

# The Church.

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## PLAIN DISCOURSES

### CHURCH GOVERNMENT:

(Being the substance of Sermons on the same subject, by G. T. Chapman, D.D., late Rector of Christ's Church, Lexington, U. S.)

#### SERMON V.

SAME TEXT.

In introducing the Testimony of the Fathers of the Church, in relation to the government and ministry established therein by the Holy Apostles, it is most important that the principles upon which the inquiry is to be conducted should be explained with the utmost clearness and precision.

You are aware that Protestants of every denomination are extremely tenacious in holding up the Bible as their sole rule of faith and practice; and not one of them has been more plain and explicit on this very material point, than the Church to which we belong. According to her 6th Article—“Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation.” With this doctrine, we all, I presume, most cordially concur.

And yet, who does not know, that from this one inspired source, a vast variety of opposing creeds profess to be drawn? diametrically opposite to each other in various points, it would be absurd to imagine that they are alike true and correct; or that such discrepancies can be really countenanced by the Scriptures.

Under such circumstances we are naturally led to enquire whether there be not some competent tribunal to which we may refer some at least of our differences, and consent to abide by its decision, as to the true sense of Scripture. Such a tribunal we think we have in the inspired writings of those who first believed in Christ—of those especially who were contemporary and personally acquainted with the Apostles, and consequently were in possession of the greatest advantages for ascertaining if not the precise doctrines which they taught, at least the precise institutions which they established.

Suppose, for example, that one of our age had constantly associated with the Apostles, and by the good Providence of God had been permitted to remain to this time; suppose, that as a Christian of blameless life and conversation, he was every way worthy of our confidence in his veracity; would he not be able most satisfactorily to settle such questions as these? Did the Apostles admit infants to Baptism? Did they recognize a change of the Sabbath from the last day of the week? or, to come more immediately within our present design—Did they establish the one single order of Presbytery in the ministry, or the three distinct orders of Bishops, Presbyters, and Deacons? There can be but one opinion upon such a statement. But if we should be willing to submit to the decisive testimony which such a person would be able to bear upon such points, ought we not to be equally willing to receive the testimony which the Primitive Fathers have given in the written works which they have bequeathed to us? Some of them enjoyed all the means of information which actual conversation with the Apostles supplied—others lived so soon after their time that their advantages were scarcely less. They were humble, pious, holy men of God, who were faithful even unto death, cheerfully submitting to the pains and penalties of martyrdom. They committed their knowledge of the Christian Church to paper, and their writings have come down to our times.

In what light then are they to be regarded? Not as Divine authority, nor as equally binding and imperative with the letter of the Scriptures, but as the declarations of so many credible witnesses of facts, which came under their observation, and about which they could be no more mistaken than we can be about the nature of the Civil or Ecclesiastical government under which we ourselves live at this day.

The first of these unexceptionable witnesses whom I shall bring forward is *Ignatius*, the successor of Peter in the Apostolic office at Antioch, appointed by him, and whose personal knowledge of many of the Apostles is not denied. These circumstances make it, as I have said, impossible that he should have been himself in error, or in ignorance as to the points upon which his testimony will be adduced; and none will suspect this venerable and intrepid martyr to the faith, of wilful mis-statement.

In his Epistle to the Magnesians, *Ignatius* writes thus:—“Seeing that I have been judged worthy to see you, by Damas your most excellent Bishop; and by your very worthy Presbyters, Bassus and Apollonius; and by my fellow servant Sotio, the Deacon; in whom I rejoice, forasmuch as he is subject unto his Bishop as to the Grace of God; and to the Presbytery as to the law of Jesus Christ; I determined to write unto you. Wherefore it will become you also not to use your Bishop too familiarly upon the account of his youth; but to yield all reverence to him according to the power of God the Father; as also I perceive that your holy presbyters do; not considering his age, which indeed to appearance is young; but as becomes those who are prudent in God, submitting to him, or rather not to him, but to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ the Bishop of us all. It will therefore becometh you to obey your Bishop; in honour of him whose pleasure it is that you should do so, because he that does not do so, deceives not the Bishop, whom he sees, but affronts him that is invisible.—For whatsoever of this kind is done, it reflects not upon him, but upon God, who is the secret of our hearts. It is therefore fitting that we should not only be called Christians, but be so. As some call indeed their Governor, Bishop, but yet do all things without him. But I can never think that these have a good conscience, seeing they are not gathered together thoroughly according to God's commandment.”

Here we have a distinct enumeration of the three separate orders of Bishops, Presbyters and Deacons; we have the subjection of the last two, and of all the Magnesians, to the first, explicitly stated, and the consequences of insubordination maintained. Afterwards, if possible, he yet more distinctly tells us—“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 entrusted with the ministry of Jesus Christ.”

In his epistle to the Trallians he enjoins them “to continue inseparable from Jesus Christ our God, and from your Bishop, and from the commands of the Apostles. He that is within the altar is pure, but he that is without, that does any thing without the Bishop, and Presbyters, and Deacons, is not pure in his conscience.” And again, after enumerating the same three orders, he uses this strong and emphatic language—“without these there is no Church.” In his Epistle to the Philadelphians, he writes—“I cried whilst I was among you; I spake with a loud voice—Attend to the Bishop, and to the Presbytery, and to the Deacons. Now some supposed that I spake this as foreseeing the division that should come among you. But he is my witness for whose sake I am in bonds that I knew nothing from any man. But the Spirit spake, saying on this wise; do nothing without the Bishop; keep your bodies as the temples of God; love unity; flee divisions; be the followers of Christ, as he was of his Father.

I did therefore as became me, as a man composed to unity. For where there is division and wrath, God dwelleth not. But the Lord forgives all that repent, if they return to the unity of God, and to the council of the Bishop.”

You see in what strong terms the companion of the Apostles condemns schism and insubordination among Christians. On the other hand, in his Epistle to Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, he takes occasion to address the laity of that Church in these terms:—“Hearken unto the Bishop, that God also may hearken unto you. My soul be security for those that submit to their Bishop, with their Presbyters and Deacons. And may my portion be with theirs in God!”

These quotations are only specimens of a large number which, to some import, pervading the writings of this holy man, who came, as it has been already observed, a martyr to the faith of Christ. But surely these are sufficient to convince any one who is open to conviction that the ministry first established by Divine authority was constituted as we affirm.

Our next witness is *Polyarp*, another martyr and companion of the Apostles. He was a fellow disciple with *Ignatius* of St. John; and *Irenaeus*, who was his scholar, assures us that he was taught by the Apostles, and familiarly conversed with many, who had seen our Lord in the flesh. After being consecrated, by his preceptor, Bishop of Smyrna, he wrote several Epistles to the Churches, of which one only remains, addressed to the Philippians. This however is particularly valuable to our present purpose, as containing the following high commendation of those Epistles of *Ignatius* from which we have so largely quoted—“The Epistles of *Ignatius* which he wrote unto us, together with what others of his have come to our hands, we have sent to you according to your order; which are subjoined to this Epistle; by which you may be greatly profited; for they treat of faith and patience, and of all things that pertain to edification in the Lord Jesus.” So that this passage as evidently shows his perfect concurrence in all the statements, opinions, and declarations of *Ignatius*, who had previously visited him in his journey to Rome, as if they had been written with his own hand. And his was indeed high authority. None stood higher in the estimation of his contemporaries, by whom he was called “the blessed,” “the most admirable *Polyarp*.” He was, beyond doubt, that angel of the Church of Smyrna, to whom the first and the last directed St. John to write—“I know thy work, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich). Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” (*Revelation* ii. 9, 10.) And he was faithful unto death. At the age of eighty-six he suffered at the stake.

The two witnesses we have already adduced, would appear amply sufficient to prove the correctness of our views of the Christian Ministry as established by the Apostles. Others however are at hand. We have the testimony of *Irenaeus*, Bishop of Lyons in Gaul, and the Disciple of *Polyarp*, who says in his third Book—“We can reckon up those who were instituted Bishops in the Churches by the Apostles, and their successors even unto us—to whom also they committed the Churches themselves. For they desire those who are exceeding perfect and irrepachable, whom they left successors, delivering up to them their own place of mastership.” “The blessed *Apostles*, therefore, founding and instructing the Church (of Rome) delivered to *Linus* the episcopal office of ruling the Church.” And in his fourth—“True knowledge is the doctrine of the Apostles, according to the succession of the Bishops, to whom they delivered the Church in every place, which doctrine hath reached us, preserved in its most full delivery.”

Wherein you cannot but observe, how fully *Irenaeus*, who was also a martyr, confirms the doctrine, which we have before deduced from the Scriptures, that the Apostolic office was continued, and that it survived in the persons of the Bishops, who, in his expressive language, obtained the mastership or rule of the Churches.

Our next witness is *Clement* of *Alexandria* a writer of the second century, who being himself only a Presbyter, cannot be suspected of an inclination to elevate Bishops over his own order. After commenting upon the duties imposed upon Christians generally in the Sacred Volume, he remarks—“There are other precepts without number, which concern men in particular capacities—some of which relate to Presbyters, others which belong to Bishops, and others respecting Deacons.”

The celebrated *Tertullian*, also a Presbyter, and flourishing at the end of the second, and commencement of the third century, has these words—“The chief or highest Priest, who is the Bishop, has the right of giving (baptism), and after him the Presbyters and Deacons, but not without the Bishop's authority, on account of the honour of the Church, which being preserved, peace is secured.” A plainer declaration of the superior office and power of a Bishop could not be given or desired.

Another celebrated Presbyter of the third century, *Origen*, in explaining that part of our Lord's Prayer—“Forgive us our debts,” observes, “Besides these general debts, there is a debt due to widows who are maintained by the Church: another to Deacons; another to Presbyters; and another to Bishops, which is the greatest of all, and exacted by the Saviour of the whole Church, who will severely punish the non-payment of it.”

*Cyprian*, at the same period Bishop of Carthage, in a passage which the time forbids me to quote, admonishes the Deacons of the Church of their subjection to those of his own order. He also re-proves his Presbyters for having, during his absence, admitted to Church membership some that had been excluded by him, saying—“What danger of offending the Lord ought we not to fear, when some of the Presbyters, neither mindful of the Gospel nor of their own place; neither regarding the future judgment of the Lord nor the Bishop now set over them, challenge entirely to themselves, with haughty speech and contempt of their superior, what was never done at all under our predecessors.”

We have also the testimony of *Jerome*, a Presbyter of the fourth century who contends for the analogy existing between the Jewish and Christian Churches, in these words—“What Aaron and his sons, and the Levites were in the Temple, the same Bishops, Presbyters, and Deacons may claim to themselves in the Church.” He also asserts that the safety of the Church depends upon the dignity and pre-eminence of the High Priest. And not only does he, in his celebrated letter to *Evagrius*, reserve to the Bishop the sole authority of laying on hands in confirmation and ordination, but he expressly declares in another Epistle—“With us the Bishops hold the place of the Apostles.”

Such a cloud of unexceptionable witnesses have we to the Divine origin of our three orders, in the Ministry, all giving the first rank and dignity to Bishops, the second to Presbyters, and the third to Deacons—all maintaining that Bishops alone were the successors of the Apostles in their pre-eminent office and ministry. And thus clearly have we the voice of antiquity on our side. This part of our subject, however, is not concluded, but will be resumed in the next Discourse.

#### SERMON VI.

SAME TEXT.

The testimony adduced, in the last discourse, of the fact of a threefold ministry having been established by

the Apostles, must I think, have appeared to you very strong and convincing; and you will probably now be desirous of hearing what the impugnors of this doctrine have to oppose to that testimony. They have done their best to weaken its force, and laboured earnestly to show that, when the Apostles ceased to govern the Church, they left no order in the ministry superior to that of Presbyters. It would have been a great thing in favour of their cause, had they been able to produce any instances of ordination by mere Presbyters, which was considered valid in the early ages of the Church. But no instances can be produced within the first fifteen centuries. In a very few cases we know that the thing was attempted; but it was almost unanimously denounced as an usurpation of power, and the persons thus irregularly promoted were immediately degraded, as it happened to *Ischirus* ordained by the Presbyter *Colluthus* in the fourth century. Indeed it was never seriously questioned but that Bishops, in virtue of their apostolic rank, alone possessed the power of ordination, until the age of *Calvin*, who in the sixteenth century, established a new Society, which he wrongly called a church, in which that order was not recognized. We must now proceed to examine the principal arguments by which it has been attempted to show that this was not a deviation from the primitive model.

One very favourite argument with the opponents of Episcopacy is that the titles Bishop and Presbyter are in the inspired volume indiscriminately applied to the same office. The fact we admit. We agree that, throughout the Acts and Epistles, those titles are indiscriminately applied; but we shall soon convince you that this proves nothing to the purpose.

We pray you to take notice that during the whole period, of which the transactions are recorded in those parts of the New Testament, there existed undeniably the lower order of Deacons and the higher order of Apostles; and it is for this threefold ministry, that we contend, and not for the names, by which it was at any time distinguished. If it could be shown, that Apostles were not superior to the then second order of Bishops or Presbyters, there would indeed be some foundation for the argument; but their superiority being universally acknowledged, it falls to the ground.

For we fearlessly assert that, after the close of the Apostolic ages, the terms Bishop and Presbyter were no longer used as equivalent; and we shall call satisfactory witnesses for the proof of our assertion. The Ecclesiastical historian *Eusebius* says—“Those very persons were called Apostles, whom by usage of speech the Church now calls Bishops;” and *Theodoret*, Bishop of Cyprus at the beginning of the 5th century, and esteemed one of the most learned fathers of the Church, tells us how this came to pass. “The same persons,” he says, “were anciently called Presbyters and Bishops, those now called Bishops, were called Apostles; but in process of time, the name of Apostle was left to those who were truly Apostles, and the name of Bishop was restrained to those who were anciently called Apostles: thus Epaphroditus was the Apostle of the Philippians, Titus of the Cretans, and Timothy of the Asiatics.”

Can any thing be imagined more clear and decisive than this? Who succeeded to the Apostolic office, out of reverence to their predecessors, as were immediately called by Christ, appear to have relinquished to them the more dignified title of Apostle, and to have appropriated to themselves the humbler name of Bishop, originally bestowed upon the second order of the ministry in common with that of Presbyter; but thereon afterwards exclusively attached to the first, and never afterwards resumed by the second. The change was only in name. The two offices or orders remained as separate and distinct as they were before. Bishops were what the Apostles had been; and Presbyters, ceasing to call themselves Bishops, looked up to these as their superiors, as they had formerly looked up to the Apostles, separated to that office, by their Lord and Master in person. This objection then, you see, plausible as it looked, is plainly good for nothing. Another intimately connected with it you will find to be equally so.

The Epistle to the Philippians commences in this manner, “Paul and Timothy, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints which are at Philippi, with the Bishops and Deacons.” And this is thought to prove something against our three orders in the ministry. Let us examine it. It proceeds from the two Apostles, Paul and Timothy, and is addressed to Bishops and Deacons, in other words, to Presbyters and Deacons, for we cheerfully agree that such is the interpretation of the passage. But if there was any office superior to the Presbyters and Deacons at Philippi, why, it may be asked, was he not named in the address? We answer, for this very substantial reason, that Epaphroditus, the Apostle of the Philippians, was the bearer of the Epistle, and in it he is very strongly commended to them as such.

There is one among the ancient Fathers to whose authority the opponents of Episcopacy are particularly fond of appealing, viz. *Jerome*, the Presbyter of the fourth century, whom we have formerly quoted on the other side. In his commentary upon the Epistle to Titus, and in his own Epistle to *Evagrius*, that Father does indeed prove the original application of the two titles Bishop and Presbyter to the same individual; but this as you have heard is our own doctrine also. The only question is how long they continued to be thus indiscriminately applied. We say, only so long as the original Apostles continued to govern the Church; and we shall show you that this is *Jerome's* own account of the matter, in the very passages by which he endeavours to prove a different doctrine. For instance the following—“These things I have written to show that, among the ancients, Presbyters and Bishops were the same. But by little and little, that all the seeds of dissension might be plucked up, the whole care was devolved upon one.” And in another passage he states—“That one was afterwards chosen, who should be set above the rest.” And hence they contend for the gradual introduction of Episcopacy, after the time of the Apostles, and of course wholly unauthorized by them; and boldly pronounce our system an usurpation of man's device, the result of “little by little” encroachments. But *Jerome* himself shall explain his own meaning. In his comment upon the Epistle to the Galatians, he says—“By little and little” (the very expression, you observe, upon which so much stress has been laid) “in process of time, others were ordained Apostles, by those whom our Lord had chosen, as that passage (or speech) to the Philippians affirms, saying, I supposed it necessary to send unto you Epaphroditus, your Apostle.” Can there possibly be stronger evidence to prove that these pretended encroachments, this usurpation of man's device, took place under the government of the Apostles, and was actually their work?

In other appeals to the same Father they have been equally unfortunate. For instance—“Before there were, by the Devil's instigation, parties in religion, and it was said among the people, I am of Paul, I am of Apollon, and I of Cephas, the Churches were governed by the common council of Presbyters.” Very well. But did not this party spirit spring up when St. Paul himself governed the Church of Corinth? and is it not therefore to that period, that the charge is referred? And to show that our construction is the true one, we find him saying in another place, “that from Mark the Evangelist, the Presbyters of Alexandria had always named one chosen from among them, and placed in a higher degree, Bishop,” most evidently dating the commencement of Episcopacy, in that once splendid Church, from the time of the Apostles.

So clear, decided and unanimous is the testimony of antiquity in favour of the apostolic ministry of our Church. And will you not allow that testimony, agreeing as it does with all that we read in Scripture on the subject, to decide the controversy? If you reject that testimony upon a matter of fact, with regard to which they could not have been ignorant or in error, consider what a powerful weapon you place in the hands of the infidel, with which to assail the volume of inspiration itself. For it is by the self-same testimony that we prove the present canon of Scripture; and if you discredit that testimony with regard to the Christian ministry, what will it avail you in the other argument—for it is as full, and steady, and consistent in the one case, as in the other.

Only bear attentively the following passage left on record by the Martyr *Ignatius*, the disciple of St. John, and judge whether any credit can be due to what he may have said upon any other subject, if it be true, as the modern separatist would persuade us, that Episcopacy is an encroachment and an usurpation, and not an apostolical appointment. “Be not deceived, brethren; if any one follows him that makes a schism in the Church, he shall not inherit the kingdom of God. If any one walks after any other opinion, he agrees not with the passion of Christ. Wherefore let it be your endeavour to partake all of the same holy eucharist. For there is but one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ; and one cup, in the unity of his blood; one altar; as also there is one Bishop, together with his Presbytery, and the Deacons my fellow servants: that so whatsoever ye do, ye may do it according to the will of God.”

If there was usurpation in the case, this writer was himself one of the usurpers. And yet he has the effrontery to declare that it was the will of God that men should submit to this usurpation on the part of himself and others, and that they should “Lord it,” as the phrase is, over those whom the Apostles had constituted their equals. The Disciple of St. John and companion of the Apostles cannot be left off on the plea of ignorance or error on a point like this. We cannot reject his testimony and adopt the notion of our opponents, without laying to his charge a deliberate and audacious falsehood in support of his own usurpation. But who will dare thus to charge the venerable martyr of Antioch? Who would suspect any man at that period, of thus solemnly affirming every intelligent member of the Church to which he wrote, must, on the supposition of our adversaries, have known to be untrue? I need not add another word upon the subject. I am persuaded that you will believe *Ignatius*, and reject without hesitation the groundless notion of an usurpation.

Indeed an invincible argument for the Divine institution of Episcopacy is derived from what is universally admitted by its opponents. For when they tell us that the government of the Churches was transmitted by the Apostles to Presbyters alone, they are forced to confess that it became Episcopacy very soon. According to some, even before the death of St. John. Others think that the change began about this time, and was gradually completed during the second and third centuries. But no writer among their ventures to assert that it continued to be Presbyterian, in any part of the world, beyond the term of three hundred years.

But is it credible that a form of government instituted by the Apostles should have been so soon and so completely overthrown by the unanimous adoption of another? that so little regard should have been paid to an appointment of those inspired servants of the most high? particularly when in the writings of that period no evidence whatever can be found of any resistance to the alleged usurpation on the part of the Presbyters. Surely it cannot be supposed that men in those days were so different from what they are at present, as to have submitted without a struggle to such an encroachment upon their lawful authority, or to have resisted it so very faintly that no trace of the struggle can any where be discovered. Suppose a similar experiment to be tried now-a-days in any even the smallest of the various denominations, among whom there is but one order of ministers, all having the same power and authority; and picture to yourselves the opposition it would excite. I need not tell you that it would call forth a burst of indignation which would speedily put down the attempt; or that, if the usurping party were too strong or too subtle to be in the end successfully resisted, it could only triumph after a contest, the events of which would be remembered long enough. And yet they would persuade us to believe that this great revolution in the whole Church of Christ was effected without any opposition, from those whose rights it violated, of sufficient importance to deserve or receive any notice in the records of the time. Search the writings of Presbyters, who never attained the Episcopal rank—even they are silent on the subject, and mute as the graves into which they have retired.—Not a word will you find about prelatial ambition, nor a word about the invasion of Presbyterian rights. Look over the folios of Bishops—there are no arguments to justify their revival and personal assumption of the apostolic office, none to silence or rebuke the clamours of any champion of the ministry once delivered to the saints. On the contrary, you will see that all those writers of whatever rank and whatever country—all unite in ascribing to Episcopacy the sanctity and authority of a divine institution. They tell you that the Apostles nominated Bishops to be their successors in the Churches planted by them, and that to them alone belonged the right of ordination—which was so well understood, that Presbyters cheerfully acquiesced in the speedy degradation of the few who obtained an irregular promotion, by the imposition of the hands of their inferior order. And it is possible, in the face of all this testimony, to believe what the opponents of Episcopacy affirm—that it is founded in usurpation, and encroachment upon the rights of the Presbytery?

I shall conclude this discourse with an inquiry respecting the Angels of the Seven Churches of Asia Minor, to each of whom, as we read in the Revelation of St. John, that Apostle, by the Saviour's direction, addressed a brief Epistle. Every reader of those Epistles must see, one would think, that each of them was addressed to some person holding Supreme power and authority in the Church where he resided, that is to say, to him whom we should now call the Bishop. And we learn from the Fathers that this is a correct view of the matter. Among others, *Hilary* tells us that St. Paul “calls Bishops Angels, as is taught in the Revelation of John;” and even the names of the individuals are given, who at that time held the Bishops of Ephesus and Smyrna. The two words translated Apostle and Angel are of the same signification. They signify respectively “one that is sent,” “a messenger;” and you will probably recollect the passage which has been already quoted from *Theodoret* in this discourse. “Those who are now called Bishops, were called Apostles; but in process of time, the name of Apostle was left to those who were truly Apostles (that is, literally ‘messengers’) commissioned to teach all nations, &c.) and the name of Bishop was restrained to those who were anciently called Apostles.” When those who succeeded to the Apostolic office became permanently settled in separate dioceses, in different towns and cities, the title from which our word Bishop is derived, and which answers exactly to the English word “Overseer,” became more appropriate, and is there-

fore constantly applied to them by ancient ecclesiastical writers.

#### SERMON VII.

SAME TEXT.

You have seen in the two preceding discourses how completely the testimony of the Fathers is in favour of the Constitution of our Church. In the present one some evidences of a different kind will be brought forth, the importance and the value of which I think you will all readily acknowledge.

Let us imagine then—that preserved by some inscrutable Providence of God, a Christian Church, planted by an Apostle, could be found in some sequestered corner of the globe, which from remotest time had enjoyed no intercourse whatever with their brethren of the same faith. Would not the character of the Ministry which it possessed be enquired into with deepest interest by all who take an interest in this controversy. Suppose, for example, that in such a Church Presbyters only were to be found, would it not furnish the advocates of that exclusive order with abundant cause of congratulation and triumph?

The discovery, I must now tell you, has indeed been made; but then the decidedly Episcopacy character of the discovered Church gives all the advantage of the discovery to us.

India was the place, and the celebrated navigator, Vasco de Gama, was the discoverer, in the year 1498. When the Portuguese arrived, they were agreeably surprised to find upwards of a hundred Christian Churches on the coast of Malabar. But when they became acquainted with the purity and simplicity of their worship, they were offended. These Churches, said the Portuguese, belong to the Pope. Who is the Pope? said the natives, we never heard of him. The European Priests were still more alarmed, when they found that these Hindoo Christians maintained the order and discipline of a regular Church under Episcopal jurisdiction; and that for three hundred years past, they had enjoyed a succession of Bishops appointed by the Patriarch of Antioch. We, said they, are of the true faith, whatever you from the West may be; for we come from the place where the followers of Christ were first called Christians.

These Churches were therefore Syrian, but were soon subjected to the inquisitorial power of Rome. At a compulsory Synod, one hundred and fifty of the Syrian Clergy appeared, and by the Romish Archbishop Menezes, were accused of the following practices and opinions—That they had married Wives; that they owned but two Sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper; that they neither invoked Saints, nor worshipped Images, nor believed in Purgatory; and that they had no other orders or names of dignity in the Church, than Bishop, Priest, and Deacon. At length, the Churches upon the sea coast were compelled to acknowledge the supremacy of the Pope. But those in the interior would not yield. After a show of submission for a little while, they proclaimed eternal war against the inquisition; they hid their books, fled occasionally to the mountains, and sought protection of the native Princes, who had always been proud of their alliance.

These details are extracted from the “*Christian Researches in Asia*” of the celebrated English Missionary, Buchanan—who proceeds to inform us that when two centuries had elapsed without any particular information respecting the Syrian Churches in the interior (those who would not submit to Rome), and when it was doubted by many whether they existed at all, he conceived the design of visiting them. He did so; and found them in all their original simplicity and purity. He conversed with them freely, and heard that, according to their records, their Church was founded by the Apostle Thomas. He found their Ministry composed, as it always had been, of Bishops, Presbyters, and Deacons, the offices being as distinctly marked, as those of any Episcopal communion whatever. Buchanan saw many of the two lower orders. On one occasion he was received at the door of the Church by three Presbyters, who were habited in white vestments. There were also present two Deacons. On another occasion, he visited Mar Dionysius, the Metropolitan of the Syrian Church, and after a long interview in which the conversation turned upon Protestant Episcopacy, he observes—“The Bishop was desirous to know something of the other Churches which had separated from Rome. I was ashamed to tell him how many there were. I mentioned that there was a Presbyter Church in our own Kingdom, in which every Presbyter was equal to another. And what! is there nobody to overlook the Presbyters?—not one. There must be something imperfect here, said he.”

With these most interesting relics of antiquity further friendly intercourse has taken place since the establishment of our own Indian Episcopate; and all that Buchanan has said of them has been verified by subsequent inquiry. And surely, you all feel that this is a most interesting and convincing evidence in favour of our argument, substantiating all that we are in the habit of maintaining, and laying the axe to the very root of schism.

The first successful innovation upon the divinely established Ministry (for such you at least will now allow me to call it) has been already adverted to. It was in the beginning of the sixteenth century, and the circumstances attending it are entitled to a brief review. The Reformation commenced by *Zwingle* and *Luther* had extended to Geneva, a beautiful town of Switzerland, and shortly afterwards the residence of the celebrated *Calvin*. This great man embraced with eagerness the reformed doctrines, and propagated them with all the zeal inspired by full conviction of their truth; and with all the success usually following in the train of conspicuous piety, learning and talent. He confined himself at first to what were really the corruptions of the Papacy, and proposed no change in the form of Church Government.

Humanly speaking, it was an unfortunate circumstance that at this important period, there was not in Germany or Switzerland, in France or Italy, a single Roman Catholic Bishop who joined the ranks of the Reformers. Had it been otherwise, we have the best reason to believe that the Continental Reformers would not have made the innovations that they did. But you will of course expect to hear the reason upon which this belief is founded; and they shall not be withheld.

*Calvin*, the author of the Presbyterian form, has left on record the following solemn declaration on the subject. “If it would give us such a hierarchy in which the Bishops have such a pre-eminence, as that they do not refuse to be subject to Christ, and to depend upon him, as their only head, and refer all to him; then I will confess, that they are worthy of all anathemas, if any shall be found who will not reverence it, and submit themselves to it with the utmost obedience.” This language you will admit to be sufficiently strong and determinate—stronger, I presume, than any of us would feel justified in using. But that it was the result of his own deliberate conviction, appears from the following testimony of *Abbot*, Archbishop of Canterbury, and a warm advocate of the great Reformer's peculiar doctrinal views.

“Perusing some papers of our predecessor, *Matthew Parker*, we find that *John Calvin* and others of the Protestant Churches of Germany and elsewhere, would have had Episcopacy, if permitted. And

whereas *John Calvin* had sent a letter in King Edward VI. reign, to have conferred with the Clergy of England about some things to this effect, the two (Popish) Bishops, viz: *Gardiner* and *Bonner*, intercepted the same; whereby Mr. *Calvin's* overture perished, and he received an answer, as if it had been from the reformed Divines of those times; wherein they checked him, and blighted his proposals. From which time *John Calvin* and the Church of England were at variance in several points; which otherwise, through God's mercy, had been qualified, if those papers of his proposals had been discovered unto the Queen's Majesty during *Calvin's* life. But being not discovered until, or about, the sixth year of her Majesty's reign, her Majesty most lamented they were not found sooner; which she expressed before her Council at the same time, in the presence of her great friends, Sir *Hemy Sidney* and Sir *William Cecil*.”

So true it is that this eminent man was fully persuaded of the Apostolic claims of Episcopacy, and that he earnestly desired to reform the Church under its auspices. But Bishops were not to be obtained; and perceiving the importance of a settled Ministry, he, although a mere layman, and without any ordination whatever, invented an ecclesiastical polity of his own, and for a long time justified his departure from the old paths, on the ground of an alleged expediency.

And what was the opinion of *Luther*? Speaking of the Romish Bishops, and of the duty of obeying them, in the event of their acceding to the principles of the Reformation, he says “We would acknowledge them as our Fathers, and willingly obey their authority, which we find supported by the word of God.”

What was the opinion of *Melancthon*, universally admired among the Reformers for the excellency of his life, and the extent of his erudition? In his Apology for the celebrated Augsburg Confession, among many similar passages, this is particularly striking—“I would to God it lay in me to restore the government of Bishops. For I see what manner of Church we shall have, the Ecclesiastical polity being dissolved. I do see that heretofore will grow up a greater Tyranny in the Church than there ever was before.” The prophecy has been very remarkably fulfilled.

By what right or law, he demands elsewhere, may we dissolve the Ecclesiastical polity, if the Bishops will grant to us that which in reason they ought to grant? And if they were lawful for us to do so, yet surely it is not expedient. *Luther* was ever of this opinion.

In a letter addressed to *Luther* in the year 1630, he employs yet more forcible expressions. “*Zwingle*,” he tells him, “has sent hither in print his confession of faith. You would say neither more nor less than that he is not in his senses. At one stroke he would abolish all ceremonies, and he would have no Bishops.”

What was the opinion of *Beza*, the learned friend of *Calvin*, his colleague and successor at Geneva?—“In my writings touching Church Government, I ever impugned the Romish hierarchy, but never intended to touch or impugn the Ecclesiastical polity of the Church of England.” “If there are any who reject the whole order of Episcopacy, God forbid that any man of a sound mind should assent to the madness of such men.”

What was the opinion of *Martin Bucer*, another highly distinguished Reformer? “By the perpetual observation of all Churches even from the Apostles' times, we see that it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, that among Presbyters, to whom the prerogative of Churches was chiefly committed, there should be one who should have the care and charge of divers Churches, and the whole ministry committed to the rest; and by reason of that charge, he was above the rest; and therefore, the name of Bishop was attributed peculiarly to those chief rulers.”

Finally, what was the opinion expressed in the articles drawn up by the Protestant Delegates to the Diet at Worms, held in 1521 by command of the Emperor Charles V., at which *Luther* himself was present, confuting his Popish adversaries? “Our learned men have expressly yielded Ordination to Bishops, if there may be a reformation.”

Is it possible to require more favourable testimony than this in behalf of Episcopacy, from the very men who were the founders of a Presbyterian Ministry, and who sought to vindicate its adoption only upon the plea of necessity? It is clear that we have them in this argument no less decidedly on our side than are the Fathers of the primitive Church, although they departed in practice from what they confessed to be the original and apostolical institution. Their candour and integrity we are prompt to honour and applaud. We cannot however admit that they were right in the course which they adopted; and always must contend that they ought to have reposed more confidence in God, and less in human expedients.—They should have permitted their supposed necessity to have been tried by the test of time, and doubtless, he, who overrules all things for the best, would have relieved them from their embarrassment, and enabled them to accomplish their great and holy design, without stirring up all those innumerable divisions which have brought reproach upon the Protestant cause.

And if the plea of necessity be of very doubtful value with regard to the first Reformers, much less can it avail those who at the present day reject a government by Bishops, such as the most eminent of the first Reformers would gladly have submitted to. Protestant Episcopacy is now firmly established, and capable of indefinite extension; and all those who are sound in the faith may avail themselves, if they will, of its Divine sanctions.

But the adversaries of this government now take other ground. They deny its Apostolic origin, in the face of the evidence which has been submitted to you. They deride our doctrine of an uninterrupted succession of Episcopal ordinations from the Apostles' time to our own; and, representing Episcopacy as a relic of Popery, insist that these ordinations have been vitiated by the impurity of the channel through which they have come down to us. This last objection seems to have great weight with many, but it is indeed a very poor one. What can be more absurd than to stigmatize any practice as a relic of Popery, because it has been regularly used in the Church of Rome, although it was equally a part of the primitive Ecclesiastical system—and to represent it as vitiated by that use? Surely we have not the less confidence in the Scriptures, because they have been transmitted to us through the same channel. Without being, at all more than our adversaries in this argument, disposed to defend the errors and corruptions of the Church, we protest against the folly and injustice of supposing that every thing belonging to her should be deemed corrupt, only because it belongs to her—and that merely to be opposed to any part of her system is any proof of the opposer being in the right. We are opposed to Romanism, as much as any others, whereinsoever it differs from primitive Christianity. The usurped authority of the Bishop of that Church we indignantly deny. We unhesitatingly reject her claim to be considered as the Mother and Mistress of Churches. Her unauthorised additions to the original twelve articles of the Christian Faith we never consent to receive. But we will be just and discriminating in our opposition; and, let who will agree or disagree with us in so doing, or find fault with us