

lows: 'It is evident unto all men diligently reading the Holy Scriptures and ancient authors, that from the Apostles' time there have been three orders of ministers in Christ's Church—Bishops, Priests, and Deacons. Which offices were evermore had in such reverend estimation that no man might presume to execute any of them, except he were first called, tried, examined, and known to have such qualities as are requisite for the same; and also by Public Prayer, with imposition of hands, were approved and admitted thereunto by lawful authority.'

Now what is this lawful authority, and whence is it derived? None can doubt that in the first instance it was bestowed by the Lord upon His Apostles, who in addition to the fulness of power of ministering the Word and Sacraments, and the privilege of founding the Church of Christ, had also the power of transmitting and handing on to others the sacred ministry. It was not long before they found it necessary to create the order of Deacons, with the special duty, at first, of caring for the poor and dealing with the funds of the Church, though also authorised, as we see in the case of Philip, to preach and baptize; then, as the Church spread and new congregations were formed, the Apostles appointed a second ministerial order—that of the Priesthood, and devolved upon it all the powers which they themselves possessed, except that of continuing and transmitting its ministry; to this second order the names both of *Presbyter (elder)* and of *Bishop (overseer)* were often applied, but before long the latter title was reserved for those who, as the Apostles fell asleep in death, took the oversight, not only of one congregation, but perhaps of many, and who succeeded to their special office and privilege of handing on to others the ministerial character.

Our materials for the history of the end of the first century and of the beginning of the second are very scanty, and we may well understand that the distinct lines of Church government and organisation, as we have them now, were at first less

clearly marked; but there are one or two facts which clearly indicate the establishment of the episcopate even in Apostolic times. Timothy and Titus, though not yet distinctly called bishops, received authority from S. Paul for the ordination of presbyters and to deal with charges brought against presbyters. The position of S. James at Jerusalem seems to have been that of a bishop, exercising his jurisdiction within certain definite limits; and within the lifetime of those who had learned from the Apostles it had come to be recognised that no church could be complete without the three orders of the ministry. Bishops alone could ordain, and by whatever steps this came about, if we believe the promise of guidance given by Christ to His Church, we must believe that it was the work of the Holy Ghost. That the Bishops are the successors of the Apostles is a fact of history, and in this Apostolic succession we have the assurance of the unbroken identity of the Church, and the rallying point for her unity.

A great English teacher and divine has recently pointed out that 'of public institutions in modern Europe the episcopate is the most venerable. It is older than any secular throne; it is by some centuries older than the Papacy. It had reached its prime while the Empire was still standing. It could shed its blood with Cyprian; it could illuminate the world by the consecrated genius of an Irenæus, of an Augustine, of Chrysostom, and Basil. The episcopate, as it traverses the centuries, is like a weather-beaten barque, on whose hull clusters many a shell and weed, and tells of the seas of feudal and political life behind it; but as these incrustations fall away we discover that the essential feature of a spiritual fatherhood, which was always there, remains intact. The title "Father in God" has never disappeared from the language, whether of the Church, or of the law, or of general literature, and its reality, even in the worst times, has never been without a witness.'

It is in their character of 'Fathers in