

done between the contending claims of Basilides and Sabinus. Bearing this in mind let us give the reply of the African Synod. After assigning reasons why the people should oppose Basilides and support Sabinus, they add, "Nor let the people flatter themselves that they can be free from contagion of guilt if they communicate with a Bishop that is a sinner, and lend their consent to the unlawful and unjust Episcopate of their Bishop." *Nec sibi plebs blandiatur quasi immunis esse a contagio delicti possit cum sacerdote peccatore communicans, et ad injustum atque illicitum Præpositi sui Episcopatum, consensum suum commodans.* Is it not evident that the African Synod only meant that the faithful laity ought to separate themselves from a sacriligious Bishop because they had the power of making a choice between worthy and unworthy ones? Here was no case of a vacancy in a See. It was simply a question between the claims of two rival Bishops, and the Epistle merely declares that the people ought to withdrawn from the communion of a bad Bishop because they had the power to do so. The mode of an election is not touched upon till after quoting the precedents of Eliezar, Matthias and the seven Deacons, the Pastoral goes on as already cited to give the Divine and Apostolic method. How far we are to admit the participation of the Laity depends on the meaning of the phrase, *plebe presente*. Mr. Dawson seems to think that it is a technical term signifying not only admission to the sight of a transaction, but official participation in it. The learned Bingham however, who argues for the right of the Laity to elect Bishops by popular votes, has not adduced this Synodical letter in support of his argument; and no wonder. Surely when the Epistle explains itself and the meaning of *plebe presente*, we have no need to conjecture a different one. The people were to be present who knew and were acquainted with the character of each candidate to give testimony and assent or dissent. This will appear to be the meaning of the words *plebe presente*, if we compare them with their context in other passages. In this same Epistle, the Synod after adducing the precedent of the Apostles calling together the whole multitude of the disciples for the election of the Deacons, go on to give the reason why the Apostles so acted—to give testimony of worthiness, "that no one who was unworthy should creep into the ministry of the