

*palem gratiam consequi meruissem; quos si minimè delissem, hodie episcopus non essem—aurum dedi et episcopatum comparavi.)** I cite this passage to prove that the Metropolitan must have been "concerned in elections," in the days of St. Ambrose, and if it be objected, that he wrote subsequently to the Nicene Council, I reply that he was not describing any particular date, but the age generally in which he lived. He was born eight years after the Council, and we may be sure that the venality he condemns, could not have arisen all at once, but prevailed before he was born, as no one, whether an individual or a Church "*repente turpissimus fit.*" I scarcely think that Mr. Dawson could have been so positive that "there is no trace even in ordinations of the presence of the Provincial Bishops, before the Canon of Nicæa," had he duly considered that the Canons of the Council make no claim to originality. They take for granted a code of Ecclesiastical law of long standing. The Fathers of Nicæa merely consolidated the many Provincial Canons enacted long before their time. For instance, the sixth canon which says, "If two or three Bishops oppose an election, reasonable in itself, and in accordance *with the Ecclesiastical Canon*, let the vote of the majority prevail," supposes such a Canon as already in force in the provinces. Moreover, all the provisions of the 6th Canon are prefaced by the words, "Let ancient customs prevail," pointing plainly to the fact that they were a ratification of laws of such long standing as to be called, *ancient*. We have therefore, in the very language of the Nicene Canons, proof from internal evidence, that Bishops "were concerned in elections,"† and that it was an "ancient custom;" but if so, we have something more than a *trace* of "their being present even in ordinations before the Nicene Council."

It should be remembered that universal obedience to the decrees of a general Council was a plant of slow growth. It depended on the acceptance accorded them by Provincial Synods. In those days it took a long time for the Canons of a general Council to reach all the provinces, but when they did reach them, the Provincial Synods accepted them (or such of them as needed acceptance), in Provincial Canons. Thus the

* St. Amb. opera, Tom. I, cap. 5.

† Canons 1, 2, 5, 6, p. 15-17.