

VIEWS OF OUR ZION.

No. V.

THE MINISTRY—(Continued.)

Answers to Objections. On the alleged identity of names and orders in the ministry of the Primitive Church.

The arguments furnished by the Scriptures themselves, as well in the manner of our blessed Lord's own appointments, as in the mode adopted by his successors the Apostles,—conjoined with the testimonies of the primitive Fathers of the Church, considered in my last two essays,—must constitute to every mind not unduly warped by prejudice, proof quite sufficient and abundantly satisfactory, that the three orders of Bishops, Priests and Deacons were the positive establishment of primitive Christianity, and that the only legitimate channel of the communication of the ministerial charge, was Episcopal.—I propose, in the present essay, briefly to consider certain objections to this system, as drawn from the allegation that no positive distinction is conveyed in scripture between the titles of Bishop and Presbyter, but that they are convertible names, and are used interchangeably to denote the same office;—in other words, that the same character and powers which are ascribed, in the sacred writings, to Bishops, are ascribed also to Presbyters,—thus establishing, it is alleged, an identity of order as well as of name.

This point I cannot better elucidate than in the words of an author, quoted in a former essay, Bishop Hopkins, of Vermont:

"The word *Bishop*, in the Greek language, signifies an overseer, and was not invented for the sake of a new office, for it was an old term, used long before the christian era, and applied commonly amongst the heathen to an overseer of any kind whatever. So, *Presbyter*, in the Greek language, signifies an elder, and was currently used to express eldership in age, or eldership in dignity. The name *Deacon*, like the others, was also common, signifying merely a servant or a minister. And the word *Apostle* was a name of signification, meaning one sent, or a messenger. Hence, it follows of course, that it is idle to look for the distinctions of office in the mere names. These names were not at first so much proper as common; although they became official and distinctive afterwards. And to shew you how perfectly the argument built upon these names may be used to mislead us, a very slight examination will be amply sufficient.

"The apostles," continues the same writer, "ordained elders or presbyters, as we read, in every city; and it is not disputed by any, that they, at least, had a right to govern those elders, as a superior order of men. But St. Peter (1 Pet. 5.) calls himself an elder, and that in the strongest form. 'The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder.' And St. John gives himself the same title in the beginning both of his second and third epistles. 'The elder unto the elect lady:—the elder unto the well-beloved Gaius.' On the other hand, we find the name apostle given to those who were not in the chief authority. Barnabas, Junia, Epaphroditus, are all called apostles; but does it follow from this occasional interchange of names, that there was no distinction between the powers and officers of the apostles and elders? Surely not. In the strict sense which was afterwards by custom attached to these names, no writer would confound them. No man now, speaking of the apostle John, would call him the Elder John, or the Presbyter John, although he called himself so in the general sense of the word which was so common at the time. Neither would any man now, speaking of the apostles, be understood as numbering Barnabas, or Junia, or Epaphroditus amongst them. The distinction, therefore, between the respective offices of Apostle, and Presbyter or Elder, must be ascertained from the facts of the sacred history: the names alone could never explain it. And we ask no more in the Episcopal argument. The distinction between the offices of Bishop and Presbyter is just as easily demonstrated by the facts. The names alone, we admit, prove nothing in our favour; but surely the community of names proves just as little on the other side; since I have shown that if it proves any thing, it proves that the apostles and the Presbyters whom they ordained were of equal dignity and authority, which has never been pretended by any man."

This is a train of reasoning, I would add, fully supported by testimonies from ancient writers. "At first," says Ambrose, "all Bishops were called Apostles and therefore St. Paul, to distinguish from such, calls himself an apostle—not of men, but of God." "They who are now called Bishops," says Amalarius, "were originally called Apostles; but not thinking it decent to assume the name of Apostles, they, dividing the names, left to the Presbyters the name of the Presbytery, and they themselves were called Bishops." "Those now called Bishops," says Theodore, "were called Apostles; but in process of time, the name of Apostles was left to those who were truly Apostles, and the name of Bishop was restrained to those who were anciently called Apostles."

But to proceed with the facts of the sacred history, as clearly indicating the existence and exercise of the Episcopal system:—"Against an elder," says St. Paul to Timothy "receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses. Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear. How is this to be construed? Is it to be believed that Timothy had no official authority over the presbyters whom he was charged to rebuke and censure when occasion required?—Again, Timothy is required by the Apostle who writes to him, to 'lay hands suddenly on no man':—the present a caution on the subject of ordaining, as the former was in the matter of rebuke. "Here then," to quote the words of Bishop Hopkins, "we see these presbyters, who, according to some, hold the highest, yea, the only office in the ministry, plainly subordinate to Timothy. The power of the Apostle is committed to his hands, not to theirs. He was to ordain—not they; he was to receive accusations against them and judge and censure, according to circumstances—not they: he was to distinguish those who were faithful and diligent in ruling their portion of the flock, and especially those who laboured fervently and zealously in word and doctrine; and yet we are asked to believe that Timothy, who was to do all this, was of no higher grade than the elders who were thus put under his charge."

This being a position untenable, attempts are made to draw from other passages of Scripture the proof that presbyters had

in the beginning, the powers of government and ordination. A citation is sometimes made of Acts xx. 25, to prove that such an authority was actually possessed; "take heed, therefore, unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers."—"We grant," says the excellent writer already so often quoted, "that presbyters are overseers of the flock of Christ, but we do not see how this can prove that there ought to be no overseer over the presbyters. We grant, too, that at the time mentioned in the book of the Acts, the presbyters of Ephesus had no such overseer appointed over them; but we do not see how this was to prevent the apostle from making the appointment as soon as it should be in his power. In the nature of things it was obviously impossible, that the Gentile churches should be supplied immediately with all the ecclesiastical officers, and so long as they had the apostolic superintendence, they needed no other. Neither can it be questioned that the office of Apostle, afterwards called Bishop, being one of the greatest responsibility and difficulty, must for that reason have been the last supplied among them, because it was necessary to wait longer for persons of suitable age and experience."

And should it be contended that there ought to be no rulers over presbyters, because, at this particular time, when Paul was at Miletus, he does not mention any such officer, we may answer in the words of the author last quoted, that "by the same argument there ought to be no presbyters in the church of Corinth, because in his address to the Corinthians (first epistle) he makes no mention of them whatsoever, allowing those converts to hold their worship and even to administer the Eucharist, without the slightest allusion to any regular ministry. What then? would this prove that the apostle never intended to establish presbyters at Corinth at all? By no means. It only proves that the Corinthian church was obliged to do as well as they could without a settled ministry, until some of their members should attain sufficient knowledge and experience to qualify them for the office."

As a proof, however, that in the case of the church at Ephesus, the want of presidential or Episcopal authority was afterwards supplied, we find that, some years after, St. Paul actually appointed Timothy to exercise this needful oversight of that church:—he completed, as soon as he was able, the ecclesiastical system which was designed to be universally acted upon.

We must now proceed to a brief examination of the claim of the ordaining power for presbyters. The first is founded upon Acts xiii. where it is stated that "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." Now, in this transaction, there were in all five persons concerned,—three besides Paul and Barnabas themselves,—and the whole are termed "prophets and teachers;" the whole are said to have "ministered unto the Lord." Of course, then,—Paul and Barnabas being already in orders,—if the present laying on of hands can be construed into an ordination, it must have been a second, and of consequence, a higher one:—which being admitted, the doctrine of parity or equality of orders is destroyed. But if it was not an ordination,—as certainly it was not,—it was a mere setting apart of these two Apostles, in a solemn manner, of which there are many examples in Scripture, to a particular field of duty. And that this transaction at Antioch related only to a special missionary work, will be sufficiently clear to those who will trace the progress of that work from Acts xiii. 4, to Acts xiv. 26,—where its completion is recorded. There we find it stated that "Thence they sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled." This latter expression would be plainly inapplicable to their general ordination to the ministry, for no person can suppose that the objects and purpose of this were at that time fulfilled. Both Paul and Barnabas continued to labour in the ministry long after this particular duty of their office had been accomplished. And if any further proof were needed to shew that this was not an ordination, it is to be found in the fact of St. Paul's declaring himself in Gal. i. 1. to be "an apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father;"—language, assuredly, which completely excludes all human agency in the ordination of that Apostle.

Another argument for Presbyterian ordination is attempted to be drawn from 1 Tim. iv. 14,—"neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery." Here we may first remark, that very eminent and very disinterested authority has declared the word "presbytery" to mean the office to which Timothy was ordained, and not the persons who ordained him; so that the passage would read thus,—"with the laying on of hands to confer the presbyterate," or the office of presbyter. In confirmation of this view, the following are the sentiments of Grotius, a disinterested authority, because not an Episcopalian:—"I do not dare to bring in confirmation of this, that expression of Paul's of the imposition of the hands of the presbytery, because I see that Jerome, Ambrose, and other ancients, and CALVIN, certainly the chief of all moderns, interpret 'presbyterium' in that place not an assembly, but the office to which Timothy was promoted; and indeed he who is conversant with the councils and the writings of the fathers, cannot be ignorant that 'presbyterium,' as 'episcopatus' and 'diaconatus' are the names of offices. Add that it appears that Paul laid hands on Timothy." This latter fact is derived from 2 Tim. i. 6, where it is said, "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." Paul, therefore, would here seem to be the instrumental cause,—by the putting on of my hands:—the elders, granting that they were meant in the present passage, seem merely to have been his coadjutors,—with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery."

But even supposing the term "presbytery" in this place to signify a body of men, the question naturally arises, who and what were they? We are aware that St. Peter and St. John, without regard to their special office, sometimes called themselves "elders;" why then, in the present instance, may not this company of elders have been composed of apostles, who were, by general admission, a superior order in the church? The burden of proof here rests upon those who would infer from the passage

in question a title to presbyterian ordination:—if no such proof can be adduced, if no satisfactory evidence can be brought forward that the "presbytery" mentioned was composed exclusively of that order in the church strictly designated presbyters,—the argument attempted to be derived from this passage must go for nothing.

We have, therefore, in the New Testament positive evidence of the exercise of Episcopal authority; but not an expression which can be fairly or satisfactorily construed into a permission to the inferior grade of presbyters to exercise the distinctive office of Episcopacy,—that of ordination. C. R.

THE CHURCH.

COBOURG, SATURDAY, JULY 29, 1837.

CHURCH RATES.—The virtual settlement of this important question, for the present at least, in the Mother Country,—because a ministerial majority of only five in a house of nearly 600 members, is universally admitted to be tantamount to a defeat,—affords us an opportunity of laying before our readers the following judicious and excellent remarks upon this subject. Their value will doubtless be much heightened in the minds of our readers, when they are informed that they embody the opinions of the great mass of the Wesleyan Methodists, in England, as expressed on the occasion of a great public meeting at Windsor, in the month of March last, by the Rev. James Allen, a respectable and able minister of that connexion:—

Sir,—In rising to move the adoption of the resolution which I hold in my hand, and which stands thus,—"That the Church Rate is the Right of the Poor, as being a long established mode by which Places of Worship are maintained for their use,"—I beg to state that I feel myself honoured in being called upon to take a public part in the proceedings of this interesting and important Meeting.

I rise to take this part under the influence of great diffidence of mind, because I apprehend that the question, the consideration of which has called us together this morning, is one whose magnitude, on religious considerations, is very great. At the same time I deem that I should be acting most inconsistently with my character and profession as a Wesleyan Minister; did I not rise to do so. I recollect, sir, that the venerable founder of our Community, the Rev. John Wesley, was an honoured and distinguished Clergyman of the Established Church of this country. I recollect that that venerable man, uniformly,—and that during a long life,—said that he was a friend of the Church: and that those who were enemies to it, were enemies to him. I recollect that, holding these friendly sentiments, on conscientious grounds, till the moment of his death, he, when he died, bequeathed them to the Ministers connected with him, and to the Christian people who had, up to that time, been the objects of his pastoral care. These sentiments of friendship, Sir, are inherited by myself, by the great body of my fathers and brethren in the Ministry of God's word, as exercised amongst us, and by the great majority of the Societies constituting our community. With all these recollections before me, I feel that I should ill sustain my character and profession as a Wesleyan Minister, did I not come forward in these ecclesiastically perilous times, and lend my humble aid in defence of the VENERABLE ESTABLISHMENT OF OUR COUNTRY.

[After some excellent remarks upon what he deems the great question before them, "Ought not the Government of this professedly Christian Country, as such, to make provision for the religious instruction of the Nation at large,"—which he takes up in the affirmative and ably argues, combatting at the same time certain objections, he thus proceeds:—]

The second objection to be considered is simply this,—In the primitive age of the Church, we see no State interference; and therefore, all such interference in the administration of the affairs of the Christian Church is deemed to be totally and notoriously at variance with the simplicity of Christ's reign of grace in this world. I should be much surprised, Sir, if in the primitive Church, there were to be seen a State interference,—an interference similar to the interference of the State of this Country, giving order to our Established Church, and investing her with influence, and supplying her with means to extend the benefits of religious instruction to thousands of our countrymen who, but for such an interference, must sink, first into infidelity and then into barbarism. Sir, God, in governing his Church, does not depart from nor act in opposition to, that established order of things which is his own creation; and which we sometimes call the nature or the fitness of things.—On this principle we say that such a State order of things could not have existed in the Primitive Church. We do not look into a newly formed Colony for all the order and energy of a classic commonwealth. Sir, the Primitive Church was a Spiritual Colony. Its members were placed, by its divine Founder, in the wide world of heathen Rome. They were bidden to colonize that mighty empire, and all the other nations of the globe. But notwithstanding the Church's high vocation, and the purity of its doctrines, and the devotedness of its members to the cause of Christ, still, as to ecclesiastical polity it was a colony. It embodied in it, however, the first principles of a well-ordered state of things, and to that state of things was to be applied that important passage "let all things be done decently and in order,"—a passage evidently investing the persons called by the Holy Ghost, to sustain official stations in the Church, with a power to modify and construct matters for the disciplinary benefit of the Church, according to the changing circumstances of time and country and custom.***

The conclusion, Sir, is that the State is imperatively bound to take, by the employment of those powers which it possesses as a Christian State, not simply a protective cognizance of religion in this country, but such a cognizance as shall consist in an actual provision of the means of religious instruction for the whole body politic.—Every individual, Sir, who is the head of a family, considers himself—if he considers things properly—bound to provide for the religious instruction of his children and servants. And surely that which is right and proper in the smaller associations of human society cannot be improper in its application to a Christian nation.

May I be allowed by your indulgence, Sir, and by the indulgence of the Gentlemen who have most courteously given me their attention thus far, further to state, that I heartily advocate the question before us, because I most heartily believe in the utter inadequacy of the Voluntary principle.—With all the excellencies and charms of this generous and Christian principle, I advocate the question before this respectable meeting on the ground of its utter inadequacy to meet the moral and religious necessities of this increasingly populous nation. The changes incident upon the system of our ministry, carrying me, as they have done, into different parts of the country, have given me opportunities of extensive observation as to the religious state of our country, and the practical bearing of the voluntary principle thereon. And from all that I have seen, I am prepared to say, that there is a fearful inadequacy in the voluntary principle. I have been into the mining, agricultural, and manufacturing districts of our country. In many of the places which I have visited there are no other sections of the church of Christ but the Establishment of this country and ourselves. It has been my lot, in the course of my ministerial engagements, to ride over the high and bleak hills in the north-western parts of the