

rend the Church of Christ. For at Alexandria from the time of St. Mark the Evangelist to that of the Bishops Heracles and Dionysius, the presbyters always styled one elected from themselves, and placed in a higher rank—a Bishop, in the same way as if an army should make an Emperor, or Deacons select one of themselves whom they knew to be industrious, and call him Archdeacon.” *Quod autem postea unus electus est, in schismatis remedium factum est; ne unus quisque ad se trahens Christi ecclesiam rumperet. Nam et Alexandria a Marco Evangelista usque ad Heraclem et Dionysium Episcopos, Presbyteri semper unum ex se electum in excelsiori gradu collocatum, Episcopum nominabant; quomodo si exercitus Imperatorem faciat, aut diaconi eligant de se quem industrium noverint, et Archidiaconum vocent.** This passage has been explained to mean, that in the great See of Alexandria, Presbyters alone had the right of electing their Bishops. But how could St. Cyprian, an African Bishop, have said that a totally different mode of election had come down to him as a “Divine tradition and an Apostolic observance,” if Alexandria the greatest of African Dioceses had quite another Apostolic observance? This difficulty alone should make us be careful whether we understand Jerome aright. I conceive that we have in this celebrated passage another instance of the power of words over ideas. The misconception of the true meaning has arisen from translating *nominabant*, they *nominated*. But to “nominate one elected” is unmeaning. Jerome is speaking of the title not the election of Bishops. He says, that ever since St. Mark’s time, the Presbyters called the man elected (not by them) but from them, (he does not say by whom)—a Bishop, in the same way as an army may make an Emperor, or Deacons call one elected out of their number an Archdeacon. Emperor was strictly speaking a title given by the army and senate to a successful general. Jerome elsewhere uses the word *nominavit* in this sense. In his commentary on the 60th chap. Isaiah, he says, “In which the majesty of Holy Scripture is to be admired, because he called (*nominavit*) the future princes of the church, Bishops.” *In quo scripture sanctae admiranda majestas quod principes futuros Ecclesiae Episcopos nominavit.* Jerome could not possibly

* Jerome, Ep. 85.