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of this term, but a careful examination of each of the seven letters yields in each case some evidence that the Angel was a personal human being, exercising authority. The theory which has found most favor with Presbyterian commentators is that the Angel is only a type or personification of the Church with which he is associated; but even in a figurative book like the Revelation such a mode of expression seems needlessly obscure and roundabout, nor is it easy to reconcile with the following clauses: The Angel of the Church of Ephesus is praised for having applied some test to the teaching of certain pretended apostles, and for having detected them. In the letter to Smyrna there is a distinction drawn between the members of the Church generally and their Angel, for we read: "The devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful and I will give thee a crown of life." Clearly, if the Angel were a mere personification of the Church, we should have either "you" or "thou" alone throughout this sentence, instead of both of them. In the letter to Pergamos the same use of both "you" and "thou" occurs; and again in that to Thyatira, although this letter is more patient of the Presbyterian interpretation than the others. The Angel of Sardis is directed to be watchful, and the context at least seems to imply that this is not merely the general spiritual alertness enjoined on all Christians, but that more peculiar task of watching over the interests of others which is referred to by St. Paul in his charge to St. Timothy (2 Tim. iv. 5), and is attributed to the rulers of the Church in Heb. xiii. 17; thus pointing further to that other phrase of St. Paul, where he speaks of Church rulers as "overseers," that is, Bishops, for it is the same word (Acts xx. 28).

The broad rule to follow, in any enquiry into a difficult question, is that the explanations which solves all the problems involved must be the only perfectly true one. An explanation which does not solve all, but solves most of them, is to be preferred, as provisional, to any other which does not solve quite so many, no matter how successfully it may explain some of them, but even so, its partial explanation cannot be taken as final. It is doubtful at best, and must await, before being received, the clearing up of the parts it fails to deal with. Supposing this can be done, then it triumphs; otherwise it must give way to any other explanation which covers more ground. This is why the astronomy of Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler, and Newton has displaced that of the older Ptolemaic system, which had held its ground for thousands of years, and which did offer very plausible explanations of some heavenly phenomena. But it could not explain several others, which are all satisfactorily accounted for by the latter system, consequently accepted by all astronomers now. Or, take another illustration, that of unravelling a cypher. It will sometimes happen that a guess at the system employed does really bring some words out

plainly enough. But if several remain hidden, we at once know that we are on the wrong track altogether, or at best, have got at only part of the solution, since there is probably another system mixed up with that we have detected, complicating the inquiry. Now, without going so far as to assert positively that the Episcopal theory is a key to every New Testament problem of Church government, yet it plainly does answer more of the questions than any other yet proposed. There is less cutting and carving required by it in order to fit Scripture to it than by any other alternative method, and it is not going too far to say that it is the only one which accounts at all for the state of things we find even in the Subapostolic age. Take this very problem of the Angels of the Churches just discussed. The point has yet to be pressed that the word Angel, meaning as it does a "messenger," is a very unlikely one to be applied to a type or personification, instead of to some actual person; and that within St. John's lifetime, as very early Christian writers attest, there was a single ruler, St. Polycarp, set over the Church of Smyrna, one of the very seven Churches addressed; nay, that St. John is alleged to have consecrated him in person. It is obvious that the Presbyterian explanation obliges us to reject all this evidence, without either having any adequate reason for doing so, or anything solid to put in the place of it; whereas it is simple, harmonious, and credible on the episcopal theory.

However, the Presbyterian plea is not yet exhausted. There are alleged certain statements from ancient Christian writers which seem to lend support to Presbyterianism. They are as follows:

1. The Epistle of St. Clement to the Church at Corinth speaks in one place of only "Bishops and deacons" as appointed by the Apostles (42). In another place the movers of sedition at Corinth are enjoined to submit themselves to the presbyters, with no mention of any higher officer (57).

2. St. Jerome (A.D. 345-420) says that the Bishops and Presbyters of the New Testament are the same persons, holding the same office (Comm. in Titus i. 5), and that they were differentiated gradually to avoid divisions, by giving the whole charge to one person, but that previously the government in each Church had been in the hands of the presbyters jointly. And in another place he makes the following statement: "At Alexandria, from Mark the Evangelist down to the Bishops Heraclas and Dionysius (i.e., down to 249), it was the custom of the presbyters to choose out of their own body one whom they placed in a higher grade and called Bishop; just as if an army were to create its own general, or deacons to choose from amongst themselves one whom they knew to be diligent, and call him Archdeacon" (Ep. ad Evang). This statement is expanded as follows by Eutychius, Patriarch of Alexandria in 933.

"The Evangelist St. Mark appointed Ananias the first Patriarch of Alexandria; and together with Ananias he appointed also

twelve presbyters who should abide with the Patriarch, so that, when the see should become vacant, they might choose one of their body, upon whom the remaining eleven might lay their hands, and bless him, and make him prtriarch. And this practice continued to be observed at Alexandria to the time of the Patriarch Alexander (A.D. 318), who ordained that upon the vacancy of the see the Bishops should convene to consecrate a successor, and that the power of election was to be in their hands, without confining themselves to the twelve presbyters." 3. Bede says, when speaking of Iona, "From this Island, from this college of monks, Aidan, having received the rank of Bishop, was sent to teach in Christ the English province." (Hist. Eccl. iii. 5).

That is the whole of the ancient evidence alleged on the Presbyterian side, and it may be pointed out how very scanty it is, in comparison with the vast body of adverse testimony, whatever its weight and value may be. Let us test it in order.

1. St. Clement's Epistle is quite consistent with the explanation that the see of Corinth was vacant when he wrote, nay, that quarrels about filling it may have formed part of the disputes then prevalent. But we are not obliged to have recourse to mere conjecture as to his evidence, for here is what he says on the question of ranks among Church officers: "We ought to do all things in order, as many as the Master hath commanded us to perform.

. . . They, therefore, that make their offerings at the appointed seasons are acceptable and blessed: for while they follow the institutions of the Master they cannot go wrong. For unto the High Priest his proper services have been assigned, and to the priests their proper office is appointed, and upon the Levites their proper ministrations have been laid; the layman is bound by the layman's ordinances." St. Clement is not here drawing a mere simile from the Jewish Church, but describing the christian polity of his time, with the three grades of ministry, while it is to be noted that the title Archpriest, as a synonym for Bishop, of very early employment.

2. As to St. Jerome, in the first place cited, he commits the same error of reasoning as modern Presbyterians, for it is nothing to the point to argue, or even to prove, that Bishops and presbyters were equals in New Testament times, when the fact remains that Apostles and Apostolic Legates were set over them; and the real question is whether any traces of their like subordination to superior officers appears just after New Testament times. The second passage cited proves no more than that the Chapter, so to speak, of Alexandria elected the Patriarch, which is true in theory of every old cathedral chapter in the English Church at the election of a Bishop, though it was and is not the usual practice in the East. It does prove that there was no party of rank at Alexandria from very ancient times, but that a patriarch was set over the other clergy. And as to the question of ordination, the very next sentence in St. Jerome's letter is, "For what does a Bishop do, which a presbyter cannot do,