

"the apostles and bishops," or "the apostles, bishops, and elders." This is easily accounted for by supposing that all those elders were bishops. Were bishops a distinct class from elders, the former would, if superior to the latter, have been specified, rather than they. If bishops were a different order of clergy from presbyters, then it is most evident that there were no bishops at that Council. But if no bishops were members of it, then the elders who sat in it must have been the ecclesiastical superiors of bishops.

The highest permanent officers in the Church next mentioned are those of the Church at Ephesus. Paul summoned them to meet him at Miletus. Who were they? The answer is contained in Acts, xx. 17,—“And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the **ELDERS** of the Church.” Philippians, i. 1 is the next passage which particularizes the permanent officers of the Church. It styles them “bishops and deacons.” Bishops were thus the highest officers recognised by the apostles as set over the Church at Philippi. But those bishops, it has been previously proved, were **ELDERS**. The highest permanent officers of the Church are next mentioned in the first epistle to Timothy, first under the title of bishop,—“A bishop must be blameless” (iii. 2); and, secondly, under that of elder,—“Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in word and doctrine” (v. 17). In the latter of these passages he represents the elders as performing the duties of bishops, and so identifies the elder with the bishop. Elders are distinguished in it into ruling and teaching elders; and the latter are represented as more honourable than the former. The prelate, therefore, whose main business is to govern the Church, and who rarely preaches, is inferior to an ordinary preacher of the Word. It was already shown that the bishops whom Paul has primarily in view in the first of them were the elders of Ephesus. The apostle also, in the same epistle, recognises a Presbytery, which must have consisted of presbyters; and speaks of it as having conferred ordination on Timothy,—“Neglect not the gift that is in thee which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of **THE PRESBYTERY**” (iv. 14). The highest permanent ecclesiastical officers next mentioned are those of the Church in Crete. They also are styled elders. Paul states that he left Titus there, besides other objects, to “ordain **ELDERS** in every city,” (Titus, i. v). The instance in which the highest permanent ecclesiastical officers are next mentioned by an appellation expressive of their office is in James v. 14,—“Is any sick among you? Let him call for the **ELDERS** of the Church.” He mentions no higher officers over the Church than the elders. Peter next, in his first epistle, indicates what is the highest class of permanent officers in the Church. In that epistle to the Churches of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, he recognises no higher officer over them than the elder. “The **ELDERS** who are among you I exhort, who are also an **ELDER**. . . . Feed the flock of God, taking the oversight thereof” (v. 1, 2). He even here asserts for himself only the same ecclesiastical rank with them. The last instances in which the highest permanent office in the Church is explicitly indicated are those in which the apostle John also styles himself an elder. “The **ELDER** unto the elect lady” (2d John, 1). “The **ELDER** unto the well beloved Gaius,” (3d John, 1).

We have thus briefly reviewed in order all the passages in the New Testament in which the highest permanent officers in the Church are expressed by an appellation which indicates explicitly who they were. We have ascertained that in every one of them the elder is intended. What is the legitimate inference from this induction of particulars? Manifestly that the apostles authorized and recognized no higher permanent officers in the Church than presbyters or elders, as the ordinary ministers of the Word, and that they did not institute, authorize, or recognise, prelate or diocesan bishops. Prelacy is obviously subversive of the Divine institution by which ecclesiastical authority is in the presbyters of the Church. It is therefore not only unscriptural, but anti-scriptural.—*From “Prelacy tried by the Word” in Edinburgh Witness.*