditions were proscribed, the customs formerly practiced in electing the pope, with the sacred rites and pristine usages, were all extinguished. In this manner, *lust*, supported by secular power, excited to frenzy, in the rage for domination, *ruled in all things.*"\* How an uninterrupted line of canonical ordinations could run through such scenes as these, it is for the advocates of the succession to show.

Of a piece with the testimony of Baronius, is the following from Episcopus,—“It is a matter of historical record, that, for fifty or eighty years together, there have been *two* or *three popes* at the

\* Quoted by R. Southey in his *Vind. Ecclesiæ Anglicanæ*, p. 359. Lond. 1826.

same time ; one of them denying to another *the very name of christian*, reproaching each other with the appellations of *heretic* and *antichrist*, and each pronouncing the other *an unlawful pope* ; that one *cut off two of the fingers* of his predecessor ; *dug up the bodies of others from their graves, and having insulted their ashes, ordered their bodies to be cast into the Tiber* ;—that, sometimes, all the three popes together were condemned and degraded, by a general council, as *false popes, heretics, and ungodly wretches*, not even to be reckoned in the number of christians ; and that, nevertheless, *many of the bishops and clergy were ordained* by these false popes.” What effect could ordination by these monsters have, in perpetuating a true succession ? And yet there is not a bishop now living, who can satisfy himself upon sufficient grounds, that his line of descent is not traceable to them.

Father Paul, of the order of the Servites—a religious order of the Romish church—utters his confession, in regard to the iniquity and disorders of those times, in the following language,—“During the space of eighty years, wherein Italy labored under the extremest confusions, as well in the civil government as ecclesiastical, especially in the papacy, we must not expect to find *any traces or form of good government* in the

church, but *a mere chaos of impieties*, and a general preparative and forerunner of the miserable revolutions and disorders which followed. Popes were then excommunicated by their successors, and their acts cursed and annulled: not excepting the very administration of the sacraments. Six popes were driven out and dethroned, by those who aspired to their places; two popes put to death, and Pope Stephen VIII. wounded in the face, with so much deformity, that he never appeared in public. *Theodora, a famous courtesan*, by the interest and faction she had then in Rome, got her professed lover chosen pope, who was called John X. And John XI. was chosen pope at the age of twenty years, *the bastard of another pope*, dead eighteen years before. And in short, such a series of wild disorders gave occasion to historians to say, that those times produced, not *popes*, but MONSTERS."

We need not pursue these horrid details. The Popes of these times are immortalized in the annals of human depravity. The tendency of their whole lives was to bring the religion of the Bible into contempt, and to promote infidelity and crime. And to suppose that any form of ordination by man, could constitute them the duly commissioned servants of Jesus Christ, is an outrage upon common sense, as well as destructive of all

the great principles which lie at the foundation of revealed religion. Alas, for the succession, that derives its integrity and virtue from such a source!

There is a consciousness, however, even on the part of its warmest advocates, that, in public estimation, the doctrine cannot stand upon this ground. And hence the attempt, which is now common, to trace a line of succession through *the Anglican Church*, as distinct from the church of Rome, and connecting with one or more of the Apostles, who are supposed to have been the first preachers of the Gospel in the island of Great Britain. We turn, for a moment, to this view of the subject; and we think you will agree with us, that the defective links, in this chain, are not only many in number, but easily detected.

As in the case of the Roman line, there is an insuperable difficulty at the very commencement. It is assumed, that the succession was started in England by the apostles; but this is a mere conjecture, entirely unsupported by proof. The case is thus stated by a living Bishop,—“The Gospel was early carried to that island, now known as Great Britain. It is generally supposed, that St. Paul was the first messenger of truth who visited it. And this opinion was held at a very early period. The testimony to this fact

was first given by Clement Romanus. He says, that the Apostle Paul ‘traveled to the utmost bounds of the West’—an expression, according to Theodoret, used to denote the British Islands. Clement gave this testimony as early as the year 70. To the like effect, is the testimony of Jerome and Theodoret. At all events, the proof is most ample to show, that the Gospel was early introduced into those Islands.” And, after proceeding a little farther, he adds,—“the succession was carried there by St. Paul and continued, as you will see, uninterruptedly in the church.”\* I give you this passage at length: because it contains all the evidence on this point which is alleged to exist; and because it affords a curious specimen of the strong faith, which these successionists can exercise, where there is really no evidence to support it. What does this testimony amount to, when viewed in its most favorable bearings? It consists of a single remark by Clement Romanus; and that remark has no direct bearing upon the subject. To make it applicable, it must be assumed, that “the utmost bounds of the West” means Great Britain—and to assure us that this is the true meaning, we are sent again to Theodoret. He lived in the *fifth* century—three hundred years after Clement wrote—and

\* Bishop M’Coskry.

his opinion, as to the import of this ambiguous phrase, is the sum total of all the proof that is given. For a moment, the Bishop's own faith seems to waver, and he says,—“At all events, the proof is most ample to show, that the gospel was introduced *early* into those Islands.” But, soon recovering, he returns to his first position with greater confidence than ever; instead of saying “it is *generally supposed*,” he now affirms positively,—“the succession *was carried there by St. Paul*,” &c. It thus appears, that in the laboratory of this system, what was a mere supposition, can be transformed, in the course of a few lines, into a matter of absolute and unqualified certainty.

The truth is, as Stillingfleet observes, that, “by the loss of records,” it is not possible to ascertain when, and under what circumstances, christianity was first introduced into Britain. The line of succession, therefore, when traced backward in this direction, runs into a region of darkness, where there is no certainty to be had. Nor would it help the cause to admit, that the fact was as the advocates of the succession would have it; because there were subsequent occurrences in Britain, by which all that had previously existed of christianity and ecclesiastical order, was swept away. It is recorded, that in the time of the

Dioclesian persecution, early in the *fourth* century, "the christian churches were levelled with the ground; all the copies of the scriptures, which could any where be found, were burnt in the public streets, and the priests and bishops of the Lord's house were slaughtered, together with their charges; so that, in some provinces, not even a trace of christianity remained."\* There is no reason to believe, that at the close of this distressing period, there was an individual left in England by whom the succession could have been perpetuated.

Again, it is matter of authentic history, that the Saxons, who were enemies of christianity, entered Britain about the middle of the *fifth* century, and established idolatry upon its ruins. They destroyed the churches which remained, or had been built, after the persecution under Dioclesian; and the priests fled for safety to other countries. After this, the reign of heathenism continued for at least a century and a half; so that, here again, the line of succession was cut off effectually, and forever. Beyond this wide and dark chasm, the present Anglican church cannot trace the line of *its existence*, any more than the line of its apostolical descent.

After this, the country passed, ecclesiastically,

\* Churton.



into the possession of the bishop of Rome, through *Augustine* and *Theodore*. Theodore, ordained at Rome, by Vitalian, was sent over, and made Archbishop of Canterbury A. D. 668. Some attempts, indeed, had been made to revive the knowledge of christianity before this, by Columba, and others ordained by him and his assistants, who are mentioned by Bede in his Church History, who wrote about A. D. 731. But Theodore, instead of recognizing any of the existing ministry as validly ordained, began anew, and ordered all ecclesiastical affairs as from the beginning. It is related by Bede, that he “reproved Chadda (one of the British ecclesiastics, who had been ordained by three others,) for that he was *not rightly* consecrated; and he did himself supply, and render complete, his consecration *after the right and due catholic manner.*”\* From Theodore downward, till the time of the Reformation, no less than *seventeen* Archbishops of Canterbury, and *twelve* Archbishops of York, were ordained immediately by the Pope, or his legates. This may be seen by any one, who chooses to consult Bishop Godwin’s Lives of the English Bishops. And, when we consider how largely the incumbents of these two sees, were concerned in the consecration of all the other English prelates, what be-

\* Book iii. chap. 28.

comes of the Anglican church, *as distinct* from that of Rome? Was there ever such an unfounded and senseless plea, set up in defence of any cause? As well might it be argued, that the rivers, when absorbed by the ocean, are distinct from the sea!

Not only did the archbishops, above mentioned, derive their ordination immediately from Rome; but, in some cases, from those who were mere *pretenders* to the popedom, or, if popes, at all, of the very blackest and most abandoned character. Pope Formosus, as appears from the authority above quoted, ordained Plegmund Archbishop of Canterbury, in 891. And of this occupant of the chair of St. Peter, it is recorded, that he obtained his place *by perjury*; and, in general, that his character and doings were so enormous, that he was regarded as no pope, by those who came after him. Stephen VI., his immediate successor, at the head of his council, declared *the ordinations* he administered *void*, and caused all those to be *reordained* whom he had ordered. Sergius III. renewed all that Stephen had done against Formosus, and caused his ordinations to be declared *null over again*.\* Now Plegmund, who received his 'apostolical grace' from this monster, was the chief ordainer of the bishops of

\* Courayer, as cited by Powell, p. 243.

England for a quarter of a century ! In what a predicament does this place the boasted succession ! The result is, that the present bishops of this country are dependent for their ordination, in all probability, upon the supposed episcopal character of an unscrupulous and profligate pope, whose official acts were declared *null and void* by the very church to which he belonged !

Take another case. John Peckham was ordained Archbishop of Canterbury, A. D. 1278, by Pope Nicholas III. This pope is known in history, emphatically, as *a robber*. Platina says,—“ he took away, by violence, the *castles* of certain noble Romans, and gave them to his own relatives.” And Bishop Godwin says, that Peckham himself “ had hardly arrived in England, when the pope *his creator* (for so he was pleased to call him) required a large sum of money from him, viz. *four thousand marks*.” Peckham’s answer, is given in these words—“ Behold thou hast *created* me, and forasmuch as it is natural for *a creature* to desire to be perfected by his *creator*, so, in my distress, I desire to be refreshed by your Holiness. Truly a writ of *execution*, horrible to be seen, and terrible to be heard, has lately reached me, declaring, that except I answer to it within a month after the feast of St. Michael, by paying into the hands of the merchants of Lucca

the sum of four thousand marks, according to *my bargain* with the court of Rome, I am then to be *excommunicated*, and am to be *cursed*, in my own and other principal churches, with *bell, book, and candles.*" Whether his Holiness, who issued the "writ" in this case, or his pliant "creature" who had to meet its exactions according to his "bargain," was farthest from the apostolical model, we do not stop to inquire. It is enough to know, that they both stand as essential links in the chain of the vaunted succession. And, if "no one can bring a clean thing out of an unclean," it is easy to determine of what value such a succession must be.

We refer you, only, to one additional case, among the many of a similar kind, which might be cited.—Henry Chichley was ordained archbishop of Canterbury by Pope Gregory XII., A. D. 1414. Between the *ordainer* and the *ordained*, in this case, there is little to choose. Gregory was one of *three* pretenders to the papal chair; and, before this ordination was performed, had been condemned in council. Subsequently, at the council of Constance, all his acts were formally *disannulled*—he was set aside as being neither pope, nor bishop. And had this no effect, in tainting the line of succession? Chichley continued for twenty-nine years to ordain the bishops,

and other clergy, of the Church of England ; and has thus perpetuated a succession, which must, of course, be as uncanonical, and worthless, as the ordination which he himself received.

But I need not weary you with these details. The conclusion is as inevitable as evidence can make it, that all the episcopal ordinations of England—and of this country also, so far as they are connected with the English line—are streams from the impure fountains of Rome. On canonical principles, they are vitiated by *irregularity* in a hundred places ; and such was the monstrous character of many of the ordainers, who form the line, that morality, religion, and common sense, all revolt at the idea of their being the duly commissioned servants of Christ, and empowered to perpetuate a ministry according to his will. So that, instead of finding no flaws in the line of descent, the difficulty is to turn in any direction where they are not to be seen.

What has been said, thus far, has respect of course to the state of things in England, *anterior* to the Reformation. A few references to historical facts will show, that, even supposing the Anglican chain to have been perfect until then, it has *since* been broken in different places.

It follows from what has been said, that no ordinations existed, when the Reformation com-

menced, which did not derive their validity from the court of Rome. Now this court had the power of *undoing* what was done by itself—if it could confer sacred orders, it could also recall them—it could take back its own gifts. There is no denying the propriety of this, as an ecclesiastical rule. All denominations of christians agree, that the same body which may commission an individual to preach the gospel, may also withdraw this commission, for what may seem to them to be sufficient reasons. What then became of the succession, when Rome withdrew from the Anglican Church of the reformation all the ordinations she had given—excommunicating her bishops and other clergy—and thereby recalling all the ‘apostolical grace’ which she had imparted? Here, it must be confessed, on all fair principles of reasoning, the chain was not only injured, but so broken, that it never can be repaired.

Passing from this consideration, we come to the strange proceedings, in the time of Henry VIII. In the plentitude of his power, and in the character of another pope, he broke up all other lines of succession, and started a new one commencing with himself. He ordained, that, “archbishops, bishops, arch-deacons, and other ecclesiastical persons, have no manner of jurisdiction ecclesiastical, but by, under, and from, *his royal*

*Majesty*; and that his Majesty is *the only supreme head* of the church of England and Ireland; to whom, BY HOLY SCRIPTURE, all authority and power is *wholly* given, to hear and determine all manner of causes ecclesiastical, and to correct all manner of heresies, errors, vices, and sins whatever, and to all such persons as *his majesty shall appoint* thereto." A higher specimen of effrontery and daring impiety, is hardly to be found on the page of universal history. And yet, there is no line of episcopal ordinations, in this country or in England, which is not tainted by this act. They are all derived from the ordaining power of those, who, in derogation of the supremacy of Jesus Christ, took out their commissions from an ambitious and impious king: which has led to the remark, that, "thus it happens for the everlasting honor and consolation of all high-churchmen, that Henry VIII., and his delegates or lieutenants in the episcopal office, stand in the line of succession between them and the apostles."

With these facts before us, we could afford to pass by the invalidity of the ordination of *Archbishop Parker*, which occurred during the reign of Elizabeth. But truth requires, that the statement should be reiterated, in the face of all the attempts which are made to deny or evade it, that no sufficient proof has ever been produced, that

his ordination was *canonical*. He was consecrated by *four* bishops, who received their appointment from Edward VI., after the fashion of Henry VIII. Their names were Barlow, Scory, Coverdale, and Hodgkins. They had all been *deposed*, during the reign of Mary, and were *never restored*. Barlow was the consecrator; and, in addition to the fact of his deposition, it was seriously doubted at the time, whether he himself had ever been consecrated at all—the registry, in the archives of the archbishop, containing no mention of his name. What casts a permanent shade of suspicion upon the whole matter, is, that it was afterwards brought before Parliament, and an act was passed, *confirming its validity*, and that of all the ordinations which were dependent upon it. That the whole Anglican chain hangs upon this ordination, will not be denied. And this presents another point, at which the succession was lost, under such circumstances, that it could never be recovered.

I shall detain you farther, with only a few remarks on the succession, as connected with the episcopacy of our own country. Bishop Seabury was ordained in Scotland in 1784; and serious doubts were entertained then, and afterwards, as to the validity of his consecration—upon the ground that the Scottish bishops themselves had



not been canonically ordained. These doubts were not confined to the opponents, but were entertained equally by the friends of episcopacy. They were referred to by Bishop White, and assigned by him as a reason for seeking ordination in England, instead of Scotland. And, if these doubts were well founded, no inconsiderable portion of the Anglo-American church have lost the succession.

Besides Seabury, there were three American prelates consecrated abroad—White, Madison, and Prevoost. And the circumstances under which they were admitted to a place in the English succession, if well considered, would be enough to consign this whole matter of lineal descent from the apostles, to the ridicule and contempt of all reflecting and candid minds. The Bishops of England, with all their apostolical prerogatives, did not regard themselves as possessing the power, independently, of perpetuating a ministry in America. The authority must, and *did* come, from another source. They could neither whisper a word of encouragement to these applicants, nor move a finger towards their ordination, *until leave was granted*, by “the King’s most excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of Parliament”—until authority was formally given, by “*the royal mandate under the great*

*seal!*” The Act, permitting the Bishops to proceed to these consecrations, expressly recites, that “no person shall be consecrated Bishop, in the manner herein provided, until the Archbishop of Canterbury, or the Archbishop of York, for the time being, shall have first applied for and obtained *his Majesty’s license*, by warrant under his *royal signet* and *sign manual*, empowering him to proceed to such consecration,” &c. Nor was even his Majesty permitted to grant leave, excepting under the following restrictions—“*Provided also*, and it is hereby declared, that no person or persons, consecrated to the office of a Bishop in the manner aforesaid, nor any person or persons *deriving their consecration from, or under, any Bishop so consecrated*, nor any person or persons admitted to the order of a deacon or priest by any bishop or bishops so consecrated, or by *the successor or successors* of any Bishop or Bishops so consecrated, shall be thereby enabled to exercise his or their respective office or offices WITHIN HIS MAJESTY’S DOMINIONS.” A pretty specimen of investiture with apostolical powers! A strange condition to be imposed, in constituting successors to those who were empowered to “go into ALL THE WORLD, and preach the Gospel *to every creature!*” In this original commission, “*his Majesty’s dominions*” are not contemplated as forbidden

ground. It looks to no geographical limits, or artificial distinctions : it makes those who receive it, messengers of the gospel to their fellow men : and, wherever there are men, in ignorance and sin, to be enlightened and saved, there is the sphere of duty and labor to which they are called. Any attempt therefore to narrow the ground specified in the commission, is a virtual abrogation of the commission itself—it converts it into another, and a different thing—it is no apostolical commission at all. And yet, it is on such a commission, that the American succession depends for its integrity and value. It runs back to the reign and Parliament of George III. ; and the link, which connects it with the Anglican line, is a mutilated and spurious ordination—an ordination, encumbered by an unauthorised and anti-scriptural restraint—and performed avowedly, not on the principles of the word of God, but in obedience to the enactments of civil law.

We add, as another circumstance which is worthy of notice in this connection, that in the judgment of many of the ardent friends of prelacy themselves, the succession in this country was essentially vitiated, in the ordinations of Bishop *Hobart* and Bishop *Griswold*. Certain words, in the form of ordination, regarded by many as essential, were omitted, in the performance of

the ceremony. And there are many still living, who remember the controversy which ensued. It was kept up for a time with warmth, not only in conversation, but also through the medium of the press. And the following is an extract from one of the pamphlets which were published during its progress—"Suppose, then, at some future period, when the heat of passion is allayed, when calm reflection is suffered to be called into exercise, that then it shall be found and acknowledged, that the considerations here advanced have weight, and that the consecration is attended with an essential defect: what will then be the state of our church? *Our priesthood invalid, OUR SUCCESSION LOST*; numbers, under *a show* of ordination, ministering without authority; the evil so extended as to be beyond the power of correction."—"For myself, I am seriously and conscientiously persuaded, that the omission of the solemn words is *material*, that it is *essential*, that it renders the whole form besides AN UTTER NULLITY."\* What the omitted words, in the case here referred to, were, we are not informed. We can easily believe, however, that if the transmission of a true ministry depends essentially on the imposition of certain *hands*, it may also depend on the use of certain forms of *expression*. The trans-

\* Quoted by Smyth, p. 220.

mitting agency, according to this doctrine, is, at best, but an outward form—it is a physical operation, consisting of certain movements of the hands and lips—and if the transaction cannot be valid, without the right movement of the former, why may it not be essentially vitiated, through the failure of a right movement in respect to the latter. On the principles of this system itself, therefore, there can be no certainty, that all the clergy ordained by Bishops Hobart and Griswold are not mere *laymen*—officiating without authority—destitute of ‘apostolical grace’—and worthy only to be numbered among the “non-episcopal sects,” with whom there ought to be “no communion”!

Having submitted these details to your consideration, I leave it to yourselves to judge, how far it is true, that an unbroken series of valid ordinations have connected the prelatial bishops of the present day with the apostles of Christ—that “*every link in the chain is known*, from St. Peter” downward—that the continuity and perfection of this chain are “*too notorious to require proof*”—that there is *not* “*a flaw* in the line of descent”—that there is not a bishop, priest, or deacon, *who cannot, if he pleases, trace his own spiritual descent from St. Peter, or St. Paul*—in

short, that the whole matter "*is evident to every one who chooses to examine it.*"

To account for such declarations as these, in view of the facts in the case, we confess to be one of the most difficult things connected with this whole discussion. On the one hand, we are not willing to doubt the sincerity of those who utter them; and, on the other, we find it difficult to see how the innumerable facts, which have a contrary bearing, can be set aside, even in the judgment of those minds which are warped by prejudice. It must be, either that these unqualified assertions are made *without examination*—or, that there is something in the spirit of this system, which so distorts the mental vision of those who yield themselves to its influence, that they can see only in one direction. Assuredly, the human mind has never been imposed upon, by a more chimerical and baseless hypothesis. It stands out in the light of history, without a single consideration to justify, or support it. And we marvel, with increasing wonder, that any who have arrived at years of discretion, and pretend to think and inquire for themselves, are willing to be numbered among its advocates or friends.



## DISCOURSE VIII.



### THE TRUE SUCCESSION.

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MATT. xxviii. 20. And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.

THERE is no difference of opinion as to the fact, that this passage lays the foundation for our belief in the perpetuity of the christian ministry. It looks forward, expressly, to “the end of the world”—it guarantees the presence of the Head of the church to those to whom it is addressed—and as they, personally, were soon to “rest from their labors,” the unavoidable inference is, that they were to have successors, and that the line of this succession was never to run out, while the world should stand.

The only question, then, as connected with this discussion, on which a discrepancy of views can be supposed to exist, is the question which relates to THE NATURE of this succession. The



view contended for by the advocates of high-church episcopacy is, that this succession is realized, in an uninterrupted line of prelatical bishops—that the christian ministry consists essentially of three orders—that the highest order alone have the power to ordain—and that this order, as perpetuated by an unbroken series of valid ordinations, is the particular line of descent in the ministry, which the Saviour anticipated, and to which he assigned the promise contained in the text.

To undermine the foundation of this scheme has been the object of what we have said, in the preceding discourses. Our argument has been, that there is no starting-place in scripture, for such a line of ministerial succession as that which this system contemplates—and that, if there were, it is a line that cannot be traced. Neither the Bible, nor the early Fathers, know of any such officer, in connection with the church of Christ, as a prelatical bishop. This office, as well as the offices of Archbishop, Patriarch, and Pope, was the invention of a later age: it is a *human* invention, and not a divine institution. But, supposing it otherwise, it is impossible to establish the fact, that an unbroken series of valid ordinations has descended from the apostles to the prelatical bishops of the present day: the chain, instead of being perfect, is broken in a multitude of

places. This, therefore, cannot be the succession which Christ had in view, and to which he gave the promise of his presence till the end of time.

Having thus denied both the doctrine and the fact of a prelatical succession, and having admitted, at the same time, that the Saviour did contemplate a succession of some sort; we acknowledge the obligation which lies upon us to show *what it was*.—And to this work, we address ourselves in the present discourse.

What, then, is THE NATURE of that succession, which the ascending Saviour had in view, when he said to his apostles,—“Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world”?

If we judge rightly, the meaning of this promise is clearly determined, by the connection in which it stands. It was addressed to the apostles, in connection with a distinct definition of *the work*, in the performance of which they were to expect its fulfillment. They were commanded to “go and *teach* all nations, *baptizing* them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost”; in other words, they were to preach the gospel, and to baptize those who should believe, and embrace it, in the name of the Trinity. It was *in doing this*, that he promised to be with them; He gave them no promise extending to any thing else. And this considera-

tion inevitably and effectually sets aside all popes, patriarchs, archbishops, bishops, priests, and deacons, who are not actively engaged, either directly or indirectly, in preaching the gospel, as their main business. Instead of being the only successors of the apostles, they are no successors at all; because they are not engaged in *the work*, to which the succession relates. Nothing can be more evident than this; and yet nothing more is needed, to overturn the foundations of all the hierarchies that have ever existed. Bishop Jewell says,—“These nine hundred years, since Gregory, the first of that name, it can hardly be found, that ever *any bishop of Rome was seen in a pulpit.*”—“Christ said unto Peter, Lovest thou me? Feed my sheep, feed my lambs, feed my flock. But our great *clerks*, our *popes*, our *cardinals*, our *bishops*, would seldom, or never, *make a sermon.*” The same remark will apply to the multitudes, in connection with the Anglican hierarchy now, who are ministers of Christ merely in name—who live on the emoluments of their office, without performing its duties; or who preach the gospel to their charges, by proxy, while they themselves are living abroad, in idleness and self-indulgence. To say that Christ has promised to be with such ministers as these, is to pervert the obvious meaning of his own language. They were not in his

eye, when he gave the final commission; and any attempt to assign them a place, in that succession which he had in view, is as contrary to scripture, as it is absurd in itself.

With this remark for our guide, then, we propose to recapitulate *the false principles*, on which the prelatical succession depends; and to exhibit, in opposition to these, as we proceed, the main principles which define and distinguish THE TRUE SUCCESSION.

1. The doctrine of succession which we have been considering in these discourses, depends for its support, upon the fundamentally erroneous position, that *the ministerial character and office are perpetuated by* A MERE EXTERNAL CEREMONY—by imposition of hands, performed by a prelatical bishop, and accompanied by the use of certain words which he is supposed to utter. Let the fact be ascertained, that such a ceremony has been performed by such an individual—we are, then, supposed to know, with infallible certainty, that another genuine and perfect link has been added to the chain, which connects, at the superior end, with the apostles of Christ.—Now this, we affirm, is altogether an anti-scriptural, irrational, and popish doctrine: it exalts an outward ceremony to a degree of importance, which is never assigned to it in scripture; and shifts the

succession in the ministry, from its true and proper ground, to that, on which the sacred writers never supposed it to rest.

We have already shown, that, however important the ceremony of ordination may be to *the regulation* of the ministry, it is no where represented in scripture, as that which *confers the ministerial character*. This character, in all its essential features, is described as consisting of things which lie *back* of ordination. Ordination is the act of induction to the ministerial office; but, before this act can be justified, there must be evidence that the substantial qualifications are already present. In itself, it produces no change in the individual on whom it is performed—it procures no alteration in his mental or moral character—it makes no addition to his knowledge, piety, prudence, or aptness to teach; but is a mere visible and public inauguration, which is grounded upon the belief, that he is one, to whom it is proper that the duties and responsibilities of this office should be committed.

We deny, therefore, that the act of ordination is sufficient of itself, under any circumstances, to determine who are, or who are not, the true ministers of Christ. And in opposition to this, we now specify some things which *do* characterize the ministerial character, and which therefore

distinguish the true succession wherever it is found.

As occupying the first place, we specify PERSONAL PIETY. Without this, no man is in a state of *reconciliation with God*. And is it credible, that "the ministry of reconciliation" can be lawfully committed to one, who is *unreconciled* in the temper of his own mind? Would any human being employ an individual, *at enmity with himself*, to effect a reconciliation with a third party, in relation to whom some ground of difference or alienation might exist? And, if it would be absurd to suppose this, must we not believe, on the same principle, that personal reconciliation to God is a fundamental requisite, in the constitution of the ministerial character? Mark the significant declaration of Paul in relation to this point. In speaking of himself and his brethren, as having received the ministry of reconciliation, he represents God as having reconciled *them* to himself, *before* this gift was conferred upon them—"who hath reconciled *us* to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation." This is the order established by divine wisdom, and proclaimed as necessary by the nature of the case. So that a thousand ordinations would be ineffectual, towards conferring the ministerial character upon one, who is in a state of enmity against God.

Again, without personal piety, there can be no *love to Christ*. And how is it possible, that an individual can be the duly commissioned servant of one, for whom he entertains no affection? The question was put, significantly, to the apostle Peter, "*Lovest thou me*"? before he received the command, "feed my lambs," "feed my sheep." All the apostles were distinguished, by the possession and exercise of this strong affection. "*The love of Christ* constraineth us," was the language in which they described, at once, the most prominent trait of their character, and the main secret of their activity and success. Without this principle, they would not have been qualified, either for the labors, or the sufferings, to which they were called. And that which was essential to the ministerial character in them, must be equally so in the persons of their true successors.

Once more, we remark, that, without personal piety, there cannot be consistent and uniform *holiness of life*. And can an individual be lawfully appointed to preach the gospel, who is living in such a way, as to defeat the very object of the message which he brings? In answer to this, it is enough to quote the plain declarations of scripture, as to what a minister of Christ must be, in respect to his personal deportment. He must approve himself, "by pureness," as well as "by

knowledge," and "by the armor of righteousness, on the right hand, and on the left"—he must be "blameless," "giving none offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed"—he must be "a lover of good men," "sober," "just," "holy," "temperate." Such were the apostles of Christ, and such are their true successors in all ages of the world. Unconverted and wicked men are not "shepherds" but "*wolves*" among the sheep—they are *hirelings* who care not for the sheep—they are *thieves* and *robbers* who, instead of entering by the door into the sheep-fold, have climbed up in some other way.

But I remark farther, that, in connection with personal piety the true succession will always consist of those who PREACH THE TRUE GOSPEL. Paul speaks of committing the gospel "to faithful men"; and a faithful man he describes as "holding fast *the faithful word*, as he hath been taught, that he may be able by *sound doctrine*, both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers." He says,—“Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach *any other gospel* unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him he accursed.” “If there come any unto you,” says the apostle John, “and bring not *this doctrine*, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed.” This language is decisive, as



to the fact, that no bearer of *false* doctrine can be a true minister of Christ, or should ever be acknowledged as such, by the churches of God. The tendency of his work is not to build up, but to cast down, and destroy; instead of being a “worker together *with* God,” he works *against* him, with all the force of his influence and example; he is a successor to Satan, in whom is “the spirit of *error*,” and not a successor to the Apostles, in whom was “the spirit of *truth*.”

To this, we add, that the true succession will always be found exclusively in the line of those ministers who are DIVINELY SENT—who, in connection with their outward ordination, have an *inward call* to the work—or who, as the ordination service of the Church of England expresses it, are “*inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost*.” This is the foundation of all that is valuable, as connected with this office. Bilney, the martyr, says, in a letter to Tonsal, bishop of London—“This is the root of all mischief in the church, that they (the ministers) are *not inwardly sent of God*. Without this inward calling, *it helpeth nothing* before God, to be a hundred times elect and consecrate by a thousand bulls, either by *pope, king, or emperor*.” This is the language of truth and soberness; it accords, too, with the language of scripture on the same subject. The true ministry

are there described, as those who have their commission *from God*—they are “laborers,” who are *sent* into the field by “*the Lord of the harvest*”—they are “stewards,” whom *God* has appointed over his own “household”—they are “*the gift of Christ*,” to those to whom they are sent—and, as their call is from Him, so it is *to Him*, immediately, that they must render their account. A ministry, thus called of God, we have no doubt will always exist; and it is to such a ministry, that Christ has promised his presence, till the end of the world.

We conclude, then, that the true succession in the ministry, runs, not so much in the line of a mere outward ceremony, as in the line of an *inward call* from God, accompanied by *personal piety* and *the faithful preaching of “the truth as it is in Jesus.”*—And, to strengthen this conclusion, we call your attention to the fact, that it falls in precisely with the *RULE prescribed in the Bible*, for distinguishing between a genuine and a spurious ministry, in particular cases.

“Beloved,” says the apostle John, “believe not every spirit, but *try* the spirits whether they are of God: because many *false* prophets are gone out into the world.” This is a case directly in point. It refers, expressly, to public teachers, or preachers of the gospel—it assumes that

the church is bound to exercise its judgment upon the question, whether they are *true*, or *false*—it assumes, also, that, in doing this, they are to be guided and governed by a certain standard, or *rule* of judgment. Now, *what is THE RULE? How* are the spirits to be tried? By what *marks* are the false prophets to be distinguished from the true? Are we to inquire first, most of all, or exclusively, who *ordained* them? whether the hands of a *prelate* have been imposed upon them? and whether certain *words* were used, in performing the ceremony, without omission, or alteration? Or are we to inquire, in the light of the general principles laid down in the word of God, into the *spirit*, the *doctrine*, and the *lives* of the men themselves? Yes, says the apostle,—“HEREBY know ye the spirit of God: every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God.” And, in another place, he answers the question, still more distinctly and fully, when he says—“Many *deceivers* are gone out into the world”—“look to yourselves”—“whosoever abideth not in *the doctrine of Christ*, hath not God. He that abideth in *the doctrine of Christ*, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not *this doctrine*, receive him

not into your house, neither bid him God speed." Here every thing is plain, rational, and satisfactory. It is as if he had said,—‘When you meet with an individual, who professes to be a minister of Christ, try him at once by *his own doctrine*—if he preaches Jesus Christ and him crucified, as the foundation of the sinner’s hope, receive this as evidence in his favor—if he does not, reject him without hesitation.’

Similar to this, is the rule prescribed by the apostle Paul. He speaks of false teachers, as existing in his time in the church at Corinth; and has no hesitation in declaring them to be “ministers of Satan.” But how did he know that they were “ministers of Satan,” and not ministers of Christ? Not by inquiring into the mode of their *ordination*, and finding that *this* was defective; but by the fact, that they handled the word of God *deceitfully—corrupted* the word of God—denied the resurrection—and thus showed, that the doctrine which they preached was not the doctrine of Christ.

And in reference to the same point, what can be more explicit than the teaching of our Saviour himself? He says to his hearers—“Beware of *false prophets*, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.” Here, again, the persons referred to are public

teachers: all is supposed to be right, as to their *outward* appearance; and yet, the fact is, that they are *false* teachers. Now, how is this to be ascertained? Not by inquiring into their ecclesiastical pedigree—not by tracing the line of their descent, along a series of ordination acts, performed in a certain way—but by looking immediately, and directly, at their own character and conduct. Yes, says the Saviour,—“By *their fruits* ye shall know them.” “Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.” This is a standard of judgment which is plain, and palpable: it is a test of character, which commends itself to the reason and common sense of every reflecting mind; and, in its connection, it proves beyond all contradiction, that the true succession in the ministry is to be determined, by other and more substantial considerations, than those which relate to the circumstances attending their ordination. The ministry to whom Christ promised his presence, is composed of those who are reconciled to God, who love Christ, who hold the truth and preach it, and who commend their message to others by the holiness of their own lives.

2. Again, the false succession not only supposes the ministry to be perpetuated by a mere ceremony, but it proceeds upon the monstrous assumption, that this ceremony extends the line of succession *with equal certainty, whether the person on whom it is performed be a GOOD, or a BAD man*—a saint, or a sinner—a servant of God, or a servant of Satan. That there is no exaggeration, or mistake, in this statement of the doctrine, we have already shown, by quoting the opinions of its advocates. They contend, that “*the unworthiness of man cannot prevent the goodness of God from flowing in those appointed channels in which he has destined it to flow.*” Let the individual ordained be as wicked as he may; it is still maintained, that he is a minister of Christ, if the hands imposed upon him have been those of a prelatical bishop. And from this it results, that hundreds of men have been clothed with the ministerial character, and have transmitted it to others, who have lived openly in the indulgence of the grossest vices, and done more than almost any others to banish true religion from the world.

Now reason and scripture unitedly judge, that a succession ascertained on this principle, is not, and cannot be, the succession which has the promise of Christ. To suppose this, is to overturn the very foundations of the christian system—to

level all the distinctions between religion and irreligion—between truth, and error—between virtue, and vice; and, at the same time, to render the word of God inconsistent with itself. Christ has never promised to be with *bad* men, either *in* the ministry, or *out* of it. A wicked man is not altered, in his sight, by the mere ceremony of ordination; He still views him as he is, and gives him no reason to expect his presence and approbation, in any thing that he does. And therefore the very fact, that he has promised to be with a ministry till the end of the world, is of itself a sufficient proof, that the particular ministry which he had in view, was a ministry composed of *good men*;—not of men deriving their character from the mode of their ordination; but of men renewed and sanctified by his own spirit, and constrained by the power of his love to devote themselves to his service. Such a ministry he will raise up, and qualify, and commission, as times and circumstances require; and he will never leave nor forsake them, whatever may be the name which they bear, or the outward form under which they exist. They shall have the testimony of his presence and friendship in this world; and, when called to the account of their stewardship, their acceptance will not turn upon any questions relating to their ordination, but only upon their faith-

ful performance of the duties connected with their high and responsible trust. “Well done, thou *good and faithful servant*”—“enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”

3. The scheme of succession, which relies exclusively upon a line of prelatical bishops, involves the unnatural and repulsive supposition, that *SUCCESS in the ministry, is no evidence of the presence of Christ, or the approbation of God.* It matters not how successful an individual may be, in apparently securing the direct results which the ministry has in view—his preaching may produce an obvious and powerful effect upon the minds of his hearers—the ignorant, who sit under his ministry, may be enlightened—the secure, and thoughtless, may be awakened and alarmed—*anxious inquirers after the way of salvation may find pardon and peace—the afflicted may be sustained and comforted—the wandering may be reclaimed—and those who are established in the faith may abound more and more in every good work; and yet it is still true, if the hands of a prelate have not been laid upon him, that he is no minister of Christ: he is a usurper of the place he occupies: his “supposed commission is worse than a nullity”: and he is “treading in the footsteps of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, whose awful punishment you read of in the book of Numbers”!!*



Now go with this principle, on a course of examination around the christian world, and see what strange and startling conclusions it will require you to embrace. You enter a house of worship, where all around you are strangers—you take your seat among others who enter, and listen attentively to what is imparted from the sacred desk. You perceive that the speaker is weak in intellect—that his manner is without interest, or life—that he has no right perception of the scriptural plan of redemption—that he even teaches his hearers to rely for salvation upon false grounds—and that no visible effect is produced by his preaching. On inquiry, you ascertain, that thus it has always been—that, within the sphere of his ministrations, the cause of morality and piety has never advanced—that the vicious remain undisturbed in their sins—that the moralist goes about to establish his own righteousness—and that those who profess to be christians exhibit nothing of the life and power of godliness; and, at this point, you are tempted to conclude, that he must have mistaken his profession, and entered the ministry without being called of God, But, while in the act of coming to this conclusion, you are told, that, in very deed, he was ordained by *a prelatical bishop*—that the hands of *a lineal descendant of the apostles* were laid upon him—and

therefore that, beyond a question, he possesses *the 'apostolical grace.'* And this, according to the doctrine, must remove all your misgivings at once, and settle you down in the assurance, that notwithstanding all appearances to the contrary, he is a true ambassador for Christ!

After leaving the scene of *his* performances, you enter another place of worship, which is crowded with an attentive and serious audience. You are interested at once, in the appearance and manner of him, who rises to address them—you perceive, as he proceeds, that he not only understands the scriptural plan of salvation in theory, but that he seems to feel the power of its great principles upon his own heart—you observe that his hearers drink in the truths which he delivers, with evident avidity and delight—that all are interested, and some deeply affected. And, on inquiry, you learn, that these indications are not equivocal—that an evident influence from on high attends the ministrations of this individual—that many cases of repentance and reformation occur—that the tone of morality is high and healthy—that piety flourishes, and good works abound. But when ready to infer, from these indications, that this must indeed be a man of God, bearing a commission from heaven, and guided by the Holy Spirit, you are told that he was ordained by *a*

*presbytery*, and not by a prelatical bishop! The consequence is, that you must start back from the conclusion which you were about to form. You have heard that, which puts an entirely different face upon the whole scene. You must now consider, that these favorable indications, which attracted your attention, are all deceitful—that they are no signs whatever, of the presence of Christ, or the approbation of God—that the person, in connection with whose agency they appear, is no minister of Christ at all; but one of those dissenting, sectarian pretenders, who run without being sent, and wickedly intermeddle with the solemn duties of an office, which has never been conferred upon them.

These are the monstrous conclusions which an adherence to the prelatical succession requires us to embrace. It drives us to the necessity of admitting, that such men as Laud, Bonner, Swift, and Sterne, who did a thousand times more to demolish the church of God than to build it up, were true ministers, while Luther and Knox, Watts and Doddridge, Edwards and Davies were *gross impostors*—preaching without authority—and pretending to administer sacraments, while they had “no real sacraments to give.” In short it is the manifest and revolting absurdity of this system, that it casts out of the ministry the very

*best* men and admits the very *worst*; and thereby confounds all distinction between fitness and unfitness—between virtue and vice—between right and wrong.

We say then, in opposition to all this, that the true succession is to be found in every age, in the line of a *successful* ministry. Paul said, in looking upon those who were converted through his instrumentality, “*the SEAL of mine apostleship are YE in the Lord.*” And this declaration exhibits the truth in the case, with great simplicity and distinctness. It proceeds upon the supposition, that the blessing of God upon his labors was a visible authentication of his call to preach the gospel, which might be “known and read of all men.” His argument is, that if his preaching had produced no effect, his claim to be regarded as an apostle of Christ, might well have been doubted; but that success is so sure a proof of the presence of Christ, and the approbation of God, that he beheld *a seal* of his apostleship, in every individual among his spiritual children.

And surely the test, which determined the true ministry in his day, must be equally available to the ascertainment of the true succession, in all ages and countries. If the call of an individual to this work is *of God*, it is to be expected, that the blessing of God, in the way of success, will

attend him : he will see the fruit of his labor, in those results which the ministry is designed to secure : and this will be an outward and visible sign, that he belongs to the line of descent, which has the promise of Christ.

Very instructive, as relating to this point, was the incident between our Saviour and his disciples concerning the man, who was not of their company, and yet was seen casting out devils in his name. They say unto Christ,—“ We forbade him, *because he followeth not us :*” their views, at that time, were precisely the views of those persons now, who would ascertain the true ministry, by external relations, or lines of distinction alone : the man in question did not belong to their number ; and, for this reason, they set him down, as having no right to cast out devils, or perform any other service in the name of their Master. The answer of the Saviour stands, as a permanent rebuke, to all such exclusive pretensions—“ Jesus said, **FORBID HIM NOT :** for there is no man that shall do a miracle in my name that can speak lightly of me.” His approbation rested upon what the individual *did*, and not upon any thing appertaining to his outward relations : he was successful in his operations against the kingdom of Satan, and in support of the kingdom of Christ : and this, to the mind of the Saviour, determined

his true character, and placed him among the number of his friends and servants.

Guided by this view, we shall never fail to find a succession in the ministry, according to the promise of Christ. But we shall see it, not so often in the walks of a hierarchy of any description, as in humbler, less ostentatious, and more retired places. We shall see it, where the truth is preached in simplicity, in faithfulness, and with affection; we shall see it, where the wicked are convinced of sin and brought to repentance—we shall see it, where believers grow in grace, where the church is edified and rendered efficient, where the fruits of righteousness appear, “which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.” A ministry attended by such seals as these, is a ministry, not in form, but in deed and in truth. It has existed in all ages that are past; it exists now; and the line of its succession will remain unbroken, till the end of the world.

These observations, we trust, will enable you to draw the line of distinction where it ought to be drawn, between the *true* and the *false* succession in the christian ministry. The false succession depends for its perpetuity upon *the mere ceremony of ordination*, as performed in a particular way—the true, upon *personal piety, soundness of*

*doctrine*, and an *inward call* from God to the ministerial work: the false succession supposes, that *the worst of men* may be the duly commissioned ministers of Christ—the true, includes those only who are personally *reconciled to God*, who *love Christ*, and are *heartily devoted to his service*: the false succession takes in the inactive, the idle, and the *unsuccessful*—the true, consists exclusively of the *laborers* who work in the field, of the *soldiers* who strive in the warfare, of the *servants* who work for their master, of the *reapers* who gather in the harvest.

That the *human* eye should be able, in all cases, to distinguish between the true and the false, is not, indeed, to be supposed. As a *wolf* may pass for a *sheep*, when “in sheep’s clothing,” so a mere pretender may pass among men for a true minister of Christ; nor is it incredible, that, while the deception remains undetected, the truth which he preaches may be the instrument of good. But there is no more difficulty here, than in distinguishing between true christians and hypocrites, among the private members of the church. A succession of true christians there will always be; and the general fact will be plain and palpable to every candid observer, although, in visible connection with them, there will always be many who have the form of godliness without

the power. And so, there will always be a succession of pious, orthodox, laborious, and useful ministers of the gospel, although, in connection with them, there may be many who have not the spirit of the office which they profess to fill. What the discernment of man cannot detect, however, is not hidden from the eye of Him, who walketh in the midst of the golden candlesticks, and holdeth the stars in his right hand. He is acquainted with his own servants; he knows them well; and the promise which he has given them shall never fail. In all the duties and trials of their work, they shall find support and consolation in him. And, after turning many unto righteousness, their distinction will be, that they "shall shine as the brightness of the firmament," and "as the stars for ever and ever."

We have now completed the outline, which we contemplated, at the commencement of these discourses. We have set aside the succession by prelatical bishops, as alike unscriptural, irrational, and unsustained by historical facts; and we have brought before you the succession, which, on scriptural principles, we have a right to expect, and which alone can claim an interest in the promise of Christ.

In conclusion, we desire to say, as was observed in the commencement, that, in projecting



the line of this argument, we had no intention of assailing Episcopacy, in any other view than as claiming to be, by divine right, the one essential, and only form, under which the Church of Christ can exist, and thereby excluding from the visible family of God all other denominations of professing Christians. If there are those, who prefer this to any other form of church polity, upon the ground of expediency, we have no wish to disturb them in the enjoyment of their opinion and preference. Nay, if they should regard and contend for this, as the form which is sanctioned by scriptural example, we should not object, provided it were admitted, that those who dissent from this opinion, may be considered as belonging to the Church of Christ, as well as themselves. Even on *this* platform, we should be ready to meet them in christian friendship, and to co-operate with them in every good work. But when the enormous pretension is put forth and maintained, that Episcopacy is essential at once to the being of a church, and to an authorized hope of salvation—that there can be no ministry without it—and that those churches, which are differently organized, are in no better condition than the heathen—it is time for the friends of truth and charity, and for the advocates of both civil and religious liberty, to arise and rebel.

This is the claim, against which we have entered our protest. We have argued against it, from scripture, from history, from reason, and from common sense; and against it, we are determined to be, as long as we have an understanding, to distinguish between truth and falsehood—a heart, to feel the power of motives to do right—and a tongue, to speak, either for the honor of God, or the welfare of man. We are as sure, as we can be of any thing, that true piety does not exist, as a monopoly, within the inclosure of any particular form of ecclesiastical polity—that the church of the Redeemer, bought with blood, does not depend for its existence, and perpetuity, upon any one order in the ministry to the exclusion of others—and that all opinions, which are contrary to this, are uncharitable in their nature, and injurious in their effects. We have never harbored a feeling of unkindness towards any individual, for belonging to a different denomination from our own. We can give the right hand of fellowship, as cordially and warmly, to a pious and liberal hearted Episcopalian, as to any human being that lives. But arrogance, intolerance, and exclusive pretensions, in matters relating to salvation, where all are beggars at the footstool of divine mercy, we cannot bear. These things are the objects of our unceasing, and incurable dis-

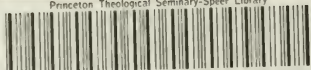
gust. And we do intend, as long as we live and breathe, to bear testimony against them, “in season, and out of season”—to hold them up to the rebuke, and reprobation, of the wise and the good—and to call upon those, who love the truth, and would keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, to be of one mind in endeavouring to oppose, and put them down. They are not suited to the age, and country, in which we live—they are too lofty, and exclusive, to agree with the genius of our institutions—and they partake, too much, of the bigotry, and intolerance of the darkest ages, to be consistent with the faith and doings of a century, in which “the true light” is shining toward every quarter of the globe, and men of every country, and clime, are beginning to rejoice in the liberty of the children of God.

In the ranks of opposition to these unrighteous and uncharitable assumptions, may you be found, with united front, whatever your denominational distinctions may be! Contend, in your respective spheres, for “the faith once delivered to the saints.” And never forget, that on the platform of this faith, “circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing”—and that “he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly: neither is circumcision that, which is outward in the flesh: but he

is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.”



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