

so much coveted and grasped at—but we say, that the power would be better exercised by the Presbytery, that is, by all the Bishops of a district, than by one man. The chief duty of a Presbyter, is the preaching of the gospel, and who better fitted to judge of the qualifications of a candidate, than men engaged in the work, who know its difficulties, and the gifts and graces it requires. To say they can preach and administer the ordinances, but have no concern in the matter of appointing others to the same work, savors of earthly wisdom—a device invented by metropolitans, and their coadjutors, to enhance their authority. It may be said, that in following out this line of argument, we are reducing church government to simple expediency, without any regard to divine authority. We reply, that we rest church government on scripture, which requires two orders of men, and only two—which are, preaching elders, and ruling elders, or deacons—and seeing no foundation in scripture for the ordaining bishop, we say, that in the nature of things there can be none. What doth the church require of the candidate for ordination? Is it the Hebrew and Greek tongues, to enable him to peruse the original text of holy writ? or, is it the Latin tongue, to enable him to read the writings of the reformers and others? Is it a knowledge of the saving truths of the gospel? Is it an aptitude for teaching—for rebuking the careless and comforting the afflicted? Then we say, that all and each of these qualifications can be tried and judged of by the Presbyters; and not only so, but inasmuch as the wisdom of two, in matters of importance, is of more avail than one, we say, that the Presbyters are better qualified for this work than the Bishop; and were a history of the episcopal ordinations, by the churches of Rome and England, drawn up, we think it would bear us out in the assertion. Who are the men the Roman bishops, acting on the *jus divinum*, ordain? They are men who uphold the reign of idolatry, and will worship—who suppress the scriptures, and teach the people to bow to graven images. And who does not know that the Bishops of the reformed church of England have in general selected those men on whom to lay their hands who have been most forward in preaching the Arminian doctrines, which their own articles, honestly interpreted, condemn. But it may be said, this is an abuse of the power, on the part of the Bishop, for which the doctrine is not responsible. We grant the admission, and would concede these evils to be of no weight, were it established to be a doctrine taught in scripture, that Bishops

only have the power of ordination; but we say it is an usurpation on their part, and in the monstrous progeny of evil which it has produced for ages, we see a confirmation of this truth.

On what ground do Episcopalians reject the Pope's authority over the Bishops? It is simply on this ground, that there is no scriptural warrant for it; and, therefore, however long standing it may be, the absence of such warrant is fatal to the claim. We apply to ourselves the same test. We deny *in toto* the distinction which they would draw between a Presbyter and a Bishop—we deny the authority of the former over the latter, it being unsupported by the word of God; and however long it may have continued in the church, this can never make good a claim which *ab initio* was of no force and effect. It was the riches and glory of Rome, which led the Bishop of that city to claim authority over all Bishops. It was no considerations of wisdom and spiritual advantage. It was simply the love of power, which his station, as Bishop in Rome, enabled him at first to make, and afterwards to persist in. And the claim of ordination by the Bishop, who preaches in the chief town of his diocese, we trace to the same origin with the usurped dominion of the sovereign pontiff—the superior riches of the congregation over which he presides. The conclusion, therefore, to which we come is this, that episcopacy is unsupported by the word of God; and we may add, that the learned deny to it the authority of the earliest of the fathers. “As to Bishops, distinct from Presbyters, we have no evidence except that of Ignatius, for the two first centuries. Clement and Polycarp most clearly recognise but two orders. Barnabas and Hermas have nothing very distinct on the subject. Justin mentions only two officers in the church, in his time,” (from the year of our Lord 132 to 167,) whom he calls “president,” (*provestos*) the very word which Paul applies to Presbyters, in 1 Tim. 5, 7, and “Deacon.” Irenaeus (A. D. 184,) uses the terms Bishop and Presbyter indiscriminately. Thus we see the weight of evidence during the two first centuries, is against the three orders, which may naturally create a suspicion that those passages in Ignatius which refer to them are interpolations; for he stands alone in what he states, for the two first centuries, and not only alone, but opposed to the strongest authorities during that period.”*

* Letters on the Fathers, by Misopapisticus, p. 67, quoted in the Edinburgh Christian Instructor, for June, 1839, p. 219.