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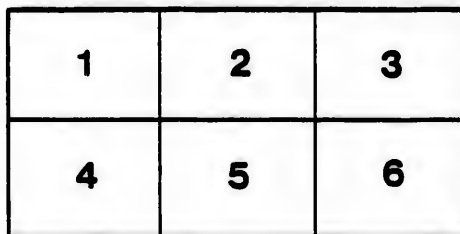
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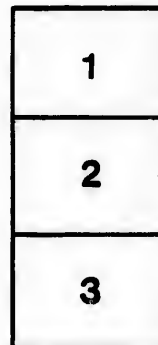
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THE ORIGINS  
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ORGANIZATION AND GOVERNMENT  
IN THE  
EARLY CHURCH,

BEING THE  
SIXTH ANNUAL LECTURE BEFORE THE THEOLOGICAL UNION OF  
MOUNT ALLISON WESLEYAN COLLEGE.

BY  
REV. E. EVANS.

DELIVERED JUNE, 1884.

SAINT JOHN, N. B.  
J. & A. McMILLAN, 98 PRINCE WILLIAM STREET.  
1884.



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## THE ORIGINS OF ORGANIZATION AND GOVERNMENT IN THE EARLY CHURCH.

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IN selecting the subject of this lecture I have been directed to the one announced by the advance made in its methods of discussion in late years, and also by the additional evidence brought to light by the indefatigable researches everywhere so successfully prosecuted. It may perhaps be thought it is not fully in accord with the name of the Society under whose auspices it is delivered, or the subjects heretofore discussed. But, though the topic be not theological in the narrower and popular sense, yet it belongs to a very prominent branch of scientific Theology, and bearing most intimate relations to its sister branches in that Queen of the Sciences. The position here claimed for Church History is acknowledged by all writers, and drawn out at length in all treatises of Theological Encyclopædia and Methodology.<sup>1</sup>

Now especially, when all ancient and venerable documents and traditions are unscrupulously handled by a daring and irreverent criticism, it is not inopportune to restate the facts and principles of church organization and government, and also the character of the documentary evidence upon which they rest. During a part of our labours we shall be able to appeal to the inspired records, and thus exegesis will be combined with history, and here indeed will be found our surest ground.

The outward form and organization of the Christian Church may seem so small a matter compared with the great truths which should be her life and inspiration, that it may be thought

<sup>1</sup> Pope: *Compendium of Theology*, Vol. I. p. 27, and Vol. II. p. 335, sqq.

"Church History is the most extensive, and including the sacred history of the Old and New Testaments, the most important branch of Theology."—Schaff: *Hist. Chris. Church*, Vol. I. p. 15.

"The backbone of Theology." Stanley: *Eastern Church*, p. 65.

lost labour to spend much time, if any, in researches either about the original forms, or the subsequent adaptations of these to the ever varying wants of the church. But a careful observer will have noticed that independent as we might suppose the doctrines of the faith to be, of the peculiar organization in which they may be set, yet the fact is indisputable that there is a close connection. How could the doctrine of justification by faith flourish under the shadow of a sacerdotal order? Or the precious truth of the universal priesthood of God's people under the paralyzing influence of an iron bound system of priestly rule and authority, allied with a ritual at once minute and extensive? Could the free and unfettered work of the Spirit of God be exhibited under the restraints of an hierarchy; and christian charity be developed, where it is a prime article of faith, that only those who acknowledge the divine right of the episcopacy constitute the true church?

It is purposed to institute an inquiry into the facts pertaining to organization and government as they are found in the inspired writings, and in the subsequent documents which we shall find ought to be used for this purpose; using for the interpretation of these the light thrown by the recovered inscriptions upon the contemporaneous institutions and usages prevalent among the people where Christianity was adopted. Also, to prosecute this research without regard to any of the theories which may have been entertained upon these questions; and from the evidence obtained, present an impartial description of this organization and government in the different stages of its history, and rigorously to abstain from all the cognate questions which all through the investigation will press themselves upon our attention. To follow the plan marked out will need severe restraint, for pleasant fields will continually open out in every direction, inviting our attention; and visions of grandeur and beauty will ever present themselves. But from all these we must turn aside. "We shall be like a student who makes it his temporary task to explore some great historic cathedral with a view only to its architecture. At every step, he treads on hallowed ground. On

every side are the memorials of saintly lives, heroic deeds, and immortal genius. From their silent tombs there seem to rise up the shadows of the holy dead, gazing at him with their beatified faces, and stretching out hands of ghostly fellowship. He is tempted at every moment to throw aside his study, and to yield to the fascination of the place, and to gain some new hope for his own sad life from the weird and whispered tale, of what they did and suffered for Christ, and for the world. But his present concern is with the architecture, and the soft solemn voices that bid him linger in sympathy or in dream, fall upon deafened ears."<sup>1</sup>

In the development of this subject, the important errors which are frequently committed in its treatment are to be assiduously guarded against. The most glaring are included in the following classification :

1. *Geographical errors.* In similar enquiries, local usages have been elevated into universal rules. A custom of the church in Greece has been supposed, without any evidence, to have been the usage at once, upon the Rhine, or in Carthage. And a practice in Egypt has been held to determine the custom in Gaul. But we shall find that Presbyters ruled the churches of one province or city, while in another, at the same time, a Bishop presided.

2. *Chronological errors.* In these investigations, two or three centuries have been thrown together in one sentence, forgetting the vast interval between them, and the great changes which took place in that early period of the church's history in a very short time. A quotation from a Christian writer is supposed to end the controversy, and yet he may have lived two, three, or four hundred years after the event or usage he is quoted to prove. The early centuries are so remote from our own that they indefinitely blend together in our vision.

3. *Lexical.* Words have remained in use, but their meanings have changed, and the same word, during the centuries, does not always denote the same idea. The word was the same, but its

<sup>1</sup> Hatch : Bampton Lecture, 1880, p. 24.

connotation different. Owing to a forgetfulness of this fact writers have involved themselves in perplexities, and adopted theories which have been wholly unsupported by the very evidence they brought forward to sustain them.

4. *Documentary errors.* In support of a fact, writings of a later age are quoted as contemporaneous, and spurious writing as authentic. And compilations of different periods are used in every part as of equal age and authority, and interpolations as genuine.

5. *Evidentiary errors.* To reach a correct judgment it is necessary to consult all contemporaneous evidence that can be obtained; and if any portion of it be slighted, undervalued, or misunderstood, or entirely ignored, our conclusions must be incomplete and often erroneous.<sup>1</sup>

In the consideration of a subject where time is such an important element, it will be wise to mark out definite periods. There are four of these naturally defined in the time included within the scope of this lecture.

I. The Petrine and Pauline Age. The period from the founding of the church to the date of the Pastoral Epistles, A. D. 67.

II. The Johannine Age. To the close of the first century.

III. The Sub-Apostolic Age. Reaching to A. D. 160.

IV. The Transitional Age. Carrying us down to A. D. 250.

Though the names appropriated to these several periods may not be absolutely correct, they are sufficiently so for all the purposes required.<sup>2</sup>

I. The Petrine and Pauline Age.

The influence of education and custom upon men is very powerful, and exerts itself in a thousand ways, and shapes our conduct, and colours our judgment, unknown to ourselves. National and religious predilections, having their foundations in the very core of our mental and spiritual constitution, always act.

<sup>1</sup> Hatch : Bamp. Lecture, 1880, p. 3, sqq. Dr. G. A. Jacob : The Ecclesiastical Polity of the New Testament, p. 68.

<sup>2</sup> Bunsen : Hippolytus and his Age, Vol. I. p. 235.

The lapse of centuries, the divergence of customs, and the peculiarities of race, may modify, but leave unrepressed their great motive force. They acted as powerfully in the first as in the nineteenth century, perhaps from the limited range of activity permitted to the average citizen, more energetically in the earlier period than in the later.

Therefore, for a full understanding of the beginning of organization in the Christian church we must place ourselves in the position of the first converts, who were Jews, and consequently both the national and the traditional religious prepossessions were called into play. They were accustomed to the Synagogue, its form of worship and government. What more natural that when the need of organization was felt in the new society its form would be assimilated to that of the synagogue, if not identical with it. This principle has been generally acknowledged, though sometimes pushed too far.<sup>1</sup> The Synagogue was not of divine authority, as the Temple and its service were, a copy of the pattern shown on the Mount. It was the outgrowth of the circumstances of the people, simple in its government and mode of worship, and the great instructor of the nation for centuries, easy of transport and adaptation to every land where the Jew found a home; and sanctioned by the presence of the Saviour at its worship during the whole of His earthly life, it possessed those very qualities needed for a universal religion.

Let us endeavor briefly to enumerate and describe the Synagogue officers and their duties. The number of Jews required by their authorities to form a synagogue was at least ten. The most important officers were the *Zekanin*—the rulers of the synagogue—the Presbyters, or Elders. They formed a judiciary, or bench of magistrates. In the New Testament they are called “the elders of the Jews.” As where a certain centurion sent the elders of the Jews, that is, the presbyters of the synagogue where the centurion lived, unto Jesus asking Him to come and save his servant.<sup>2</sup> There were generally three in each synagogue.

<sup>1</sup> As by Lightfoot, Vitranga, and Mosheim.

<sup>2</sup> Luke vii. 3.

One of these officiated as the president,<sup>1</sup> who, in the New Testament, is the *Archisynagogus*—the ruler of the synagogue.<sup>2</sup> But the title rulers is given to the whole presbytery.<sup>3</sup> They were also called *parnassin*, *poimenes*, pastors, and presidents. Their jurisdiction was very extensive. They judged concerning money matters, thefts, losses, admission of proselytes, laying on of hands; also directed the services in the synagogue through their president, who should read prophets, who should recite the phylacteries or prayers, and who should pass before the ark, that is, conduct the divine service; and generally one or more of them gave an address or exhortation. The president was elected by the votes of the congregation, and all the members of the presbytery were set apart for their office by the laying on of hands.

The three Almoners, *parnassin*, *diakonoi*, shepherds, or deacons, are the next in order. Two of them collected alms, one distributed them, but all must be present. These were a standing poor committee, possessed of large powers, and composed of the most esteemed men in the congregation, men of honour, wisdom, justice, and such as had the confidence of the people, and required their unanimous vote for their election.<sup>4</sup>

The Legate of the congregation, or Leader of divine service, the Apostle or Messenger of the Synagogue was an official who read the prayers; this was his chief duty. Any one at first was called forward, afterwards, about five hundred years after Christ, it became an established office, and its duties were prescribed as follows:<sup>5</sup> He is to be one apt to officiate, who has children, whose family is free from vice, who has a proper beard, whose garments are decent, who is acceptable to the people, who has a good and amiable voice, who understands how to read the law, the prophets, and the Hagiographa, who is versed in homiletic, legal,

<sup>1</sup> Lightfoot: Horae. Heb., Matt. iv. 23, ix. 23; Smith's Dict. Bible, Vol. III. p. 1399; McClintock & Strong's Cyclopædia, Vol. X. p. 75.

<sup>2</sup> Luke viii. 41, 49; xiii. 14; Acts xviii. 8, 17. <sup>3</sup> Acts xiii. 15.

<sup>4</sup> From Lightfoot it would appear that the title *parnassin*, pastors, belongs peculiarly to these. See supra l. c. and Works, Vol. III. p. 257, sq.

<sup>5</sup> McClintock & Strong's Cyclop., Vol. X. p. 76.

and traditional exegesis, and who knows all the benedictions of the service.<sup>1</sup>

The *Chazzan* was the lowest servant; like a sexton or beadle, he had the care of the furniture, opened the doors, and lighted the lamps, called out the names of the persons selected by the ruler of the Synagogue, or if he were not present, by the presbyters, for readers, handed them the manuscript rolls and took them back again.

There were said to be ten officers in each Synagogue, who were also called the ten *Ballanin*, or men of leisure, who had time and ability to attend to its affairs. The other officers, besides those already enumerated, being the interpreter, divinity school teacher and his interpreter.<sup>2</sup>

Bearing in mind the intense love of the Hebrew for the customs of his ancestors, we expect to find that when the occasion arose he instinctively turned to the Synagogue organization as a precedent for him in his new relations. For a short time the Apostles were the only rulers, they possessed sole power, they were the fountains of power and office, and concentrated in themselves all the offices needed for the development and government of the Church. The Apostolate, as a mighty tree, was to send forth its branches in the offices; which they, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, instituted, suitable for the time and circumstances of the Church.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Plumptre, in Smith's Dict. Bible, confuses the qualifications and duties of this office in the days of the Apostles with those belonging to it at a later date.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Geikie in his Life of Christ, Vol. II. p. 623, accuses Dr. Farrar, in his Life of Christ, of confounding the *Ballanin* with the presbytery, but Dr. Farrar is sustained in his view by Lightfoot, Vitringa, Benjamin of Tudela, Hertzfeld, &c. He himself makes a mistake in enumerating among the duties of the elders the care of the alms, for, as shown above, there was a Committee of Almoners distinct from the elders. But he commits a glaring anachronism in Vol. I. pp. 174-189, and 565, in representing the Chazzan as the reader, teacher of the school, messenger of the Synagogue, and stating that he presided over the reading of the law, and directed the service; he only entered upon these duties several centuries after, but in the first century he was a sexton, and no more.

<sup>3</sup> See Lechler: Com. Acts 6, 1-7; Schafl's History Apostolic Church, pp. 500, 514; Pope's Comp. Theology, Vol. III. p. 339; Neander's Planting and Training, Vol. I. p. 37; Pressense's Apostolic Era, p. 49.

As witnesses of Christ's life and words, and inspired in their words and writings, the founders and pillars of the Church, their office was intransmissible. But the ministry of the Church, which was needed for all time, they provided, having themselves also performed the same duties and then appointed others to these offices. Hence Peter styles himself a fellow-presbyter;<sup>1</sup> John also calls himself a presbyter.<sup>2</sup> But while they performed the work of presbyters and deacons, yet their position was higher than any of these, they were the fountain of church order and economy. The Apostolate at first united in one all the various offices which were by degrees to become detached.<sup>3</sup> In them were concentrated all the gifts bestowed on the early disciples of the Lord. Their number, twelve, pointed them out as the representatives and founders of the spiritual Israel, as the twelve sons of Jacob had been the founders of Israel according to the flesh. No priestly character did they fill or assume, except as all Israel is a royal priesthood.

It was some time after the Pentecostal ingathering before it was apparent that the infant Church had need of any special officers. The constant presence in Jerusalem of the Apostles, the marvellous gifts imparted to the disciples, the harmony and love which prevailed, and the constant attendance upon daily worship, exalted the piety of the whole Christian community to supernatural heights. It was the glorious Sabbath which preceded the long week of toil and struggle in which the Church still finds herself. During the three years which had elapsed since Pentecost the inveterate prejudices between the two parties, which had been overcome and repressed by divine grace but were not extinct, began to show themselves.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps the miraculous and wonderful enlargement of the Church was the cause of the oversight which led to the murmurings recorded.<sup>5</sup> It is now my purpose to follow the indications of the appointment of additional officers in chronological order.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Peter v. 1. <sup>2</sup> 2 John 1 : 3 John 1. <sup>3</sup> Pressense: supra. l. c.

<sup>4</sup> This seems to be the period according to Eichorn, Winer, Wiesler, Ewald and others. See Chart Meyer's Com. Acts. Lechler, Schaff and Canon Cook agree about this time. <sup>5</sup> Acts vi. 1.



The first of these is the appointment of Deacons. Hitherto the Apostles had not only been the inspired leaders of the Church in spiritual things, but the pecuniary interests had also been at their disposal; moneys were committed to them, and they distributed these among the poor of the community, especially the widows; but the foreign-born Jews and widows were unintentionally overlooked in this distribution. To remove the cause of complaint and to relieve themselves of duties, which with the enlarged number of converts it became impossible for them to perform, they called upon the congregation of believers to choose seven of their number for the distribution of alms, and yet in describing them evidently looking forward to their engagement in more directly spiritual work. It has been supposed by a few eminent commentators and historians that the office of Deacon already existed in the Church. Believing that from the first the Apostles designed to form a society exactly upon the model of the Synagogue, and in pursuance of that plan had already instituted particular offices for the government of the believers in agreement with that design. They look upon the young men previously mentioned in Acts<sup>1</sup> as filling the office of Deacon.<sup>2</sup>

But the most judicious historians are averse to this interpretation, which seems to have little to commend it except the exigencies of a preconceived theory.<sup>3</sup> In considering this first outgrowth from the Apostolical authority and division of their work we will enquire —

1. How they were appointed.
2. The duties and extent of their office.
3. Its resemblance to any preceding office in the Synagogue.

<sup>1</sup> Acts v. 6-10.

<sup>2</sup> Mosheim: Eccl. Hist., p. 29; Neander: Pl. and Tr., Vol. I. p. 35; Plumptre, Smith's Dict. Bib., art. Deacon; Conybeare & Howson: St. Paul, Vol. I. p. 435; also Coms. of Olshausen, Meyer, and Jacobson, *in loco*.

<sup>3</sup> Neander: P. & T., Vol. I., p. 37; Pressense: Apostol. Era, p. 56; Plumptre, art. Deacon, Smith's Dict. Bib.; McClintock & Strong's Cyclop. Deacon, Vol. II. p. 705; Hooker: Ecc. Polity, Bk. xv., sec. 78; Bishop Lightfoot: Com. Phil., p. 189; Kaye: Gov. & Discip. Church, p. 13.

1. How they were appointed. The Apostles placed a proposition before the Church. The words used forbid us to think that only a part of the whole Church were present. But as women were excluded from participation in the elections of the synagogue, we may assume that they also took no part in this. As there were about five thousand believers,<sup>1</sup> and to these were added afterwards multitudes of both men and women,<sup>2</sup> the conjecture of Bengel that there were now seven thousand, and therefore a Deacon was required for each thousand believers, is not unworthy of notice,<sup>3</sup> nor that of Dr. Clarke, one for each day in the week.<sup>4</sup>

In consequence of so large a number, and owing to the pressure of ecclesiastical systems, it has been thought that by "the multitude of disciples" is meant only the whole number of the presbytery, or the one hundred and eight, who had been already appointed and had previously assembled and acted in that capacity.<sup>5</sup>

But there is a general assent to the opinion that all the disciples were called together to make the selection;<sup>6</sup> and this appears to be the only construction the text will bear. The multitude of believers selected the men by an election, the Apostles appointed them to their office.

2. The duties and extent of their office. The duties were chiefly pecuniary — the distribution of alms, but not confined solely to this, for their qualifications were such as to fit them for ministering to the spiritual needs as well as the temporal necessities of the poor committed to their trust, and, as the approved

<sup>1</sup> Acts v. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Acts v. 14.

<sup>3</sup> Bengel Gnomon, *in loco*.

<sup>4</sup> Clarke's Com. *in loco*. The whole of his note is excellent, and meets with the approval of Dr. Whedon, who would combine with it the view that seven is a sacred number. Com. *in loco*. Dr. Alexander is of the same opinion. Others think seven because there was that number of sections in the Church, as Mosheim, Meyer, and partially Neander.

<sup>5</sup> Lightfoot: Com. Acts i. 15; Heb. & Talmud. Excer. Acts i. 15; vi. 3.

<sup>6</sup> Lechler, Jacobson, and Whedon, Coms. *in loco*: Neander, P. and T., Vol. I. p. 38; Killen Ancient Church, p. 48; Schaff, Apos. Ch., p. 501; Pressense, Apostl. Era, p. 55, sq.; Kaye, Hist. Gov. & Disc. Ch., p. 14.

officers of the church, to engage in the teaching and defence of the Gospel. As the Apostles did not cease participating in the temporal interests of the church though deacons were appointed, neither did these confine themselves to their purely eleemosynary functions, but, as they were gifted and directed by the Spirit, became teachers and eminent as evangelists, as Stephen and Philip, and ultimately as pastors in later times. It may be necessary to consider the objection advanced by some that these seven did not fully represent the office and functions of the diaconate of Philippians and the Pastoral Epistles.<sup>1</sup> The offices of the church at this period were in an elastic and fluid condition, and did not become crystalized into a fixed state till afterward, and in the words of Neander, "It would be wrong to deny that the later church office of this name developed itself from the first, and might be traced back to it."<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the statements of Irenaeus, who handed down the Apostolic tradition of John; a tradition at once historical and critical, decides the point. He writes, "the Nicolaitanes were the followers of that Nicolas who was one of the seven first ordained to the diaconate by the Apostles."<sup>3</sup> "Stephen who was chosen the first deacon by the Apostles."<sup>4</sup> The Church at Rome preserved the same tradition, and restricted the deacons to the original number.<sup>5</sup>

3. Its resemblance to any preceding office in the synagogue.

The office of deacon has been taken to correspond to the *Chazzan*, or common servant of the synagogue.<sup>6</sup> But that the office was one of far higher import is evident from the qualifications demanded. There was an office whose duties were similar, and where the qualifications were alike. The three Almoners, whose duties have been above described, were to be men of honour, wisdom, and justice, and have the confidence of the people; so the twelve call for seven, who, under the better estate of the Christian

<sup>1</sup> Vitringa, Pressense, Alexander, and others.      <sup>2</sup> P. & T., Vol. I. p. 39.

<sup>3</sup> Heresies. Bk. I. 26.3.      <sup>4</sup> Bk. III. xii. 10; also Bk. IV. xv. 1.

<sup>5</sup> Eusebius, H. Ecc., VI.: 43. Bishop Lightfoot also quotes Fabian, but his Epistles are justly considered forgeries.

<sup>6</sup> Vitringa, Plumptre: Smith's Dict. Bible, article Deacon, p. 417.

church, were to be "men of good report, full of the Spirit of wisdom." The Almoners were eminently, among all the officers of the synagogue, those to whom the name of shepherds was applied; they were the watchful pastors to care for, and to nourish the weak or helpless widows. With the knowledge of the existence of such officers of charity, it is a matter of surprise to read in an essay on the Christian Ministry, by one of the foremost scholars of the day, the following: "It would appear, moreover, that the institution was not merely new within the Christian Church, but novel absolutely. There is no reason for connecting it with any prototype existing in the Jewish community. The narrative offers no hint that it was either a continuation of the order of Levites, or an adaptation of an office in the synagogue. The philanthropic purpose for which it was established presents no direct point of contact with the known duties of either. It is therefore a baseless, though a very common assumption that the Christian diaconate was copied from the arrangements of the synagogue. We may fairly presume that St. Luke dwells at such length on the establishment of the diaconate, because he regarded it as a novel creation."<sup>1</sup> To sustain these positive assertions, a comparison is instituted between the duties of the Christian Deacon and those of the Levite of the Temple, and the Chazzan of the Synagogue, and as might be expected, nothing is found in common between them. But of the more important and analogous office of the Almoner, no mention is made.<sup>2</sup> Dr. Ginsburg, whose acquaintance with Hebrew learning is proverbial, and the gist of whose account of the Almoners is given above, shall furnish additional information to the above description, to show how baseless these statements are. "The Almoners exercised great discretion, both in demanding alms and in distributing them. There were 'the alms of the dish,' consisting of articles of food, col-

<sup>1</sup> Bishop Lightfoot: Essay on the Christian Ministry in his Commentary on Philipians, p. 189, sq.

<sup>2</sup> The same singular omission occurs in Plumptre's article, Deacon, in Smith's Dict. Bible, Vol. I. p. 417.

lected daily, and to which every one must contribute who resided thirty days in one place; these were distributed every evening." This at least seems singularly like an office which is described in this Essay as 'superintending the public messes, and providing in other ways for the wants of the helpless poor.' "Then there were also 'the alms of the box,' being the money collected every Friday, and distributed weekly, and to this every one contributed who had lived ninety days in a place. They had full power of exempting from these contributions any whom they believed unable to pay, and to enforce contributions on those who might pretend they were too poor."<sup>1</sup> And while some dispute over serving tables, as to whether it meant dining tables or money tables, we see that in these offices of the synagogue both were combined, and most probably were in the duties of the diaconate. Moreover, the prominence of the alms box in every synagogue might have suggested that the argument was not as complete as it appeared.<sup>2</sup>

But while the synagogue may have suggested the idea and office, it partook of the enlarged and spiritual nature of Christianity, and soon burst the narrow bounds of a simple Judaistic institution.

A period of perhaps hardly a year had passed after the institution of deacons before one of them became the proto-martyr of the Church. Then they "that were scattered abroad" upon the tribulations which arose about Stephen, "went about speaking the word" and "preaching the Lord Jesus."<sup>3</sup> Some of these early evangelists founded a church at Antioch. We have now to leap over an interval of seven years, when we find the Antiochian church sending relief by the hands of Barnabas and Saul to the elders in Judea.<sup>4</sup>

This is the first mention of the officers who were to become

<sup>1</sup> Kitto's Cyclopædia, Vol. III., article Synagogue.

<sup>2</sup> Lightfoot in his Excerpts. reiterates this transference, "This office of the deacon, to whom the charge of the poor was entrusted, was translated from the Jewish to the Christian Church, for there belonged to every synagogue three deacons, with whom that care was deposited." Heb. and Tal. Excer., Acts vi. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Acts viii. 1-4, and xi. 19-21.

<sup>4</sup> Acts xi. 30.

so important in the Christian Church. Now, the question arises, When had these presbyters been appointed? The office appears to have been adopted with the growth of the church: the need was felt when the details of its management became too numerous, and the guidance of its affairs could no longer be combined with the general oversight appertaining to the Apostolic office. The example was before them in the synagogue, and so undoubtedly the office was borrowed, and it formed so little break in the onward flow of Christian life, that its introduction is not recorded. It was so in accord with Jewish practice that its absence, rather than its presence, would have required notice. The Jews carried with them in their dispersions the laws of their courts and synagogues, and these were confirmed by successive decrees of the Roman Emperors. At Alexandria and at Rome we have the most unimpeachable evidence of this; in the latter city, in the inscriptions found in the Jewish cemeteries. Consequently, when the majority of the members of a Jewish community were converted, there was nothing to interrupt the current of their former life, there was no need for a change of organization. The old forms of worship and the old mode of government would still go on. The weekly commemoration of the Lord's supper and worship supplemented, but did not supersede the ancient Sabbath. The reading of the life of Jesus and the letters of the Apostles supplemented, but did not supersede the ancient lessons from the Prophets and the ancient singing of the Psalms. The community, as a whole, was known by the same name which had designated the purely Jewish community. It was a *paroikia*—a parish—a colony of sojourners. The officers would continue to bear the same name, and to a large extent perform the same duties.<sup>1</sup> The meetings of the disciples of Jesus would bear the same designation—a synagogue, and were known by that name in Palestine and Asia Minor long afterwards. James writes, "For if there come in your synagogue a man with a gold ring,"<sup>2</sup> The "Testament of the twelve Patriarchs," the production of a

<sup>1</sup> Hatch: Bampton Lect., 1880, p. 59. Archbishop Whately: Kingdom of Christ Delineated, p. 108. Bis. Lightfoot: Com. Phil., p. 192. <sup>2</sup> James ii. 2.

Jewish Christian, written about A. D. 135, and reflecting the language of that time, in describing Paul, says, "One shall rise up from my seed in the latter times, beloved of the Lord, hearing upon earth his voice, enlightening with new knowledge all the Gentiles, bursting in upon Israel, for salvation with the light of knowledge, and tearing it away from it like a wolf, and giving it to the synagogue of the Gentiles, and until the consummation of the ages, shall he be in the synagogues of the Gentiles, and among their rulers, as a strain of music in the mouth of all."<sup>1</sup> The whole analogy leads us to the assurance that a body of elders had been chosen at an early period to direct the religious worship of the society, and also to oversee its temporal wellbeing.<sup>2</sup> And while therefore we would not put its formation back to that remarkable Pentecost, as Lightfoot, Mosheim and others, yet it is most likely that it was adopted when the persecution took place after the death of Stephen, and this seems to be the opinion of Neander.<sup>3</sup> It must have been in existence some time, the office well known in its Christian application, and the name one which conveyed a certain idea to all. Some have argued that the presbyters were introduced into the church at the time of the martyrdom of James by Herod, and that this event was the signal for the dispersion of the Apostles on a wider mission. Since Jerusalem could no longer be their home, as hitherto, it became necessary to provide for the permanent organization of the church.<sup>4</sup> But a period of intense missionary activity had begun seven years before; and can we think that the infant churches formed had been left so long without any organization or rulers, when immediately upon the departure of the Apostles

<sup>1</sup> Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs: Benj. II. Synagogue is used in the same sense by the writer of the Epistle of Ignatius to Polycarp, c. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Bis. Lightfoot: *supra*. l. c., and Dr. Alexander: *Com. Acts* xiv. 23; Lechler: *Com. Acts* xi. 30.

<sup>3</sup> The formation of Churches in South and West Palestine, at Lydda, Sharon, Joppa, and Cæsarea, and also in Samaria and Phœnicia, would seem to necessitate their appointment at this time.

<sup>4</sup> Bis. Lightfoot *Es. Ministry*, *Com. Phil.* p. 192, sq., and *Com. Gal.* pp. 298-303.

from the church which had been privileged with their presence and oversight for eleven years, it is found necessary immediately to establish the presbytery. Moreover, the course adopted by the Apostles soon afterwards is against such a delay as this theory supposes. For we have the fullest evidence that in the societies of Asia Minor and Macedonia they had a fully organized church and presbytery within a few months of their foundation, as will appear further on.

Having described the presbytery of the synagogue, its chief functions need now only be recalled. It regulated all matters of worship, directed the reading and explanation of the sacred books, the offering of prayers, and the chanting of the Psalms; and also in the Apostle's days one or more of its members gave an address. It had a president; perhaps this office was held in rotation, at least he was but the first among his peers. There was nothing priestly about it; not the least breath of sacerdotalism clung to it.<sup>1</sup> It was very democratic in its formation and constitution, and undoubtedly was adopted as making provision for the government of the church in the first instance, rather than for its instruction. This seems to have been chiefly in the hands of the Apostles and those under the special influence of the Spirit, called prophets or preachers; and those who having the charism of teaching, were by their mental development, under the guidance of the Spirit eminently qualified for the impartation of knowledge and the edification of the people. It is likely, however, that these presbyters were selected not only on account of their governing capacity, wisdom, age, and experience, but also where possible, because they had in addition, those charisms of the Spirit especially required for the discharge of the teaching function, and which immediately after formed one of the chief duties of their office.

That they did perform these didactic functions at an early period is certain, if we look at the evidence afforded by the

<sup>1</sup> According to the views of Lange and Pressense, the diaconate and presbyterate both were developed out of the office of the Seven. Pressense: *Apos. Age*, p. 85, sq.



Epistle to the Hebrews, addressed to these very Palestinian Jewish Christians about twenty years after this mention of elders in the Acts:<sup>1</sup> "Obey them that have the rule over you and submit yourselves, for they watch over your souls as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy and not with grief, for that is unprofitable for you."<sup>2</sup> In addition to ruling and watching over their souls, the delivery of the divine truth must have been part of their duty in the fulfilment of this onerous care. This is put beyond doubt by the seventh verse, "Who have spoken unto you the word of God." Moreover, these leaders and speakers were dead, so that this may take us back to the period of their ruling and preaching, to the time under consideration.<sup>3</sup> This view of the union of the two functions in this office is confirmed by the description given by St. Luke of some of the eminent men in the church at Jerusalem a few years hence, Judas Barsabas, and Silas or Silvanus, who were sent as a deputation to the Antiochian churches. They are represented as "chief men among the brethren,"<sup>4</sup> men of influence, leaders or rulers, *hegoumenoi*, the title used in Hebrews,<sup>5</sup> and as those, spake unto them the word, as well as watched over their souls; so these delegates from the society at Jerusalem are not only called rulers, but also prophets, that is, preachers who "exhorted the brethren with many discourses and strengthened them."<sup>6</sup> It appears, therefore, that these eminent men were selected for the presbytery because of their superior qualifications as public teachers.

Notwithstanding the plain correspondence between the Jewish and Christian presbyteries, it has been sought to identify the presbyter of the latter with the Messenger of the synagogue and and the Chazzan, as by Lightfoot, who speaks with great dog-

<sup>1</sup> According to the chronology of the Acts this was A. D. 44, and the Epistle to the Hebrews was written about A. D. 65. See Drs. Kaye, Moll, and Whedon in their Introductions to their Commentaries of this Epistle.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. xiii. 17.

<sup>3</sup> Moll. Com., Heb. xiii. 17.

<sup>4</sup> Acts xv. 22.

<sup>5</sup> Heb. xiii. 7, 17, 24.

<sup>6</sup> Acts xv. 32.

matism on this point,<sup>1</sup> and who has had a multitude of followers both in the assertion, and also in the spirit in which it is made.

But, as shown above, these were but subordinate offices in the Apostles times.<sup>2</sup> This view arises from confusing the different duties attached to these offices, and the merging to a large degree the two into one several centuries afterwards. But of this confusion a large number of writers are guilty; but if there is a fact upon which we can rest with certainty pertaining to this age it is this, that the presbyter was not evolved out of the parish clerk and the sexton.

Neither can the view of Baur be entertained, that there was one presbyter for each congregation, introducing a monarchical element into the constitution of the church. That the church at Jerusalem and elsewhere was at this period divided into distinct societies, each with its own presbyter and separate government, is devoid of a tittle of evidence, and besides, the plain facts of the history as recorded in Acts, and the correspondence in form with the synagogue presbytery are against it.<sup>3</sup>

Concerning the mode of appointing these officers there can be little uncertainty. In filling the place of the traitor there was a nomination and an election, by the whole body of disciples assembled.<sup>4</sup> When the deacons were to be appointed, the whole multitude of disciples were called to make the choice and present the elected to the Apostles, not for their confirmation but for appointment, and we cannot think that any other mode was adopted in this case. This does not invalidate the fact that all these received the inward call of the Holy Spirit moving them to this holy and onerous office.

What particular rites were used in inducting them into this office are not recorded, but the imposition of hands was used in the corresponding office of the synagogue. An event which took place a short time after the period allotted for

<sup>1</sup> Horae Heb. Matt. p. 89.

<sup>2</sup> Bishop Lighfoot: Phil. p. 199, note.

<sup>3</sup> Neander: P. & T., p. 42, sq., and note. In his General History he well terms it an atomic theory, Vol. I., p. 185.

<sup>4</sup> Acts i. 15-26.

the formation of this office leaves little doubt on the subject; this important event we now proceed to consider — the separation and appointment of Barnabas and Saul for the work of the evangelization of the heathen world. The sacred narrative is as follows: "Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was *there*, prophets and teachers. — And, as they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, 'Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.' Then when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them they sent them away."<sup>1</sup> The intimation of the divine will came through one of these prophets and teachers while they were engaged in public worship.<sup>2</sup> There might have been a seeking of the divine direction in this matter, for Paul's soul, we learn from his writings, was impressed with a strong conviction that he was called to this special work, and the mention of fasting renders it probable. The important word in the message is, *separate*, that is, from other work — ministering to and building up churches already founded; for the spread of the Gospel among other races and in other lands, strictly evangelistic work. They were not only appointed to a new office, but their duties were defined. This separation, like the technical Hebrew work *Kodesh*, included a sanctification and preparation for the work to which the person was appointed; this preparation in the Apostles had been recognized by the public call. They were divinely called because divinely qualified.

This setting apart was composed of the following particulars: fasting, prayer and laying on of hands. Fasting that their minds might be withdrawn from the earthly, and fitted for believing prayer. Intercessory prayer for the graces of the Spirit yet further to qualify and succour these messengers, and "to open a door of faith unto the Gentiles."<sup>3</sup> Laying on of hands for the transmission of office and authority was the outward sign of this separation. This very ancient and Jewish right was familiar to

<sup>1</sup> Acts xiii. 1-3.

<sup>2</sup> The word employed refers to public duties in worship. Meyer, Alford, Bloomfield, Comr.; Acts xiii. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Acts xiv. 23.

all, and no mystical import could be attached to it. From earliest times this form had been used in the conferring of office, as in the case of Joshua.<sup>1</sup> The man was selected, "for in him was the spirit," but this was his public appointment. For forty years he had been the military leader, yet he must be publicly consecrated to his high office.<sup>2</sup> The spiritual gifts he possessed did not dispense with this external appointment, nor would this ordination have been of any avail without the gifts.<sup>3</sup> In accord with ancient usage, the Saviour himself in blessing his disciples and sending them forth on their mission at His departure lifted up His hands and blessed them.<sup>4</sup> In the circumstantial account given by Luke we are able to scan the exact import of this rite, which has been so sadly abused by all Judaizing Christians by attaching to it a magic potency, and making it the monopoly of a certain class of ministers. What was the virtue of the ordination here described? Did it furnish Saul and Barnabas with a title to the ministry? No, for God himself had called them, and a higher authorization they could not receive. Did it necessarily add anything to the eloquence, or the prudence, or the knowledge, or the piety of the missionaries? No results of the kind were to be produced by any such ceremony. What, then, was its meaning? The Holy Spirit required their separation for a specific work, and the laying on of hands was the mode or form in which they were designated to their new office. To Hebrews the rite was very suggestive and full of hallowed associations. When a Jewish father invoked a benediction on any of his family he laid his hands upon the head of his child; when a Jewish priest devoted an animal in sacrifice he laid his hands upon the head of the victim; when a Jewish ruler invested another with office he laid his hands upon the head of the new functionary, and when a new candidate was received into the synagogue presbytery it was by imposition of the hands of the presbytery. By this act the presbytery of Antioch intimated their investiture with ecclesiastical authority.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Numb. xxvii. 2.    <sup>2</sup> Lange *in loco*.    <sup>3</sup> Dr. Gosman: Lange's Com. *in loco*.

<sup>4</sup> Luke xxiv. 50.

<sup>5</sup> Killen: Ancient Church, p. 64, sq.

In some few instances, when used by the Saviour and His disciples in answer to their prayers, the rite had been accompanied with the impartation of the Holy Ghost.<sup>1</sup> In this instance the grace had been in the possession of the ordained for years.<sup>2</sup>

Those who ordained or imposed their hands upon them in the name of the church, thus giving them this visible authority, were prophets and teachers, Symeon, Lucius and Manaen, two Cyrenicians and a Romanized Jew; no apostle, no delegate from Jerusalem, but the members of the presbytery of the church at Antioch, scriptural exhorters, preachers and expositors.

The full purpose of this solemn consecration is obvious. Before, they taught as Christ's disciples, using their gifts and graces for the diffusion of the Gospel, as all talented Christians did, and were called to do, and as the founders of the Antiochian church had done. Barnabas had been a presbyter of the church at Jerusalem for several years, and Paul had laboured in that capacity for a year at least in Antioch, but they were now to go forth as the appointed ministers of the church and messengers of the Lord Jesus unto the Gentiles, to preach the word, gain converts, organize their new churches; and to confront all opposing Judaizers, they were solemnly and publicly invested with this authority.<sup>3</sup>

The difficulty suggested by some that they could not receive this appointment to a higher office from those ecclesiastically beneath them, is to throw back the ideas of the nineteenth century into the first, and to overlook the divine command. Neither are we to entertain the view that by this act, Paul and Barnabas were set apart to fill up the original number of the Apostles, one being killed by Herod and the other made Bishop of Jerusalem.<sup>4</sup> These vacancies were not filled, and the supposed Bishop of Jerusalem was not an Apostle.

<sup>1</sup> Acts viii. 17; ix. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Acts ix. 18; xi. 24.

<sup>3</sup> Bishop Kaye: *Gov. and Disc. Church First three Centuries*, p. 22.

<sup>4</sup> Bloomfield: *Greek Test., in loco*.

That this ordination was not lightly valued by Paul appears from his distinct reference to it in describing himself to the Roman church—"Called to be an Apostle, separated unto the gospel of God."<sup>1</sup> It was not until five years after, that the apostleship of Paul was acknowledged by the other Apostles and the church at Jerusalem.<sup>2</sup> Though some commentators understand the reference in Romans to be to his call on the way to Damascus, it may more properly be understood as above, of his formal acknowledgment and appointment before the world.<sup>3</sup> When the twelve had been sent in their official capacity, Jesus had stretched out his hands over them, an outward sign visible to those present; so these Apostles and Evangelists receive an outward indication of their official relations to the church.

Fully commissioned and endowed, they set forth on their missionary journey, which likely occupied about nine months, from March to November of the year A. D. 45.<sup>4</sup> This period is very noteworthy in its bearing on the constitution of missionary churches, and also as the first statement of the setting apart of presbyters in congregations, the results of but a few months labour.<sup>5</sup> Paul and Barnabas appointed some of these new converts to the responsible position of elders, though their knowledge of the gospel must, from their previous training, and the brevity of their Christian life, have been of the most meagre and limited character. Yet, Christian prudence and care for their welfare, prompted this course; and we must not forget that the Apostles were under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, which, in relation to these ecclesiastical arrangements, was the Spirit of wisdom. There are several facts which will lessen the astonishment of some at this rapid advance of young and inexperienced

<sup>1</sup> Rom. i. 1: Olshausen, Lechler and Wordsworth, *in loco*.

<sup>2</sup> Gal. ii. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Lechler: Acts xiii. 1-3.

<sup>4</sup> Opinions vary; that given, is sustained with ability by Conybeare & Howson: St. Paul, Vol. I. p. 164, sq., and by Farrar: Life St. Paul, p. 295. Lechler: Acts xiv. 26; and Canon Cook: Introd. Acts, p. 316, think two years. But the climax is reached by Killen and Renan, who think four, five, or six years. Anc. Church, p. 68; St. Paul, p. 70.

<sup>5</sup> Acts xiv. 23.

converts to this position of trust and responsibility. There were several of these officers in each church, most probably three.<sup>1</sup> The teaching function of the presbyter did not at that time assume in all the churches that leading position among the other duties assigned them which it did afterwards, and the charisms of the Spirit were more striking and manifold than in a later age; prophets and teachers might arise in each infant congregation, and no doubt upon fitting occasions these were made presbyters.

The method of their appointment is indicated—"When they had chosen them by vote."<sup>2</sup> It is conceded by a large number of able expositors that this is the meaning of the word employed.<sup>3</sup> Even if we take the word to denote simply appoint, as the Revised Version reads, yet nevertheless the preceding history would decide that the selection was made by voting, as in the apostleship, deacons, and in the synagogue. With these precedents, the word would be misleading if any other mode of election had been adopted.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The force of a favourite theory is seen in Bishop Jacobson's note in the Speaker's Commentary, *in loco*. "One elder in each where there were several churches in the same city." The most microscopic criticism fails to discover the least intimation of more than one church in each place. It stands in marked contrast to the frank admission that there were several in each church by Conybeare and Howson: *St. Paul*, Vol. I. p. 199; and Dr. Jacob: *Ecc. Polity of N. Test.*, p. 78, sq.

<sup>2</sup> Acts iv. 23.

<sup>3</sup> *Cheirotonein*—See Robinson's *Lex. sub. voce.*, and compare its use in 2 Cor. viii., 19. Compare Meyer, Alford, and Lechler, *in loco*; Schaff: *Apos. Church*, pp. 244, 501; Killen: *Ancient Church*, p. 67; Pressense: *Apos. Age*, p. 122; Kaye: *Gov. Discip. Ch.*, p. 23, note; Rothe and Baumgarten, &c., advocate the same view; and even Bish. Jacobson seems to admit that there may be a reference to an election, *supra* l. c.

<sup>4</sup> Hammond, Whitby, Bloomfield and others, contend that the Apostles appointed them without any election, which is a simple ignoring of the record. The comment of Bloomfield seems to confound the meaning of the word in the Apostles days with the ecclesiastical use of it in the twelfth century, when it was used of the stretching out of the Bishop's hands in the rite of the imposition of hands. Dr. Whedon enforces the meaning election, but says that Barnabas and Paul elected, which at least would save trouble in counting

The persons appointed were such as enjoyed the confidence of these youthful Christian communities. Separated from the synagogue, liable to persecution, it became imperative that they should form a society of their own with proper officers.

An interval of a few years brings us to a remarkable epoch in the history of church organization—the meeting of the Apostles and Elders described in the fifteenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. There are a number of questions to be examined before it is possible to arrive at a proper view of its constituents, authority, procedure, and action. And here we shall find the necessity of keeping close to the inspired records, and divesting ourselves of our ecclesiastical opinions as to what *ought to be*, and confining ourselves rigorously to what *is*, as exhibited in this history.

There is a sufficient preponderance of opinion among eminent critics to sustain the date of this gathering as about A. D. 50. There is also a wide-spread agreement that the account in Acts xv. must be supplemented by that given by Paul in Gal. chaps. i. and ii. This opinion is ancient, as well as extensively supported by modern critics. Irenaeus, after stating that at this time Paul went up to Jerusalem, and quoting from Galatians, proceeds: "If, then, any one shall from the Acts of the Apostles, votes. In the elaborate and very valuable article in Smith and Cheetham's Dictionary of Christian Antiquities, Vol. II. p. 1501, by Hatch, he considers the word equivalent to appoint, without defining the method, while admitting the original use was restricted to an election. Nevertheless, one of the references given—Ignatius Ep. Philadelphians, c. 10—certainly means elect, and so Dr. Donaldson translates it, the church is to "elect a deacon as an ambassador," and two passages not referred to confirm this definition; the Smyrneans are instructed, c. 11, "Your church should elect some worthy delegate," and Polycarp, c. 7, is told "to assemble a very solemn council, and to elect one whom you greatly love, and know to be a man of activity." The whole argument of his celebrated Bampton Lecture sustains the meaning here given. A comparison of its use in Clem. Alex. Strom. VI., 13, Eusebius E. H. vi. 29, Teaching of Apostles, c. 15, with what we assuredly know of the mode of appointment at these periods, removes all doubt. In Coleman's Apostolical and Primitive Church, pp. 61-64, may be found a full discussion of the meaning of this word. Dr. Clarke, *in loco*, has a clear, judicious note containing a quotation from Zonaras, which gives the gist of the whole matter.



carefully scrutinize the time concerning which it is written, that he went up to Jerusalem on account of the forementioned question, he will find those years mentioned by Paul coinciding with it. Thus the statement of Paul harmonizes with, and is, as it were, identical with, the testimony of Luke regarding the Apostles."<sup>1</sup> Hug, in an elaborate and comprehensive inquiry, arrives at the same conclusion ;<sup>2</sup> which may now, supported as it is by the greatest authorities, be considered beyond question.<sup>3</sup>

The account in Acts gives the more public details, that in Epistle to Galatians the more private and inner movements which took place.

Its immediate cause was the desire for the judgment of the Mother Church at Jerusalem on a momentous question which involved the very foundations of doctrine, and in a large measure the extension of the gospel among the heathen.<sup>4</sup> This action was taken by the church at Antioch and its officers, after a consultation, in obedience to a divine intimation given through Paul.

It has been called "The Apostolic Council," "The Convention of the Apostles."<sup>5</sup> But it was not apostolical, if by that is understood that all the Apostles, or even a majority of the twelve were present. In both accounts there is only reference to two, of the twelve. Most likely the others were far away in their evangelistic travels. While the traditions preserved, regarding their travels, may not be entirely trustworthy, there is undoubtedly a large degree of fact at their base.<sup>6</sup> However, the history refers only to the apostles Peter and John ; and John appears to have taken little part in the public proceedings.

The question as to whether James, who spoke in the conference, was one of the Apostles, though a difficult one, is not quite an insoluble one, and there is every probability that he was not

<sup>1</sup> Heresies : Bk. III. c. 13, 3.      <sup>2</sup> Introd. N. T., Vol. II. p. 316, sqq.

<sup>3</sup> The following have been examined : Bengel, Neander, Schaff, Lechler, Jacobson, Killen, Ellicott, Meyer, Lightfoot, Wordsworth, and Alford.

<sup>4</sup> Renan, notwithstanding his strange critical notions, perceived and stated this point with great clearness and force in his *St. Paul*, p. 76, sqq.

<sup>5</sup> Hefele : *Hist. Christian Councils*, p. 77.

<sup>6</sup> Hippolytus, *On the Twelve Apostles*.

one of the twelve, but was the brother of our Lord, and the evidence is so conclusive that only dogmatic reasons have prevented their force being felt.<sup>1</sup>

Neither can this meeting be called a synod, for there is nothing in the narrative which even suggests that there were any present from any church but that at Jerusalem. The imagination, trained under strong prepossessions, has seen delegates from the Phœnician and Palestinian churches, and those of the Syrian in the persons of Paul and his companions. But where is the evidence of this? Paul and his coadjutors were present to seek the judgment of the assembly, and to state their case before it, but were not members of it in the sense of voting, or adjudicating upon the question, on which they asked the decision of the church at Jerusalem.

When we examine both accounts, instead of an "Ecumenical or Universal Council,"<sup>2</sup> as it has been called, we find it composed of two Apostles, the brother of the Lord, the presbyters, prophets, teachers, and members of the Christian societies at Jerusalem.<sup>3</sup> The only point in which other famous councils resemble it is in the formula which they adopted, but which indicates that in which they were the least like it—"It seemeth good to the Holy Ghost and to us."<sup>4</sup>

It is needful to give attention to the statement that the disciples generally were present. It is difficult to suppress amazement at the pertinacity with which some of the plainest statements of Luke are ignored. The reception of the delegates is a public one, "they were received of the church and the apostles and elders," v. 4. In the sixth verse the apostles and elders are gathered together, but it is added, "that all the multitude kept silence and listened to Paul and Barnabas," v. 12, and

<sup>1</sup> Pressense, Schaff, and Wiesler, powerfully reënforced recently by Holtzmann of Strasburg. *Methodist Quarterly Review*, 1880, p. 370, sq.

<sup>2</sup> Killen: *An. Ch.*, pp. 72-77.

<sup>3</sup> Schaff: *Ap. Ch.*, 245; A. W. Haddan: *art. Council*; Smith and Cheetham: *Diet. Christ. Antiquities*, Vol. I. p. 474; also McClintock & Strong's *Cyclop.*, Vol. II. p. 537; Kaye: *Gov. and Dis. Church*, p. 24.

<sup>4</sup> Hefele: *Hist. Councils*, Vol. I. p. 1, sq.

"then the apostles and elders with the whole church resolved," v. 22,<sup>1</sup> and in v. 23, "The apostles and the elders and the brethren."<sup>2</sup> It appears therefore from the text that the whole membership of the church at Jerusalem was present and took a part in the deliberations.<sup>3</sup> This is in accordance with the statements of Irenaeus, who lived but one generation after one of the members of this council, the apostle John, and whose sayings he lovingly cherished. In writing of this convention, he says, "The whole church had convened together, Peter thus addressed the members, brethren," etc.: "And when all these things had been said, and all had given their consent."<sup>4</sup>

A survey of the whole evidence leads to the conclusion that it was no mere apostolical, nor even clerical council. Not only the apostles, but the presbyters; not only the presbyters, but the whole multitude of believers take part in the proceedings of the conference. This council was essentially democratic, and we need not be astonished, for all these were disciples, ready to die for the faith; the sword of persecution was unsheathed, and they lived as those whose days are few, in the fear of the Lord.<sup>5</sup>

There is a dispute as to whether Peter or James was the president; from the evidence to be hereafter adduced it appears that

<sup>1</sup> The word *edoxe*, rendered "*it pleased*," often occurs in classic Greek in the formal resolution of a senate, a popular assembly, or any body vested with authority. Lechler: Com. Acts xv. 22; Robinson's *Lex.* sub voce, 2, c.

<sup>2</sup> Though the words "*and the*" have been left out by Westcott & Hort, and also out of the Rev. Ver., on MSS. authority there is reason to think that they were cancelled as the result of the strong hierarchical feeling prevalent when our oldest Uncials were written. DeWette, Tischendorf, and Meyer consider the words are genuine; Dr. Shaeffer's critical note *in loco*, Lange's Com. But omitting the words, the translation proposed by the American revisors, is preferable: "The apostles and the elders, brethren," Appendix R. V.

<sup>3</sup> And this is in full accord with their previous practice, for several years before, when the news of the good work at Antioch reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem "*they sent forth Barnabas as far as Antioch.*" Acts xi. 22.

<sup>4</sup> Heresies: Bk. III. c. xii. 14. See also Neander: P. & T., Vol. I. p. 136, and p. 144, note.

<sup>5</sup> Pressense: Ap. Ch., Vol. I. p. 131, sq. Conybeare and Howson: St. Paul, Vol. I. p. 214. Bish. Jacobson Com. Acts xv. Also Schaff, Neander, Baumgarten, Lange, Lechler, and Rothe on this event.

James occupied a commanding position in the church, so that probably he presided; and the so called "Apostolic Council" had not even an apostle for a president. This position of James was one arising from his relationship to the Lord, his personal character, and his austere virtue and strict piety, which commanded the respect of the most ultra Judaizers, as well as the more liberal Gentile Christians. But the statement that he was invested with chief authority is mere supposition.<sup>1</sup>

It is urged by some that Peter opened the conference, and gave the first speech, but a careful reading will show that there had been a long debate, "And when there had been much discussion, Peter rose up and said."<sup>2</sup> To sum up our findings, this so called "Council of Jerusalem" in no way resembled the General Councils of the Church, either in its history, its constitution, or its object. It was not a convention of ordained delegates, but a meeting of the entire church of Jerusalem to receive a deputation from the church at Antioch.

Even Paul and Barnabas seemed to have had no vote in the decision, though the vote of a promiscuous body could certainly not be more enlightened than theirs, nor was their allegiance due in any way to James. The church at Jerusalem might, out of respect, be consulted, but it had no claim to superiority, no abstract prerogative to bind its decision on the free church of God. The "decree of the Council" was little more than the wise recommendation of a single synod addressed to a particular district, and possessing only a temporary validity. It was, in fact, a local concordat. Little or no attention has been paid by the universal church to two of its restrictions; a third, not many years after, was twice discussed and settled by Paul on the same general principles, but with by no means identical conclusions. The concession which it made to the Gentiles in not insisting on the necessity of circumcision was equally treated as a dead letter by the Judaizing party, and cost Paul the severest battle of his lifetime to maintain. If this circular letter is to be regarded as a binding and final decree, and the meeting of a single church,

<sup>1</sup> Jacobson *in loco*.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xv. 7.

not by delegates, but in the person of all its members, is to be regarded as a "Council," never was the decision of a Council less appealed to, and never was a decree regarded as so entirely inoperative alike by those who repudiated the validity of its concessions and by those who discussed, as though they were still an open question, no less than three of its four restrictions."<sup>9</sup>

We enter now upon what is strictly the Pauline era of the Christian Church. This Apostle becomes the central figure: his history in the Acts, and his writings, will be almost the only sources of information. Heretofore, the chronological order has been followed, but this period of seventeen years, during which the chief Gentile churches were founded and fostered by the labours and writings of this zealous Apostle, it will be advisable to treat as a whole. During the seventeen years past the interest has centered chiefly in Judaic churches; now they become subordinate to the marvellous growth of the Gentile churches, and instead of Peter and James, the chiefs of the Palestinian Jews, we have Paul the apostle of the Gentiles.

Now, the gospel is about to be preached chiefly to the Greeks, who were pagans; consequently the social and national influences and examples, which had exhibited such a marked power in shaping the constitution and government of the infant churches among the Jews, are now to display a corresponding force among these new converts. In the vision which he had, Peter was taught that everything that is not in its nature sinful may be used in the service of God: so the usages in the public and social institutions of even pagan Greeks and Romans, not in themselves sinful, are adopted and purified for the service of the youthful church in their midst. Unlike Judaism, it had no temple of a peculiar pattern, or priesthood with an appointed ritual; but the spirit of the Christian life was free to manifest itself in a form, and assume a garb and organization favourable to the genius of the many nations who were about to be subdued under its saving power.

<sup>9</sup> Farrar: *Life and Work of St. Paul*, Vol. i. p. 301.

There was a great similarity in Greek and Roman life of this period to our own times, in the tendency to form associations. We have these for almost every purpose — social, scientific, religious and commercial; trades unions, relief clubs, friendly societies, political clubs, etc., etc. At this time, in all parts of the Empire, were to be found clubs and associations. There were trade guilds and dramatic guilds, friendly societies and financial societies, literary societies and religious societies, burial clubs and dining clubs. These organizations honeycombed the Empire. In Geneva and Ephesus, Laodicea and Turin, Philippi and Alexandria, Spain and Wallachia, France and Numidia, Italy and Proconsular Asia,—everywhere, inscriptions have been found commemorating the existence, describing the officers, meetings, and rules of these omnipresent societies. They were open to all, for even slaves had their organizations for protection and mutual help. What is more important for our purpose, all these guilds had a strong religious element; they were placed under the protection of some divinity. The trade clubs of Rome were under the patronage of Minerva; the physicians guild at Turin claimed that of Esculapius. The meetings were called by a name afterwards consecrated to Christian uses, a "sacred synod." They had lodge rooms or guild halls,<sup>1</sup> chapels<sup>2</sup> and altars;<sup>3</sup> Greek or Roman, the religious element was ever present.

But the most important of these were the religious associations. While the national religion had in a great measure lost its hold upon the people, these associations tended to keep alive a reverence for their gods, divinities of whom the State knew nothing, had, through these, their chapels, priests, sacrifices and ritual. Admission to these was open to all, free born citizens, women and strangers, freedmen and slaves. In some of them an examination was required, and the officers tested the candidate for admission, as to whether he was chaste, pious, and good. The assembly was called a church, a synagogue, etc.<sup>4</sup> The members contributed monthly dues, which formed the common fund

<sup>1</sup> *Scholae.*<sup>2</sup> *Templi.*<sup>3</sup> *Arae.*<sup>4</sup> *Ecclesia.*

of the association; they had also a common meal, and sacrifice.<sup>1</sup> They had their committees and officers. The governing body of some were called *episcopoi*; the name was in common use at the time, and was given to certain officers of a temple in Syria, and also to a class of municipal officers.

Important facts in municipal government must also be borne in mind. The councils of Greek cities at this period had reverted to a more primitive type, and while the councillors were numerous, the principal management of the business was in the hands of a committee of more aged and experienced men, who bore the name of presbyters. This system was wide spread at this age; in Asia Minor, Palestine, and Egypt, the inscriptions lately recovered give many details before unknown.<sup>2</sup> This title was also appropriated by certain officers of temples, and by professors in some schools of philosophy. Now, two consequences flow from these facts:

1. That to the pagans, Christians would be looked upon as members of a similar association; this was not only most likely, but we know it actually to be the case. Let us recite the evidence: The researches recently made show that the Roman government seemed at an early date to recognize the Christians as a confraternity, or corporate body.<sup>3</sup> The existence of certain inscriptions in the catacombs place it beyond doubt. The ordinary laws respecting burial fraternities<sup>4</sup> governed those of the Christians, and afforded them protection during the first two centuries, and under this semi-legal protection they held their assem-

<sup>1</sup> Hatch: Bampton Lecture, 1880, pp. 27, 28, 31, and notes, where all the original authorities are given. Renan: St. Paul, pp. 173, 217, 255, where also the authorities are quoted, art. Collegium; Smith and Cheetham's Dictionary of Christian Antiquities, Vol. I. p. 405. A brief but excellent account may be found of these collegia in Withrow's Catacombs, p. 66, sqq.

<sup>2</sup> Josephus states that at Gaza there were 500, and at Tiberias 600, Antiq. xiii. 13, 3., B. J. ii. 29, 1; Wood's Discoveries at Ephesus, App. ii., p. 29; Hatch, Smith and Cheetham's Dict. Christ. Antiq., Vol. II. p. 1699.

<sup>3</sup> Lightfoot: Phil., p. 194.

<sup>4</sup> The rules of one of these burial societies, or collegia, may be found in Withrow's Catacombs, p. 66, sq.

blies and administered their affairs, as described by Tertullian in his *Apology*.<sup>1</sup> As these principles were in active operation during the whole of the time over which this inquiry extends, the evidence will also be collected from the same area. Pliny, in his letter to Trajan, c. 100 A. D., classes Christians as one of these associations.<sup>2</sup> Celsus, c. 160 A. D., considers them such, and in Tertullian's *Apology* we have direct references to this view, and though this treatise was written more than a century after the time under consideration, and when these Christian gatherings began to be classed as illegal, it refers to a judgment which was universal in earlier times. Tertullian writes with great fervour: "Ought not Christians therefore to receive, not merely a somewhat milder treatment, but to have a place among the law tolerated societies, seeing they are not chargeable with any such crimes as are commonly dreaded from societies of the illicit class. I shall at once go on then to exhibit the peculiarities of the Church Society. We are a body knit together as such, by a common religious profession, by unity of discipline, and by a bond of common hope. The tried men of our community preside over us; though we have our treasure chest, it is not made up of purchase money, as of a religion that has its price. On the monthly collection day, if he likes, each one puts in a small donation. These gifts are, as it were piety's deposit fund. For they are not taken thence and spent on feasts and drinking bouts and eating houses, but to support and bury poor people, to supply the wants of boys and girls destitute of means and parents, and of old people now confined to the house; such too as have suffered shipwreck, and if there happen to be any in mines, or banished to islands, or shut up in prisons, for nothing but their fidelity to the cause of God's church, they become the nurslings

<sup>1</sup> De Rossi, *Northcote*; also *Withrow's Catacombs*, excellent, as avoiding the onesided interpretations adopted by Northcote. Mommsen has clearly shown the bearing of the Imperial law upon Christian brotherhoods in his work *De Collegiis*, etc. Article, *Catacombs*, *Smith and Cheetham's Dictionary Christ. Antiq.*, Vol. I. p. 301. Pressense: *Christ. Life and Practice*, p. 502, sqq.

<sup>2</sup> On the bearing of Pliny's decree on Christian assemblies, see Pressense: *Ch. Life and Practice*, p. 218, and note A, p. 523.



of their confession. But it is mainly the deeds of a love so noble that lead many to put a brand upon us. See, they say, how they love one another."<sup>1</sup>

The close correspondence between the two classes of associations is here forcibly brought out, and the points of contact exhibited in every sentence. He then proceeds to defend the love-feasts, comparing them with the feasts of the pagan associations, and concludes: "Give the meeting of the Christians its due, and hold it unlawful if it is like the assemblies of the illicit sort." The whole of this part of the Apology consists in parallels between Christian and pagan brotherhoods, and showing the immense difference and superiority of the former.

Origen, in defending the love-feasts against Celsus, writes: "The first point that Celsus brings forward is that the Christians entered into secret associations with each other contrary to law, saying that 'of associations, some are public, and that these are according to law; others again secret, and maintained in violation of the laws.' And his wish is to bring into disrepute what are termed the love-feasts of Christians. Since, then, he babbles about public law, alleging that the associations of the Christians are in violation of it, we have to reply: It is not irrational then to form associations in opposition to existing laws, if done for the sake of truth."<sup>2</sup> These quotations are but examples of many that might be brought, and show that Christian writers met the allegations of the pagans, not by a denial of their relationship to the law, but by showing the vast moral superiority of their institutions to the corresponding institutions of their pagan neighbours.

2. Another consequence is, that as soon as a number of Gentiles were brought to the acceptance of Christ, and felt the divine power of His love, they would unite together; but mere feeling, or belief in a common creed, would not be the only bonds, but of necessity, for purposes of worship and mutual help—for a Christian church was also a charitable association—they would form an organization like the numerous associations around them,

<sup>1</sup> Tertullian: Apology, cc. 38, 39.

<sup>2</sup> Origen, Against Celsus, Bk. I. c. 1.

for in these there was very much suitable for them, and possessing also the sanction of custom, and the facility which habitual usage affords. That this occurred, will be seen as we proceed. That there was nothing repugnant to the Christian judgment at that time in such adaptation, appears from the testimony of their writings, some proof has been given, and further quotations will show that they appealed to this conformity to usage, except in sinful idolatrous practices. In that golden relic of antiquity, the Epistle to Diognetus, the author writes: "The Christians are not distinguished from other men by country, by language, nor by civil institutions, for they neither dwell in cities by themselves, nor use a peculiar tongue, nor lead a singular mode of life. They follow the usage of the country in dress, food, and the other affairs of life. They obey existing laws, and excel the laws by their lives."<sup>1</sup>

Tertullian also, in the same strain, urges: "So we sojourn with you in the world, abjuring neither forum, nor shambles, nor bath, nor booth, nor workshop, nor inn, nor weekly market, nor any other place of commerce. But if I do not frequent your religious ceremonies, I am still, on the sacred day, a man."<sup>2</sup>

The reverence and affection for national and ancient usage which entered so largely in the shaping of Jewish Christian communities, played quite as important a part in the formation of Gentile Christian societies. As the words selected to convey the mind of the Spirit in the sacred writings of the New Testament had been used hitherto with pagan connotations, but now were taken, and purified, and spiritual and Christian meanings attached to them,<sup>3</sup> so these customs and laws were adopted, but purified and elevated for the spiritual uses of the Church of Christ.<sup>4</sup> Then also the additional advantage it gave of securing

<sup>1</sup> Epistle Diognetus, c. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Apology, c. 42.

<sup>3</sup> Such as gospel, love, faith, humility, holy, holiness, church, apostle, bishop, presbyter: Trench: Synonyms, N. S. Schaff: Companion Greek Testament, p. 40, sq.

<sup>4</sup> In further proof of this principle, compare Tertul. De Pallio; Justin, Dialogue Trypho, c. 1; Eusebius, H. E., Bk. IV. 11; Origen, c. Celsus, Bk. III. c. 31; Bunsen's Hippolytus and his Age, Vol. I. p. 313.

to some extent the protection afforded by the civil law, would be a strong inducement for them to copy the existing legal associations in their useful and permissible forms. In the early ages, the Christians always used their privileges and rights as citizens for their protection from their innumerable foes. As Paul at Philippi, and in his appeal to Cæsar; also the many instances when persecution decimated the Church in the mode of death to which citizens were adjudged, and in the Apologies addressed to the Emperors by Christian teachers.

The first two churches formed on European soil were in Philippi and Thessalonica in 51 A. D. The letters addressed to the latter were written a few months after the founding of the church there.<sup>1</sup> Upon examination, we find a full church organization established, though the time which had elapsed was so brief. We may view it from two aspects, the ancient pagan one, and the Christian.

The congregation at Thessalonica, to the eye of the heathen outside observer, would present the very appearance of the associations with which he was familiar. There was the same name for their meeting, the church or synagogue, it had its presidents or *episcopoi* as they had. They met in the house of Jason or Aristarchus, like the domestic colleges with which they were familiar.<sup>2</sup> The basis of association was the same, the profession of a common religion. The members in the one case, as in the other, contributed to a common fund, or if needy, received from it; they, like them, partook of a common meal, the love-feast. As in the pagan societies, so in this, admission was open to all, bond or free, male or female, Jew, Greek or barbarian. They were the worshippers of Christ, as the others were the worshippers of Jupiter or Mercury. Those who a short time before had been officers, *episcopoi* of their confraternities, were now *episcopoi* of this, presided at the weekly gatherings, and exhorted to the service of Christ as before to that of Jupiter. The solemn vow of the one reappears in the promises of obedience, or what

<sup>1</sup> Conybeare and Howson. Alford, and Ellicott think, 52 A. D.

<sup>2</sup> Withrow's Catacombs, p. 69, gives a description of such a domestic college.

seemed to them the oath administered in the Lord's Supper. As the church appeared to the Jew a rival synagogue, to the heathen it was a rival confraternity, with a new deity,—a third tribe, neither Jew nor Gentile.

According to the Christian view, here was a church<sup>1</sup> composed of baptized believers, having a stated ministry,<sup>2</sup> a superintendency, or episcopacy, that was a labour and a work, one of the duties of which was to admonish; the administration of the communion,<sup>3</sup> reading of the Scriptures and of this Epistle; mutual edification and consolation in their assemblies;<sup>4</sup> teaching by those having the gift of prophesying, a clear insight into the meaning of the Scriptures, accompanied with a fitting power of expression. So speedily, in ancient days, were pagans transformed into a church of Christ, and artisans, even slaves, made *episcopoi* under the wonderful and gracious power of the Holy Ghost; and others, by the charism of the same Spirit, qualified for the office of instructors to the youthful society. Let us now take a comprehensive view of the organization of the church during this period.

We find several enumerations of church officers: two appear to be very full—those given in Ephesians and Corinthians—"He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."<sup>5</sup> "And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?"<sup>6</sup>

In the first passage the persons are brought before us prominently as the gifts of Christ unto His church; in the second, we have, as the chief feature, those charisms of the Spirit which

<sup>1</sup> 1 Thess. i. 1.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Thess. v. 12, 13.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Thess. v. 27; <sup>4</sup> verse 11.

<sup>5</sup> Eph. iv. 11, 12.

<sup>6</sup> 1 Cor. xii. 28-30.

form the divine qualifications for the different offices. Yet these lists do not include deacons, whom we know were in existence, without we take "*helps*," in Corinthians, to describe them. But, taking and combining the two catalogues, also assuming pastors and teachers to be identical, the two sides of the one office, we have the following classification: Apostles, prophets, evangelists, presbyter-bishops, and deacons. Five classes of officers, the higher including the lower, but not the reverse.<sup>1</sup> The apostles at the same time were prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers and deacons.<sup>2</sup> And this universal official character was attributed also to Christ: He is expressly called an apostle,<sup>3</sup> prophet,<sup>4</sup> evangelist,<sup>5</sup> shepherd,<sup>6</sup> or pastor, and performs the duty of the diaconate.<sup>7</sup>

There is this distinction between these church officers: the first three have relations to the whole church, the last two to separate congregations.<sup>8</sup> The apostolate presented many features which were quite unique.<sup>9</sup>

1. They received their commission from Christ Himself.
2. They had seen the Saviour after He had risen again, and were qualified to testify to His resurrection.
3. They enjoyed a special inspiration.
4. They had supreme authority in the churches.
5. They were furnished with ample credentials in proof of their commission and inspiration.
6. They had a universal commission to preach and found churches.
7. They can have, from the above peculiarities, no personal successors.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Peter calls himself a presbyter, so also John; but while these apostles were presbyters, all presbyters were not apostles.

<sup>2</sup> Acts iv. 35, 37; vi. 2. <sup>3</sup> Heb. iii. 1. <sup>4</sup> John iv. 19; vi. 14; vii. 40; Luke xxiv. 19.

<sup>5</sup> Eph. ii. 17. <sup>6</sup> John x. 11. <sup>7</sup> Phil. ii. 87; John xiii. 14; Luke xxii. 27.

<sup>8</sup> This distinction continued afterwards, in The Teaching of the Apostles: apostles, prophets, and teachers itinerate, while bishops are chosen for separate congregations. <sup>9</sup> Schaff: Apos. Ch., p. 499, sq.

<sup>10</sup> Braune: Com. Eph. iv. 11. The above represents the views of Eadie,

The position of Paul differs somewhat from that of the twelve: he stood upon grounds peculiar to himself as the directly called Apostle of the Gentiles, yet enjoying the above privileges.

The apostles, in virtue of their universal vocation, were the evangelists of the whole world, and the living bonds and personal representatives of the inward and outward unity of the churches. Though such great authority had been given by Christ Himself, they never forced any of their measures upon the churches, but administered their government in active sympathy with them, and by their full consent. They demanded no authority which did not rest in free conviction and love of the people; no obedience to their order which did not spring from the working of the divine truth within them. There was no tyranny over the conscience, no hierarchical despotism. As the ministers of the whole church, they occupied no station permanently, but spent their time in missionary tours. As above observed, they left no successors; but in a wider sense, every true minister of the gospel is a successor, since, like them, he is a messenger of mercy and love. As to the restriction of this succession to those who are now called bishops, it is a theological romance, which disappears at the slightest touch of historical criticism.

Prophets, the second class, were inspired teachers; the apostles were, in a special sense, the prophets of the new dispensation;<sup>1</sup> but, in addition, the names of many others are given who are eminent for these peculiar gifts, and in some of the churches there were a great number of believers who received this charism which fitted them to make powerful appeals, and give impressive exhortations to the assemblies where they ministered.<sup>2</sup>

Ellicot, Alford, and Schaff. Lightfoot in Epistle to Gal. denies the necessity of a personal call from the Lord, to include Paul; but admits the necessity of having seen Christ; so therefore admits the cessation of the office.

<sup>1</sup> Eph. ii. 20. The absence of the article before the second substantive, showing the same persons are meant, the apostles, who were at the same time prophets.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. xiv. 1, 3, 24, 25, 31; Acts xv. 32.

The next class were evangelists, or itinerant missionaries. In the Acts and Epistles, their names occur again and again: Philip, Timothy, Titus, Silvanus or Silas, Luke, John Mark,<sup>1</sup> etc. Several of them were in attendance upon Paul, and the life of one was typical of all. The travels of Timothy will therefore be an illustration of the variety of their duties, and extent of their itinerancy. Soon after his conversion, he was engaged in missionary service;<sup>2</sup> then sent to Ephesus to complete the organization of the church, in the absence of the apostle Paul.<sup>3</sup> After the fulfilment of this duty, he is sent by Paul to Corinth; from thence to Macedonia.<sup>4</sup> Then he accompanied the Apostle on his last journey to Jerusalem, and also to Rome.<sup>5</sup> From thence he is sent as a delegate to the church at Philippi, to enquire into their state, also bearing a letter to them from Paul.<sup>6</sup> Afterwards he proceeded to Ephesus, where Paul sent his second Epistle to him, and called him again to Rome.<sup>7</sup> When he arrived in this city he was imprisoned, but afterwards, being released, he proposed to visit Palestine.<sup>8</sup> Similar labours and duties seem to have engaged the talents and time of the others, who were the chosen helpers and delegates of the Apostle.<sup>9</sup>

We now come to the presbyte -bishops, and having previously considered the origin and duties of these officers, only a few points of interest, and frequently of much discussion, remain to be noticed. There appears to be no change in the duties of the office, as compared with the earlier period, at this time. The first question in importance is the equivalence of these two offices. The evidence in the New Testament is as follows:

1. In no instance are presbyters and bishops mentioned together, as we find "bishops and deacons" in Philippians.

<sup>1</sup> Acts viii. 5-13, 26-40; xxi. 8; Gal. ii. 1; Titus i. 5, etc., etc.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xvi. 3.     <sup>3</sup> 1 Tim. i. 3; iii. 14, 15; iv. 13.

<sup>4</sup> Acts xix. 22; 1 Cor. iv. 17, sqq.; xvi. 10; 2 Cor. i. 1.

<sup>5</sup> Acts xx. 4; Col. i. 1; Phil. i. 1.     <sup>6</sup> Phil. ii. 19-23.

<sup>7</sup> 2 Tim. iv. 9, 21.     <sup>8</sup> Heb. xiii. 23.

<sup>9</sup> As, Titus, whom we can trace in Jerusalem, Ephesus, Corinth, Crete, Nicopolis, and Dalmatia.

2. In the directions which are given to Timothy touching the officers of the church, mention is made only of bishops and deacons; no allusion being made to presbyters, because the bishops and presbyters were the same.

3. In Paul's Epistle to Titus, whom he had left in Crete to set in order the things that were wanting, and constitute or appoint presbyters in every city, the qualifications for the presbyters are substantially identical with those which he had specified to Timothy as the qualifications for a bishop; and he adds, "For the superintendent or bishop must be blameless," etc. Comparing the directions given to Timothy and to Titus, as to the characteristics which are to distinguish presbyters or bishops, nothing but the straits of a controversial exigency could blind any reader to the fact of their absolute identity.

4. In Acts xx. 17, Paul is introduced to us as summoning to Miletus, the "elders," or "presbyters" of the church at Ephesus. And in his farewell address to them he distinctly designates them "bishops" (v. 28).

5. In the opening verse of the Epistle to the Philippians the Apostle salutes "the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons;" and it is inconceivable, that if there had been another order of officers in that church between bishops and deacons, they would have been omitted.

6. The same identity of the two officers is clearly recognized by Peter when he exhorts the "presbyters" to "feed the flock of God which is among them, taking the episcopacy or superintendency thereof, not by constraint, but willingly."

7. Of bishops, James makes no mention, but speaks of the "presbyters of the church."

The lines of evidence accordingly which are found in the Acts of the Apostles, and in those Epistles of the New Testament which treat directly or indirectly of this subject, all converge to the establishment of this conclusion: that no distinction was



known or recognized by the apostles between presbyters and bishops, but that they were different names for the same office.<sup>1</sup>

That to such a conclusion an impartial criticism must lead is apparent from the almost universal admission of it by the critics of all schools. As Ritschl declares, "It does not admit even of a doubt that within the New Testament, bishop and presbyter are the titles of the same office, and that accordingly more bishops than one, in the first age, belonged to the church; that this fact was not only acknowledged by the interpreters of the ancient church, but by many of the Catholic authorities of the middle ages."<sup>2</sup> Rothe also says that "the identity of the New Testament bishops and presbyters is even now acknowledged by unprejudiced Catholic theologians."<sup>3</sup> Lightfoot asserts: "It is a fact now generally recognized by theologians of all shades of opinions that in the language of the New Testament the same officer in the church is called indifferently bishop, elder, or presbyter."<sup>4</sup>

Pressense: "The identity of the office of bishop with that of the elder is so very apparent in the New Testament, that it was admitted by the whole ancient church, even at the time of the rise of the episcopacy, properly so called."<sup>5</sup>

Stanley: "It is certain that throughout the first century, and for the first years of the second, that is, through the later chapters of the Acts, Epistles, and the writings of Clement and Hermas, bishop and presbyter were convertible terms, and that the body of men so called were the rulers, so far as any permanent rulers existed, of the early church."<sup>6</sup>

Hatch: "Now in the Christian communities there appears to have been from very early times a body of officers known individually and collectively as presbyters, and also—for I shall here assume what the weight of evidence has rendered indisput-

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Mellor: *Priesthood in the Light of the New Testament*, p. 88, sq. Bishop Lightfoot: *Com. Phil.* p. 96, sq.

<sup>2</sup> *Origin of the Old Catholic Church.*

<sup>3</sup> *The Beginnings of the Christian Church.*

<sup>4</sup> *Com. Philippians.*

<sup>5</sup> *Apostolic Era.* <sup>6</sup> *Christian Institutions.*

able—by the name of bishops. The admission of both mediæval and modern writers of almost all schools of theological opinion have practically removed this from the list of disputed questions.”<sup>1</sup>

These are but a few examples representing different schools of thought in the Christian church, and also different countries. Such a consensus could never have been reached without the weight of evidence had been overpowering.

The next important point for consideration is, whether there is any ground for the assertion that the ruling and teaching functions were separate during this period; that they were not, in the former period of seventeen years, has already been conclusively shown. This subject has two branches:

1. Were there two classes of elders,—ruling elders and preaching elders?<sup>2</sup>

2. Were all the elders simply appointed for the purpose of government, and was the instruction of the congregations left solely to those who were possessors of the charisms of teaching and prophecy, many of whom occupied no official position, as seen in Corinthians?

1. In Ephesians, that the two functions were closely connected, is seen in the juxtaposition of the two, “pastors and teachers,” where the two terms must be referred to the same persons.<sup>3</sup> In Hebrews the same association of ruling and teaching is seen, not only at the time of writing, but going back to a former generation.<sup>4</sup> In the Pastoral Epistles a talent for teaching is especially required,—“a bishop then must be apt to teach.”<sup>5</sup> In Titus the teaching qualifications are more emphasized; the whole context shows the vast importance of teaching ability in the judgment of the Apostle, and its urgent necessity for the right discharge

<sup>1</sup> Bampton Lecture, 1880.

<sup>2</sup> Hatch, in his Bampton Lecture, recurs to this view again and again with approval. So also Bunsen in his writings; and Killen thinks any other view wholly inadmissible; but upon what slight grounds will be seen.

<sup>3</sup> Eph. iv. 11.

<sup>4</sup> Heb. xiii. 7; comp. verse 17.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Tim. iii. 2.

of the duties of the presbyter-bishop. "For the bishop must be blameless—holding to the faithful word which is according to the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in the sound doctrine, and to convict the gainsayers. For there are many unruly men, vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped."<sup>1</sup>

The only passage appealed to, to support the position is, "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially those who labour in the word and in teaching."<sup>2</sup> But the grammatical construction would put the emphasis on the laborious diligence in teaching, so that the antithesis is not between teaching and non-teaching elders, but between a ruling well and teaching zealously, and those who do both, but not with this supreme earnestness and zeal.<sup>3</sup> Its very setting is enough to suggest its true import; it forms part of an Epistle, treating especially of false doctrines, and designed to set forth the great importance of teaching the truth. Our judgment must be, that it contains no allusion to two orders of elders.<sup>4</sup>

2. Neither can we receive the opinion that these presbyters were mere presidents of congregations, and that teaching was attached to no particular office, but was undertaken by any one who had the qualification.<sup>5</sup> That there was a general liberty of prophesying and teaching cannot be questioned, but that did not provide for the regular instruction of the church everywhere, and at all times. Moreover, the quotations given above from the apostolical writings show that such a provision was made.<sup>6</sup>

The diaconate appears to have retained the same functions. It is probable however that owing to the personal character of the holder, at one time including the higher function of teaching,

<sup>1</sup> Titus i. 7-11. Comp. Origen's interpretation, c. Celsus, Bk. III. c. 48.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Tim. v. 17.

<sup>3</sup> Schaff: Apos. Ch. p. 530; compare Huther and Oosterzee *in loco*. Rothe adopts this interpretation.

<sup>4</sup> Pressense: Ap. Era, p. 351; and Origen, *supra* l. c.

<sup>5</sup> Neander: P. and T., Vol. I. pp. 174-8. Gen. Ch. Hist., Vol. I. p. 184.

<sup>6</sup> Neander admits this at the date of the Pas. Ep. Gen. Ch. Hist., Vol. I. p. 187, sq.

and at another, only the lower services in the public worship, in conjunction with the eleemosynary duties of the office. Deaconesses were also found in this era, as Phoebe and others.<sup>1</sup>

The mode of election and appointment continues the same. The injunctions of Paul to Timothy and Titus are in full accord with the principles before laid down. These officers formed no priestly caste, for all believers were priests, "an holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."<sup>2</sup> They were a "royal priesthood, an holy nation,"<sup>3</sup>—all the people were clergy.<sup>4</sup> Because of this universal priesthood, they had the liberty of teaching, and that participation in the government of the church characteristic of the apostolic age. This freedom is very prominently seen in the Corinthian church.<sup>5</sup> In matters of dispute it was customary to form a small committee of the members of the church to arbitrate.<sup>6</sup> Where the apostles act themselves, it is in harmony with the general body of believers forming the church.<sup>7</sup> These united testimonies carry down the organization of the church thirty-four years, when it had acquired stability with its growth.<sup>8</sup>

## II. The Johannine Age. From 67 A. D. to 100 A. D.

The evidence to be gathered during this period is small in amount, and the chronology subject to peculiar difficulty. After

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xvi. 1.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Peter ii. 4, 5; <sup>3</sup> ver. 9; <sup>4</sup> v. 3. <sup>5</sup> 1 Cor. xiv. 23-36. <sup>6</sup> 1 Cor. vi. 5.

<sup>7</sup> 1 Cor. v. 4.

<sup>8</sup> This statement depends on the belief in the second imprisonment of Paul. After much discussion, this view is gaining ground, and in the words of Oosterzee in his Introduction to the Pastoral Epistles, "We must range ourselves in the last result with Giesler, Lange, and Neander, notwithstanding the learned pages of Reus, Wiesler, and Pressense." The proofs of the second imprisonment are admirably stated by Prof. Wace in his Introduction to Past. Epistles. These proofs receive additional force from attributing Hebrews to Paul, who wrote it during the last days of his first imprisonment. This much controverted question, during the last ten years has changed its position entirely, so that in the more conservative circles it is considered a settled fact. A critical journal states that during this period, in Germany alone, seven able scholars have commented on this Epistle, and all have declared themselves in favour of its Pauline authorship.

a full consideration of the subject, we take the following to be the order and dates of these writings of the apostle John: The Apocalypse, in the reign of Domitian, near the close of his life, 96 A. D.;<sup>1</sup> the Gospel, 98 or 99;<sup>2</sup> and the Epistles, at the close of the century.<sup>3</sup> The most prominent feature in these writings bearing upon our subject, is the use of the title "angel of the church," in the Epistles to the seven churches of Asia, which has been taken to mark a new epoch in ecclesiastical government, and these angels have been taken to be the bishops of the respective churches, that is, the presiding presbyter invested with additional powers, or as Bunsen expresses it, a "monarchical bishop." This opinion might be followed out in detail, but to give the most meagre outline of the many theories propounded, with the evidence needed, ere a judgment could be formed, would require more space than can be allotted. That which appears most in accord with the book, as a whole, and least encumbered with difficulties, is that advocated by Lange and Lightfoot. The angel is the heavenly representative of the church, whether conceived of, as an actual person; the celestial guardian; or only, as a personification; the idea, or spirit of the church. This angel is identified with the church, punished with it, rewarded with it, and responsible for it as no human officer, or a body of them, could be. This interpretation is in keeping with the symbolical character of the whole book; and such an employment of a heavenly representative is also in accord with the earliest Apocalyptic book, the Prophecy of Daniel.<sup>4</sup> Here then we find no change, no evidence of a nascent episcopacy, or for a monarchical bishop. A theory which has been received with favour by some

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Lee's Introduction to the Apocalypse contains a clear statement of the whole case, and for ample learning, and impartial judgment, has not been surpassed, and upon this much controverted question is well worth careful perusal by any in doubt as to the date of the Apocalypse.

<sup>2</sup> Wescott's Introduction Com. Gospel of St. John.

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Alexander's Introduction Com. Epistles.

<sup>4</sup> Lange: Com. Rev. p. 197, sq. Lightfoot: Chris. Min. Phil. p. 199. See Dr. Lee's note Com. Rev. on the whole subject, and Schaff: Ap. Ch. p. 537, sq. Killen: Anc. Ch. pp. 237-245.

quite recently, that episcopacy originated with James the Just at Jerusalem, and was perpetuated and further developed during John's residence in Ephesus, receiving his sanction, is built entirely on a few mystical epithets and allusions of early writers, and deserves no attempt at a refutation.

The only evidence which cannot be disputed goes to show that the title and office of presbyter were still held in great esteem, and that the apostle John himself used it in the second and third Epistles, where he styles himself "the presbyter." While there were in Asia Minor hundreds of Christians bearing this title and holding this office, there was but one to whom the appellation could be given so preëminently, that it once described him who was the great light of Asia.<sup>1</sup> In reading these letters, we see that the days of the special and striking charisms of the church are near their close, we are no longer in the region of miracle and prophecy, the supernatural character of the first ages has faded away. Christianity begins to assume that every day life, with its regular paths and quiet appearance it presented afterward.

And now closes the apostolic era with that one who, as the son of Salome and Zebedee, began his life on the sea of Galilee, and became the disciple of the Baptist, then the apostle of Jesus, the herald of the Word, the Plato of the Evangelists, the prophet of Patmos, the inheritor of the work of Paul and Timothy at Ephesus, the missionary of Ionia, and the last great Seer of the long roll which has made the history of his race and country famous forever.<sup>2</sup>

From the few disciples, of whom he was among the first, he had seen the church grow till its numbers were counted by hundreds of thousands,<sup>3</sup> the marvellous endowments and rich gifts of its youth had been changed for the more lasting graces which remain in her to-day; but the simple polity of the missionary

<sup>1</sup> Polycrates : apud Eusebius H. E., Bk. III. c. 31.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Alexander: *Con. John's Epis.* Introduction.

<sup>3</sup> Dorchester: *Religious Progress*, p. 515, gives the number generally received, 500,000.

apostles still remained intact and useful, a pattern to which succeeding generations have ever looked with lingering affection and desire; and now we must leave it, and with it the inspired records, which are to be no longer our guides; and alas, soon to find that the simple organization, so befitting the children of God, is to be elaborated in accord with the fashions of statecraft and imperial rule.

### III. The Sub-Apostolic Age. From 100 A. D. to 160 A. D.

The first step will be to enumerate the documents which may be, or have been used as authorities during this period, and caution is required, for great mistakes are constantly committed through not giving due attention to the proper credentials of the witnesses to be examined in this enquiry. To state properly the characteristics of each writer, the evidences of authenticity, and the weight to be attached to his testimony, while so necessary, yet cannot be done; and conclusions must be given, with the assurance that these are the results of careful comparison and independent judgment, after consulting the latest and best information accessible to the lecturer on the subject.

The first authority in point of age is the Epistle of Clement to the Corinthian church. As to its genuineness, there can be no doubt; and since the discovery of the whole MS. by Bryennios in 1875, and since then a Syriac translation of the Epistle, the text is well authenticated, and very reliable. Its author was a prominent presbyter of the Roman church, commonly called a bishop, and wrote this letter about 98 A. D., so that properly it belongs to the preceding age, but for convenience left to this, as verging upon it; and also that the inspired writings might stand alone in their full preëminence.

The Epistles of Ignatius. No subject has given rise to more discussion than the genuineness of these Epistles. An entire volume would be needed to deal with it fully; and the works written upon it would form a library of themselves. Renan pronounces it the most difficult question of early church history. It was thought that the discovery of the Curetonian Syriac Epistles

had settled the controversy. But scholars generally are coming to the opinion that these are but extracts from the Vossian Epistles, and that these latter are the genuine Epistles, if any be genuine. Some of the strongest defenders of the Curetonian Epistles have adopted this view, among whom that eminent scholar, Bishop Lightfoot, since 1875, has taken this ground. Even this strong defender of their authenticity is obliged to acknowledge their unchristian spirit; he writes: "It need hardly be remarked how subversive of the true spirit of Christianity, in the negation of individual freedom, in the consequent suppression of direct responsibility to God in Christ, is the crushing despotism with which this language, if taken literally, would invest the episcopal office."<sup>1</sup> A careful perusal of the seven Eusebian Epistles in the shorter recension—for the longer recension is out of court altogether—must leave the impression, that they cannot be the production of an apostolical bishop of that age. The writer is a monomaniac on the prerogatives of the bishop.<sup>2</sup> A comparison of these Epistles with those of Clement, there being only seven or nine years between them, shows the disparity in tone to be so vast, the church organization so diverse, and the whole atmosphere of such another character, that it is almost impossible that they can be of the same age. The last two Epistles of the apostle John are separated by the same short interval, yet what comparison can be instituted, what traces of a similar Christian tone of feeling can be discovered, between the aged Apostle calling himself the presbyter, and the representations here given, of a fiery old fanatic with his bishops as the representatives of God, and in the place of the Lord Jesus Christ upon earth. The impious whimsicalities, such as comparing the Holy Ghost to a rope,<sup>3</sup> and the three mysteries of the shout, which were done by the star, and hidden from the devil;<sup>4</sup> and the insane desire for martyrdom repeatedly expressed,<sup>5</sup> are so unlike the tone of the believer of that age, that these things alone are sufficient to condemn them

<sup>1</sup> Bishop Lightfoot: Phil. p. 237.

<sup>2</sup> Ephesians iii. 6, 5. Trall. ii. 7. Symr. ix. 8. Magn. iii.

<sup>3</sup> Eph. 9. Curetonian Vers. <sup>4</sup> Ibid 19. <sup>5</sup> Especially Rom. iii. 4, 5.



as forgeries. But the reasons, of every kind, cannot be given. While not fully agreeing with Calvin that there is nothing more abominable than the trash which is in circulation under the name of Ignatius; yet, all the evidence appears to concur in proving these Epistles to be forgeries.<sup>1</sup> This judgment has the approval of many capable and cautious critics of modern times.<sup>2</sup> The date of the forgery was perhaps somewhere between 150 and 180 A. D.<sup>3</sup>

The Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians possesses all the marks of genuineness required; it was written about 150 A. D. The Acts of his Martyrdom are valuable, and in the main, trustworthy.

The Shepherd of Hermas is another important document, which may be placed between 130 and 160 A. D.; the references to church organization and officers are very interesting, and of great service. There seems no reason to doubt the genuineness of the few fragments of Papias, preserved in Irenaeus and Eusebius; nor those of Hegesippus.

Justin Martyr affords most valuable aid, and his two Apologies, and Dialogue with Trypho, are accepted as authentic by all parties, and were written about 140-150 A. D.; or even as late as 160 has been assigned for the Dialogue with Trypho. Written by one familiar with Syria, Asia Minor, and Italy, they are of the very first importance in all discussions on this age. The integrity of the Acts of his Martyrdom is generally conceded.

The Teaching of Addai, in Syriac, edited and translated by Cureton, has been held by a few to be a genuine product of the

<sup>1</sup> The recent discovery of that important document, The Teaching of the Apostles, renders this position almost impregnable against all criticism; especially if the weight of evidence shall incline to its Syrian origin.

<sup>2</sup> Lardner, Mosheim, Griesbach, Rosenmuller, Neander, Porson, Bentley, Renan, Ritsch, etc., etc.

<sup>3</sup> Brief compendiums of the controversy may be seen in Schaff's Hist. Ch. Church, Vol. I. pp. 469, 470. Pressense's Martyrs and Apologists, note B., pp. 630-634. Dr. Salmon's art. Ignatius; Smith and Wace's Dict. Christian Biog., Vol. III. pp. 209-223; and article Ignatius in McClintock and Strong's Cyclopædia, Vol. IV. p. 490, sqq.

first or early part of the second century, and was so received by Cureton ; but in such a judgment, a simple faith is a more powerful factor than any critical sagacity, as will appear from the most cursory perusal. It cannot be earlier than 250 A. D. But the most interesting document is one recently published by the Metropolitan of Nicomedia :

The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles. It is certainly one of the most important witnesses of this early period we now possess, and its value can hardly be overestimated in this special inquiry. Its probable date is 100-160 A. D. Its genuineness, well set forth by the publication of Bryennios, has been accepted by Harnack, the greatest patristic scholar and authority living. Its publication makes 1884 as famous as 1851, when the *Philosophumena* of Hippolytus was published at Oxford.

The Epistle to Diognetus is one of the most precious remains of antiquity, which, for dignity, sweetness, and strength, cannot be excelled, was written probably by Ambrosius, a chief man of Athens, to Diognetus, a former instructor of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius, about 160 A. D. Its genuineness is beyond question, and all the doubts regarding its integrity have lately been dissipated.<sup>1</sup>

Having enumerated the witnesses who may be used without doubt, our next enquiry will be to trace the church officers of this age, and the instances, if there be any, where presbyters and bishops are mentioned ; if the bishop becomes a distinct officer, and what were the distinguishing features of his office ; the position of the laity, and all other traces of organization which may present themselves. We find an enumeration of officers in two writings, and they closely correspond : apostles, prophets, presbyters, bishops, teachers, and deacons.<sup>2</sup>

In addition, the title of presidents is given by Justin,<sup>3</sup> but that these were the same as bishops appears from the explanation

<sup>1</sup> The authorities for the above statements would require too much room to cite, and is needless, for most of them are generally acknowledged.

<sup>2</sup> *Hermas* : Vis. iii. 5. *Com.* xi. *Simil.* viii. 11. *Teach. Apos.* cc. 11, 13, 15.

<sup>3</sup> *Justin* : *Apology* I. cc. 65, 67.

given in a MS. of Hermas, that a "bishop is one who presides over a congregation."<sup>1</sup>

The apostles of this age were missionaries, whose duty it was to labour on the outskirts of Christianity among the surrounding pagans. They were wandering evangelists, the messengers of the churches bearing the precious evangel to the darkness beyond. Full of holy fervour and undaunted zeal, they were worthy bearers of the name of those who had been sent by the Lord Jesus, who Himself was the Apostle of our profession, unto the uttermost parts of the earth.<sup>2</sup>

Prophets were such as we find described in the Epistles to the Corinthians, and referred to in Thessalonians. Men moved by divine impulses to proclaim truth in a forcible and soul-moving way; men of great emotion, who wrought mightily upon the hearts of the people, giving consolation, arousing to action, and awakening sinners.<sup>3</sup> In the church in Rome,<sup>4</sup> and in the Syrian and Egyptian churches,<sup>5</sup> there still remained such men, and in Asia Minor and Palestine there were also those under the prophetic impulse.<sup>6</sup> Hermas was one, and he describes the prophet. "The man being filled with the Holy Spirit speaks to the multitude as the Lord wishes." They also occupied prominent seats with presbyters, and were consulted by the people.<sup>7</sup> But we learn that there was great need to try the spirits, for false prophets found an entrance into the sacred enclosure, and some of them used their gifts for the purpose of unholy gain.<sup>8</sup> In these early days, these local exhorters must have occupied a leading position, and accomplished a very good and necessary work in building up the church.

<sup>1</sup> Hermas: Simil. ix. 27, in the Vatican MS. Comp. Vis. ii. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Teach. Apostles, c. xi.

<sup>3</sup> Schaff: Apos. Church, p. 578. Teach. Apost. c. 10. Locke: Paraphrase 1 Cor. xii. 10. Conybeare & Howson, Vol. I. p. 430.

<sup>4</sup> Vis. ii. 4; iii. 10; Com. xi. 12, 3; Simil. viii. 11.

<sup>5</sup> Teach. Apos. c. 11. <sup>6</sup> Justin: Dial. c. Trypho, c. 82.

<sup>7</sup> Her. Com. 11; Teach. Apos. c. 11.

<sup>8</sup> Eusebius E. H. v. 18; Her. Com. 11; Teach. Apos. c. 11; Justin, Dial. c. Trypho, c. 82.

Another class who filled a foremost rank at this time were the teachers. Those who were endowed with a strong and cultivated understanding, a power of clear discriminating thought, and a gift of communicating instruction to others.<sup>1</sup> Among such teachers we find Justin Martyr still retaining the philosopher's cloak, and discoursing with those who visited him in the Christian meeting house in the abode of Martinus, or in the colonnade at Ephesus;<sup>2</sup> or ready to give an exposition of Scripture to the only congregation with which he worshipped in Rome, which met near the Timiotinian Bath, some of which no doubt are preserved to us in his Dialogue with the Jew, Trypho. Another, whose personality has been long overshadowed by Justin, Ambrosius of Athens, who styles himself "a teacher of the Gentiles and disciple of the Apostles," and though neither bishop nor deacon, yet a gifted and eloquent teacher, who gave a remarkable and powerful address to the congregation, still extant, and declares that "he ministers the things delivered to me to those that are disciples worthy of the truth."<sup>3</sup> Many of these gifted men visited the churches, staying but a short time. According to the ancient rule, each was treated as he deserved. "If he teaches so that he increases righteousness and knowledge of the Lord, then receive him as of the Lord;" "and a true teacher as a workman is worthy of his support."<sup>4</sup> They constituted no order, but, like the prophets of that day, as they were moved by the Spirit and were acceptable to the churches, fulfilled each one his own office of ministration for the welfare of all. A few of the most eminent men of the church added this to their other functions. Polycarp was an "apostolic and prophetic teacher," and the church loved to revere his memory as "the illustrious teacher."<sup>5</sup> The names of many of the ancient worthies, still preserved, were those eminent for this, among their other duties.

Bishops, presidents or presbyters, come next in order. The

<sup>1</sup> Neander: Gen. Hist., Vol. I. p. 187.

<sup>2</sup> Acts. Martyrd. c. 2; Dial. c. Trypho, c. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Ep. Diognetus, cc. 11, 12. <sup>4</sup> Teach. Apos. cc. 11, 13.

<sup>5</sup> Polycarp: Acts. Martyrd. cc. 16, 19.

equivalence of these titles and offices is fully established by the witnesses of this age, whose testimony we will present.

The evidence of Clement of Rome is indubitable that at Corinth there are presbyters only. It is sought to evacuate his testimony with regard to Rome, but the tenor of his Epistle shows that what was the usage of Corinth, was, that of Rome.<sup>1</sup> The statement that "We cannot but accept the universal testimony of antiquity that it was written by Clement, the reputed bishop of Rome," is somewhat evasive in its tone.<sup>2</sup> Truly Clement was a bishop, and the nature of his episcopacy is fully set forth by himself. When speaking of the apostles, he writes, "And thus preaching through all countries and cities, they appointed the first fruits, having tested them in the spirit, to be bishops and deacons, of those who should afterwards believe. Nor was this any new thing, since indeed many ages before it was written concerning bishops and deacons; for thus saith the Scripture in a certain place, 'I will appoint their bishops in righteousness and their deacons in faith.'"<sup>3</sup> He was a bishop, of whom there were several in one city, as at Philippi and Ephesus, in apostolical times—a presbyter holding an episcopate.<sup>4</sup>

The testimony of Hermas tends in the same direction; an identification of the two is found, the government of the church is in the hands of the presbyters;<sup>5</sup> and the character of its constitution is that with which the preceding years have made us familiar. That there was a turmoil in Rome about this time, we may justly infer from his warning those who "rule over the church, and those who love the chief seats," exhorting them to live in peace."<sup>6</sup>

The supposition that in the above classification—bishops and teachers—bishop is used in a later sense, and that the teacher is the presbyter,<sup>7</sup> springs from a forgetfulness that such a class of

<sup>1</sup> Clement: Ep. Cor. cc. 1. 21, 42, 44, 47, 54, 57, and perhaps 65, (59).

<sup>2</sup> Bishop Lightfoot: Phil. p. 218.

<sup>3</sup> Clem.: *ibid*, c. 42.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, c. 44.

<sup>5</sup> Her. Vis. 2, 2, 4; 3, 5, 9. Dr. Salmon, Art. Hermas, Smith and Wace's Dict. Chris. Biog., Vol. II. p. 919.

<sup>6</sup> Vis. iii. 9; not "the chief seat," as given by Bish. Lightfoot, Phil. p. 219.

<sup>7</sup> Bishop Lightfoot, l. c.

officers was well established in the church of this period, and also from a latent desire to press the evidence further than it warrants. Of a similar nature is the remark that were it not known that the writer's own brother was a bishop of Rome, we should be at a loss what to say about the constitution of the Roman church in his day.<sup>1</sup> Pius, the Roman bishop, was such a bishop as is described by his brother Hermas,—one of the rulers of the church, and sat on one of the chief seats—a presbyter, and the underlying supposition of Lightfoot is a mere begging of the question at issue. Looking calmly at the hints given, we arrive at the solution which has met with so many advocates:<sup>2</sup> that at this time there was beginning at Rome a desire for a change, and ambitious men were seeking to establish a bishop of the Ignatian stamp. The lists of Roman bishops paraded, teach us that some of these were chief among the presbyters, not chief over the presbyters, and the title is not given to any of them whose epitaphs have been found in the catacombs till the third century.<sup>3</sup>

Hegesippus, near the close of this age, published his succession of the heads of the Roman church, but gives them no distinguishing title;<sup>4</sup> and it is as applicable to a succession of New Testament presbyters or bishops, as to the officers of a later generation.<sup>5</sup> In the Western church, including Italy and Greece, we find no proof of any organic change; the duties of the officers, their classes, and relations to each other and the church, remain the same.

<sup>1</sup> Bishop Lightfoot, l. c.    <sup>2</sup> Pressense, Killen, Ritschl, etc.

<sup>3</sup> Withrow's *Catacombs*, p. 81; Anteros, with the contraction E P I. in Greek characters is the first. *Comp. Art. Catacombs*, Smith and Cheetham's *Diet. Christian Antiquities*, Vol. I. p. 303.

<sup>4</sup> Hegesippus: Ap. Eusebius E. H. iv. 22; Hatch's *Bamp. Lec.* p. 87, note.

<sup>5</sup> The unconscious influence of theory may be seen in Bis. Lightfoot calling this a list of Roman bishops. *Phil.* p. 220. I insert the paragraph for comparison: "On my arrival in Rome, I drew up a list of the succession down to Anicetus. But in the case of every succession, and in every city, the state of affairs is in accordance with the teaching of the law, and of the prophets, and of the Lord." It appears that Hegesippus was more concerned about the faith, and its preservation, than a mere list of names. The views of good men were not quite so mechanical yet. The men were only the channels through whom the doctrines were traced.

The powers, rights and privileges of the body of the church, are unaltered, and the primitive simplicity in a great measure retains its supremacy in the Western churches. Those of Asia Minor come next in order.

Polycarp is the first in rank, as a disciple of the apostles, and one whose testimony reached down through the major part of this age to 155 A. D. In the interpretation of his evidence, we shall endeavour to keep to contemporaneous usages and connotations, and avoid the rock on which many theories continuously are wrecked. As in the case of Clemens, and hundreds of others throughout the Christian church, he was a bishop in the New Testament sense, and in the Clementine use of the word, and also according to the earliest collection of church rules extant.<sup>1</sup> But a bishop, as distinguished from a presbyter, there is no evidence to prove. It is argued that he styles himself such. It is nothing to the purpose if he did, for a presbyter at Ephesus could have done the same. But in fact he did not; though a later writer did it for him. Though some of the MSS. give this title in their heading, it is the work of a copyist of a later date. The address is "Polycarp and those with him who are presbyters."<sup>2</sup> In the Epistle he treats of an erring presbyter, Valens, but he is amenable, not to a bishop, but to the whole church.<sup>3</sup> Two chapters treat of the duties of the several classes of members and officers of the church; and here the duties of presbyters and deacons are set forth, but no other officers.<sup>4</sup> How unlike the forgeries circulated in the name of Ignatius his contemporary. This evidence is invaluable as covering a period—the time of the apostle John's residence in Ephesus and half a century after—concerning which our knowledge is so scant; and especially about the country, where, it is advocated, episcopacy of a later type arose. But this aged Christian Father, who had been eighty-six years a disciple

<sup>1</sup> Teach. Apos. c. 15.    <sup>2</sup> Polycarp: Phil. Superscription.    <sup>3</sup> Ibid c. 11.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, cc. 5 6. Bish. Lightfoot acknowledges this, "Though two or three chapters are devoted to injunctions respecting the ministry of the church, there is not an allusion to episcopacy from beginning to end." Contemporary Review, 1875, p. 839.

when he suffered martyrdom in 155 A. D., has no hint of any such order; the constitution of the church appears unchanged in Asia Minor. The title of Presbyter applied to the apostle John by Papias, combines with the above to prove the certainty of this conclusion. This writer, born in 60 A. D., and for forty years a contemporary of the Apostle, his life reaching to 160, by the use of this designation shows that the change soon to take place had not yet begun.<sup>1</sup>

The churches of Syria and Egypt offer their testimony in the valuable documents of this age and these lands, eminently the first Apology of Justin, and The Teaching of the Apostles. We are able without doubt to trace its organization. The presidents of Justin are the bishops of the latter, according to the very ancient MS. gloss before quoted, and the internal testimony of these writings; and both titles have apostolical sanction. No other intermediate order is known; they and the deacons are the officers of each church. Their duties are alike in both; the president administers the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and after the reading of the inspired Word, verbally instructs and exhorts to the imitation of these good things,<sup>2</sup> and offers prayers and thanksgivings to the best of his ability.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Westcott: Introd. Com. John; and Hist. New T. Canon. Eusebius, E. H. iii. 39. As to the nebulous John the Presbyter evoked by the Tübingen school, "we may relegate this Doppelgänger of the apostle to the region of ghostland." Dr. Salmon: Smith and Wace's Dict. Chris. Biog., Vol. III. p. 401. Farrar: Early Days of Christianity, p. 618, sqq.

<sup>2</sup> So simple and yet so solemn were these exhortations, that Pliny, having never heard ought like them in heathen worship, mistook the confessions he obtained from apostate Christians, and the testimony of the two Deaconesses he tortured, to mean that, they took an oath to abstain from every evil act. The pagan knew nothing of the impressive exhortations of Christian teachers or bishops, and hence his mistake. There is no reference to the Eucharist, as some suppose, which is clearly distinguishable in the following clause. Pliny's Ep. 97. Pressense: Christian Life and Practice, Appendix, p. 523.

<sup>3</sup> Justin: Apology, l. c. 67. The supposition of Bingham: Antiquities Chr. Ch. Bk. xiii. c. 5, that *hose dumanis* means with a loud voice, is not only contrary to the simple meaning of the Greek, but also singularly inaccordant with the simple worship there described, held in private houses. Moreover, the directions given in the Coptic Constitutions settle the point. "But every



The provisions found in the Teaching of the Apostles are similar. "Choose for yourselves besides, bishops and deacons who are worthy of the Lord, gentle and not miserly, and upright and proven men; for they also render unto you the service of prophets and teachers. Despise them not therefore, for they are your honoured men, with the prophets and teachers."<sup>1</sup> The same beautiful simplicity of worship is portrayed, but if any difference, it is in the freedom whereby apostle, prophet or teacher may address the congregation, or offer prayers. But quite in unison with what is found in Hermas as the practice in Rome. This unity is further assured by the position held by Justin as a teacher of the church, and whose extensive travels made him acquainted with the usages of the church in his native Palestine, Asia Minor, and Rome. We conclude the review by the testimony of the ancient Syriac version belonging to the close of this age, as embodying the thought and usage of the Syrian church at the time of its translation, for we find this venerable version translating *episcopos* by *kashisha*, that is, presbyter.<sup>2</sup>

The East unites with the West in corroboration of our conclusions: the religion of the meek and lowly Jesus has not yet put on worldly attractions, or sought to emulate its pomp; rank and office are subordinate to the spirit of devotion and evangelization, and all Christians still feel it their duty, according to their ability, to "be seen as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life,"<sup>3</sup> as they were favoured with opportunity. The distinction between the clergy and the laity was not yet established, for "they shall all be taught of God" was the current maxim.<sup>4</sup> The one shall pray according to his ability; but if he be able to pray suitably, and the prayer is acceptable, it is good." Coptic Const. Bk. II. Can. 34.

<sup>1</sup> Teach. of the Apostles, c. 15. Notwithstanding the rendering of eminent translators, and their notes, I cannot but consider "*choose*" a closer rendering of *cheirolonein*, than appoint. Compare the directions given in Coptic Const. Bk. II. Can. 31, and Ethiopic Col. Can. 2, and note 4 on p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> Peshito: Ed. Gutbier, Hamburg, 1664. Phil. i. 1; 1 Tim. iii. 1; Titus i. 7, etc. Compare Ethridge: Syrian Churches and Gospels, p. 102, sq. Bish. Lightfoot acknowledges this, and refers to it, but evades its true bearing. Phil. p. 97, note.

<sup>3</sup> Phil. ii. 16. <sup>4</sup> Apost Const. viii. 31. Coptic Const. Bk. II. Can. 41.

liberty of prophesying which prevailed in the apostolic age, still exists;<sup>1</sup> the evidence in proof of this has already been given incidentally, so that there is no need of its repetition.<sup>2</sup> That, in cases of necessity, laymen administered baptism, appears not only from the words of Justin,<sup>3</sup> but by express declaration, long after this time. For, when neither presbyters nor deacons are present, laymen have the right, "for what is equally received can be equally given."<sup>4</sup> It seems also that in the absence of the proper officer, the Eucharist might be celebrated by the assembled worshippers, though this point is not so clear.<sup>5</sup> That discipline was exercised by the whole community is seen by the Epistles of Clement and Polycarp; both place the right of restoring and removing officers in the church itself,—the whole community of Christians in the city.<sup>6</sup>

In all these functions, the members might share, in case of need, with their officers. No mystical power was in the hands of the one which the other did not possess. The gifts of the Spirit were freely bestowed, and as freely used, and no strained idea of church order prevented the spontaneous outflow of Christian thought and emotion by those who had been divinely taught. Each church had an express voice in the selection and appointment of its own bishops and deacons. They were elected by the body of believers, thus following the apostolical precedent.<sup>7</sup> The unity of the church universal was secured by a unity of personal experience, and all were bound together by the ties of Christian love, not by church order or outward bonds; the cement of their unity was the one Spirit, the one Lord, the one faith, the one baptism, and the one God and Father of all.<sup>8</sup> And now, like the

<sup>1</sup> Acts viii. 4; xi. 9-21; xiii. 1; 1 Cor. xiv., and implied in Jas. iii. 1, etc.

<sup>2</sup> Clem. Cor. c. 56; Teach. Apost. c. 11.     <sup>3</sup> Justin: Apol. 1. cc. 61, 65.

<sup>4</sup> Tertullian on Baptism, c. 17.

<sup>5</sup> The reasoning of Tertullian belongs to an earlier date, and reflects the usage of an age anterior to his own. Comp. The Crown, c. 3, with Ex. Chast. c. 7.

<sup>6</sup> Clem. Cor. cc. 44, 54. Polycarp: Phil. c. 11.

<sup>7</sup> Clement: Cor. c. 42. Teach. Apost. c. 15.

<sup>8</sup> The attempt to represent some clauses of the lately recovered lost portion of the Epistle of Clement, as speaking in a tone of authority used by the Ro-

traveller who takes a long lingering look on a beautiful scene he never expects to behold again, his joy tinged with sadness,—so we leave this pristine age of spiritual power and simple government, with sombre emotions, knowing that never again will our beloved Christianity present to the world such a spectacle of simple forms, unrestrained by the shackles of excessive and burdensome ordinances, and the incubus of a priestly despotism. The combined influence of which were soon to make the church in her organization and doctrine a Judaistic and Gnostic petrification of that living truth Christ had committed to the care and keeping of His disciples.

#### IV. The Transitional Age. From 160 to 250 A. D.

So called, because now began to work the principles which paved the way for the establishment of the episcopate, as distinguished from the presbyterate; the loss of power and privilege by the presbyters; and with the growing formalism, the spiritual life, and church rights of the laity; bringing the church finally to the character she attained in the Nicene period. Regarding the great writers of this period, whose remains we possess, little need be said; their works are well known, and their character understood. We are more assured to-day than ever before, of the trustworthiness of these writers in matters of fact coming under their own observation, and of the quotations they make from preceding or contemporaneous documents. It is especially interesting, as well as important, to observe how the historical accuracy of Eusebius has been sustained by the inscriptions lately

man church in making an *unsolicited interference* with the affairs of another church, as is done by Dr. Salmon, will not convince a careful reader. For, while the translation: "Owing, dear brethren, to the sudden and successive calamities which have come upon us, we feel that we have been somewhat tardy in turning our attention to the points respecting which *you consulted us*"—c. 1—may not be exactly accurate, yet the tenor of the whole clause implies such a reference, and the presence of a Corinthian in Rome shows that such an appeal had been made. Dr. Salmon: Clemens Romanus; Smith and Wace's Dict. Christ. Biog. Vol. I. p. 558; Bish. Lightfoot: Clement of Rome, App. pp. 253, 399.

discovered, in those very events and narratives, against which the keenest shafts of an envenomed criticism have been hitherto discharged. Also the Syrian MSS. contained in the Nitrian collections gained for the British Museum, within the last forty years, have triumphantly upheld this historian in controverted points; as well as brought to light some of his works heretofore lost.<sup>1</sup> While we give due praise to the accuracy of this author, yet his opinions, deductions, and judgments are open to our criticism, as in the case of every historian.<sup>2</sup> The works of Irenaeus, Hippolytus, Tertullian, Origen, Clemens Alexandrinus, Cyprian and Eusebius, are all important authorities for this age.

Some attention must however be given to certain writings which have been used as evidence proper to be quoted for this period without due warrant.

A Commentary on the Gospels, by Theophilus of Antiöch, c. 170 A. D., has been used to prove hierarchial views. Its importance has lately been revived by the efforts of Zahn to establish its genuineness; but these have been triumphantly overthrown by Harnack, who proves it to be a compilation of the fifth century, and that it does not even claim Theophilus as its author.

The Apostolical Constitutions have been upheld as presenting a true picture of the church of this age. But only by those whose faith in the productions of antiquity borders upon credulity. Like a cave deposit, where floods have swept in from surrounding localities, and oftentimes from great distances, *debris* of every age, and buried them promiscuously in its muddy sediment, which some explorer turning over, finds a fragment of the most ancient rock in close proximity with a specimen of a modern formation; or a flint weapon of the palaeolithic man, and a bronze sword of the Saxon period in close contact. So these

<sup>1</sup> The long recension of the Martyrs of Palestine.

<sup>2</sup> See the exhaustive monograph of Bishop Lightfoot, containing also notes of Prof. Westcott, in Smith and Wace's Dict. Christ. Biog. Vol. III. p. 308, sqq. Also his articles in the Contemporary Review, 1875; and two articles on Greek and Latin Christian Inscriptions in the same Review, 1880 and 1881, by Rev. J. Stokes.

wonderful forgeries, professing to come from the Apostles themselves, but which contain a large amount of the thought and practice of the fourth and even fifth centuries, contain a few remains of an earlier and purer age, which seem the more precious for the setting in which they are found. These purer materials are so perspicuous that we can make little mistake in their selection. The Constitutions, are most probably of Ebionitic compilation and editorship, and were intended to advance the hierarchical views of this sect. They formed a part of the vast system of forgeries produced in this age, but chiefly, it must be acknowledged, by the heretics who sought to establish their claims thereby. An early collection of church rules we have in the Coptic Constitutions, and whatever theory may be entertained respecting them, there can be little doubt concerning their date, which is the most important point in connection with our present use of them, and this must be placed within the compass of the era under discussion.

Another important collection which has received great attention of late, and will receive more on account of its close connection with the Teaching of the Apostles is, "The Epitome of the Regulations of the Holy Apostles." It has been termed "The Apostolical Church Directory," and, till the publication recently of the "Teaching of the Apostles," was assumed to be the "Teaching of the Apostles" mentioned by Eusebius, Clement, and Athanasius. Its probable date is within the latter half of this period.<sup>1</sup>

The Apostolic Canons, in their present shape, cannot be earlier than the fourth century, though a few of earlier date may be interspersed among them.

The Clementine Recognitions and Homilies are fictions of this age, and are the work of the Elchasaite branch of the

<sup>1</sup> The novel supposition of Bryennios, that "The Epitome" was formed after the "Constitutions," as we now have them, by their redacteur, as a piece of pastime, is beyond credence. Redacteurs of enlarged fictitious compilations would neither have the taste nor the judgment needed for the production of a tract, having all the simplicity, and undoubted atmosphere and flavour of an earlier antiquity belonging to the "Epitome."

Ebionite school ; but to quote them as evidence of what the constitution of the church was, would be a singular misapplication of their true import.<sup>1</sup> What could be expected from a document emanating from such a school, which professed that its doctrines were received from an angel ninety-six miles high and sixteen miles in breadth, the width of whose shoulders was twenty-four miles, and whose feet left tracks which were fourteen miles long ; and this stupendous being was accompanied by a female companion of the same astounding proportions.<sup>2</sup> Confessing such a source, we are not surprised to find that it taught the practice of incantations and repeated baptisms, enforced the requirements of the Mosaic law, and above all, expressed the most determined hostility to Paul. The Clementines owed their celebrity at Rome mainly to the support which they incidentally gave to the unhistorical claims of the Roman bishop.<sup>3</sup>

The Ignatian Epistles belong to this age, and this tendency ; and it has been shown that the long form of these epistles exhibits evident connection with the interpolated long form of the first six books of the Constitutions ; and the shorter form of these epistles coincides very strikingly with the shorter form of these six books, known to us in the *Didascalia*.<sup>4</sup> All these productions were written for the same purpose, and soon impressed their ideas on the church, which became moulded under their influence. They were the dreams of fanatical men, which, alas, soon became realities in the Catholic Church itself.

The second Epistle of Clement, recently given to us in a perfect form, is a homily given by one occupying a prominent position in the church at Rome, and is of this period, probably about 160 A. D. The long-lost work of Hippolytus, "The Refutation of all Heresies," has been the subject of prolonged controversy ;

<sup>1</sup> One cannot but feel surprised that so able a scholar as Bishop Lightfoot should have used these wild romances as supporting the early establishment of the episcopacy. *Phil.* pp. 209, 210, 224. In a later work, however, he more justly says : "This romance, therefore, is valueless as evidence." *Clem. Rom. App.* p. 262.

<sup>2</sup> Hippolytus : *Refut. Heresies* ix. 8.      <sup>3</sup> Bryennios : *Epistle of Clement*.

<sup>4</sup> Smith & Wace : *Dict. Ch. Biog.*, Vol. III. p. 210.

but its genuineness and integrity have been placed beyond doubt.<sup>1</sup>

We now proceed to the use of the witnesses we have mentioned or described. The tendency to elevate one of the presbyters as a moderator, and also gradually as a superior officer, as a matter of order and usefulness, was now nearly everywhere prevalent. Still, there are many instances showing that the primitive views remained; and there is direct—and oftener indirect—acknowledgment of their former supremacy. Between 170 and 200, certain conferences were held in Asia between several orthodox bishops and the Montanists; and in a fragment preserved in Eusebius,<sup>2</sup> and attributed either to Appollinaris or Asterius Urbanus, we find, "The presbytery of the place desired us to leave behind some memoranda, there being present also our fellow presbyter Zoticus Otrenus;" and a little further on, "Those men so highly reputed as men and bishops, namely, Zoticus of Comana, and Julia of Apamea." Here the presbyter is a bishop, and the bishop a presbyter.<sup>3</sup> About this time, Irenaeus in his letter to Florinus, styles Polycarp indifferently bishop or presbyter.<sup>4</sup>

About 200 A. D. the plainest evidence that presbyterial government existed in Smyrna is found in a fragment of a homily delivered by Hippolytus, and still preserved, wherein he describes the heresy of Noetus: "He said that Christ is himself the Father, and that the Father himself had been born, and suffered and died. When the blessed presbyters heard these things, they summoned him, and examined him before the church. Again, the blessed presbyters summoned him, and administered a rebuke." After hearing his defence, which they showed him was

<sup>1</sup> For the statements made respecting the writing of this age, reliance has been placed upon Neander, Schaff, Pressense, Kaye, Westcott, Lightfoot, Stanley, Farrar, Cook, Bunsen, Hefele, Bryennios, and the articles in Smith and Cheetham's Dictionary of Christian Antiquities, Smith and Wace's Dictionary Christian Biography, McClintock and Strong's Cyclopædia.

<sup>2</sup> Eusebius, v. 16.

<sup>3</sup> Yet this is one of the facts adduced by Bishop Lightfoot to prove the existence of the later episcopacy in this region at this time. Phil. p. 214.

<sup>4</sup> Eusebius v. 20.

insufficient, Hippolytus proceeds: "Then they rebuked him and cast him out of the church."<sup>1</sup> Clement of Alexandria, near the beginning of the century, when he writes about the Passover, commits to writing "those traditions he had heard from the oldest presbyters." When he would show how Paul, though the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews did not mention his own name, he quotes, "what a blessed presbyter said." So, when speaking of the order of the Gospels, he gives the authority of "the oldest presbyters."<sup>2</sup> In stating briefly the duties of the church officers, he has two classes, "the elders who attend the department which has instruction for its object, and the deacons to the ministerial." But he also recognizes the election of one of them as a bishop; and yet, his tone shows that he is not distinct from the presbyters but as a matter of convenience, and the well known Alexandrian practice confirms this.<sup>3</sup>

The so-called second Epistle of Clement is unmistakable in its recognition of a church order, such as found under Hermas at Rome, and contains proofs of the identity before exhibited. "The foremost place in ruling and teaching the church is attributed by him to the body of presbyters."<sup>4</sup> The writings of Irenaeus show the same equivalence, though episcopacy was becoming established, and he was the ablest propounder and defender of its necessity and privileges. He writes: "But again, when we refer them to that tradition which originates from the Apostles, and which is preserved by means of successions of presbyters in the church, they object to tradition, saying they are wiser, not merely than the presbyters, but even than the apostles, because

<sup>1</sup> Hippol.: Her. Noetus, c. 1. Bunsen: Hippol. and Age, Vol. I. p. 114, sq. Killen: Anc. Church, p. 470, sq. This heresy was adopted by Pope Callistus.

<sup>2</sup> Eusebius vi. 13, 14.

<sup>3</sup> Strom. vii. 1; vi. 13. The assertion of Bishop Lightfoot, that in the Instructor, iii. 12, Clement betrays his ignorance of the N. T. equivalence of the two terms, is not sustained by the passages quoted, which simply speak of the commands given to these, as found in the New Testament, and that these are given to bishops and elders, a novice can read.

<sup>4</sup> Dr. Salmon: Smith and Wace's Dict. Ch. Biog., Vol. I. p. 558, sq. Ep. c. 17.



they have discoursed the unadulterated truth."<sup>1</sup> Within a few lines he writes: "It is within the power of all therefore in every church, who may wish to see the truth, to contemplate clearly the tradition of the apostles manifested throughout the whole world, and we are in a position to reckon up those who by the apostles were instituted bishops in these churches, and the successions of these men to our own times."<sup>2</sup> In the succeeding book we find—"Wherefore it is incumbent to obey the presbyters who are in the church, those who, as I have shown, possess the succession from the apostles; those who, together with the succession of the episcopacy."<sup>3</sup> Also, "Such presbyters does the church nourish of whom the prophet says, 'I will give thy rulers in peace, and thy bishops in righteousness.'"<sup>4</sup> Again, in his formal letter to Victor, where, from the circumstances, it is not likely he would omit any form of right or courtesy: "And those presbyters who governed the church before Soter, and over which you now preside, I mean Anicetus, Pius, Hyginus, with Telesphorus and Xystus. But those very presbyters before thee, who did not observe, sent the Eucharist to those churches who did."<sup>5</sup>

Though we find episcopacy beginning to prevail, yet, as Prof. Lipsius of Jena acknowledges: "Its origination out of simpler constitutional forms betrays itself in a mode of expression derived indeed from earlier times, but still common to Irenaeus, with Tertullian, Clement Alexandrinus, Hippolytus, and others, the use namely of official titles "*presbuteroi*" and "*episcopoi*" to designate alternately the same persons."<sup>6</sup>

What were the causes which led to the placing of the authority, hitherto held by a number, in the hands of one officer? There were several. The great Gnostic systems advocated with ability, and gaining many adherents, imperilled the existence of the church. If the writings of the Evangelists or the Apostles were used against them, they boasted

<sup>1</sup> Her., Bk. III. c. 2, 2. <sup>2</sup> Bk. III. c. 31. <sup>3</sup> Bk. IV. 26. 2. <sup>4</sup> Bk. IV. 26, 5.

<sup>5</sup> Eusebius v. 24.

<sup>6</sup> Irenaeus: Smith and Wace's Dict. Chris. Biog., Vol. III. p. 272.

that they had gospels of their own, which were genuine. Or, if the writing was acknowledged, they rejected the interpretation, and professed to have an esoteric doctrine handed down from the Apostles. The crisis was one of a gravity difficult to overestimate. Irenaeus stood forth, and maintained with great force and subtlety, that the standard of Christian doctrine was the teaching of the churches which the Apostles had founded; that this doctrine had been preserved by the officers of these churches in uninterrupted succession. From this view arose the necessity of unity in each church, for among many presbyters there might be divers views on some doctrines; and therefore the chairman became the bishop, the depositary and conservator of the true doctrine; and the supremacy of the bishop and unity of doctrine were supposed to go hand in hand.<sup>1</sup>

Early in the third century important questions of discipline arose: hence again in the same church the views of the presbyters differed, and some made a capricious use of their power: the situation was difficult and perplexing. But in the end, at Rome, and at Carthage, the bishops were victorious, and held the discipline of the church, as well as its doctrines, in their hands. In this age, unity, as then conceived, was everything, and everything was sacrificed that stood in its way.<sup>2</sup>

Another important feature of the times which enhanced their power was the state of poverty from which the Christian church, in common with the whole world, was suffering. This called for the fullest display of that Christian charity urgently pressed upon believers in the New Testament, and the writings of the early Fathers.<sup>3</sup> The general poverty was intensified by the peculiar condition of the Christian community. Some were outcast from their homes, some had been compelled to leave sinful occupa-

<sup>1</sup> Hatch: Bampton Lecture, p. 94, sqq.

<sup>2</sup> This was not the way Paul conducted the defence of the church against these dangers, for they existed in his day, but by a clear and forcible exposition of the true Gospel. Comp. Neander: Gen. Hist., Vol. I. p. 193.

<sup>3</sup> How these teachings were received, and how private charity expressed itself, see Tertullian to his Wife, c. 4.

tions.<sup>1</sup> In times of persecution, confessors in prison had to be fed. Those who had lost their property through confiscation, must be supported, and those sold into captivity to be ransomed.<sup>2</sup> The widows and orphans, whose lot was deplorable indeed in these ages, must be cared for, and the number rapidly increased during the periods of persecution.<sup>3</sup> They were always one of the first charges on what Tertullian calls "piety's deposit fund." Besides, there was a constant stream of strangers passing through the commercial centres, and these, as well as the other classes, were entitled to a share in the distribution of the church funds.<sup>4</sup>

To prevent imposition, such Christians were provided with tickets or certificates of membership, and it became a rule to relieve no one not having such a certificate.<sup>5</sup> The management of these funds was first lodged in the colleges of the presbyters, and then in the bishop and presbyters.<sup>6</sup> But as the bishop kept the roll of membership, and therefore issued the certificates and received them, the administration of the funds fell more and more into his power, till, in the succeeding century the presbyters had lost all control of them, with their other privileges.

Toward the end of this age, we find the churches having, each one of them, a bishop and a body of presbyters, and one or more deacons, the theory then prevalent being that the bishop repre-

<sup>1</sup> Cyprian: Ep. 61. Tertullian: Idolatry, cc. 10, 11, 12.

<sup>2</sup> Dionysius of Corinth, ap. Eusebius, iv. 23. Tertullian: Martyrdom, 1. Cyprian: Ep. 36, 60, especially 77. The first paragraph of Ap. Constitutions, Bk: V. c. 1, contains a beautiful description of the feelings of the early Christians toward Confessors, and is a fragment of this age.

<sup>3</sup> Cyprian: Ep. 36. Tertul. Wife, I. 8. Ap. Const. II. 26; III. 4, 6, 7, 14; IV. 2, 3, 8. These quotations belong to an early date. In Rome at this time there were more than 1500 widows, afflicted and needy, depending upon the church funds. Cornelius: Ep. Fabius, ap. Eusebius, 6, 43. If, with some, we suppose that in the persecution under Gallus, Cornelius, followed by nearly the whole church, took refuge at Centumcellæ in Etruria, we have a glimpse of the fearful sufferings entailed on the Christians.

<sup>4</sup> Apost.: Canon 41.

<sup>5</sup> Apostol. Canon 34. Neander: G. Hist., Vol. I. p. 205.

<sup>6</sup> Cyprian: Ep. 37. Hatch: Bampton Lecture, p. 46. Neander: G. H., Vol. I. p. 233.

sented the Lord Jesus in the church, and the presbyters the apostles. Some transformed the church below into an exact transcript of the church above. The bishop was like the Eternal Father upon His throne, the presbyters were like the four and twenty elders, and the deacons were transformed into angels passing to and fro on the ministry of God.<sup>1</sup> This was the theory we find developed in the Ignatian Epistles, the Clementines, the Apostolical Constitutions, and generally accepted in the church of the third century.<sup>2</sup>

But during the episcopate of the weak and illiterate Zephyrinus, and that of the ambitious and unscrupulous Callixtus, who sought to aggrandize their position by a new and hitherto unheard of power, that of forgiving sins; and casting about for some authority for such a strange and novel procedure, after comparing the church to Noah's ark, into which all things went, clean and unclean,—claimed that the power of the keys conferred upon Peter, to bind or loose, descended upon them. But this, the first mention of a second theory regarding the prerogatives of bishops, aroused such a storm, and was rebuked so sternly by Hippolytus and Tertullian, that it was not mooted again till after the conclusion of this period.<sup>3</sup> That dream of visionaries who dislike historical research, called the apostolical succession, was esteemed by these early Fathers a fearful heresy, and its progenitors were the two greatest foes of true religion, and of the worst character personally that sat in the episcopal chair in that age.

The bishop was always to act in unison with the presbyters, they formed a council of which the united action was the action of the church. The action of the bishop without his presbytery was invalid. But though the functions and privileges of this officer were so considerably enlarged, they were not possessed of the power which has been ascribed to them by those who have formed their opinions from what is known about the most emi-

<sup>1</sup> Clem. Alex. Stromata, c. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Ignatius; Mag. 6. Clem. Recog. III. 66. Hom. III. 60; III. 70. Ap. Constitutions, II. 26. Cyprian: Ep. 55, 5.

<sup>3</sup> Hippolytus: Ref. Her. 9. Tertullian: Modesty, 21.

ment who filled this office in the chief cities. Their preëminence in the church was owing more to their superior talents and character, and to the commanding influence which their city position gave them, than to their office simply. Bishop Lightfoot asserts that in the Ignatian writings the term is used in the more modern sense, but even one hundred and fifty years after the time he supposes they came into existence, this assertion is not true.<sup>1</sup> According to an ancient rule, where there were but twelve faithful men willing to sustain a bishop, they could have one, so that a congregation which could assemble in a small room, could have such an officer, three presbyters, and a deacon.<sup>2</sup> The church over which Gregory Thaumaturgus was appointed bishop consisted of seventeen persons.<sup>3</sup> About the same time a synod was held in Africa—a small province—to condemn Privatus, and ninety bishops were present, the greater number of them mere village pastors.<sup>4</sup> After this, from Proconsular Asia, a province much smaller than the County of York in New Brunswick, forty-two bishops were present in a council.

And in the half converted province of North Africa there were four hundred and seventy episcopal towns, a great number of which could have been no more than small villages.<sup>5</sup>

It appears that every congregation had a bishop, even in very small towns and villages,<sup>6</sup> and it was only in large cities that the office assumed larger proportions, owing to there being several congregations. At this time occurs the singular anomaly that there were some who were both bishops and presbyters, holding

<sup>1</sup> Com. Phil. p. 98.

<sup>2</sup> Coptic Const. I. 15. Pressense: Life and Practice, p. 58. Bunsen: Hippolytus, etc., Vol. II. p. 305.

<sup>3</sup> Neo Caesarea in Pontus, 240 A. D. Smith and Wace's Dict. Chris. Biog., Vol. II. p. 730.

<sup>4</sup> Cyprian: Ep. 54. Hefele: History Councils, Vol. I. p. 90, sq.

<sup>5</sup> Hatch: Bampton Lecture, p. 78. Bingham, Bk. II. c. 12, 2.

<sup>6</sup> "The Ante-Nicene law exhibits every town, that is to say, every place which is not a mere *villa*, as a church presided over by a bishop and a board of presbyters. It is fundamentally congregational, and its bishop, as such, represents the independence, and, as it were, the sovereignty of the congregation." Bunsen: Hippolytus and his Age, Vol. II. p. 258, sq.

these distinct relations to different churches at the same time. Hippolytus was bishop of Portus, and yet a presbyter of Rome, of which Portus was a suburb.<sup>1</sup>

The duties of the presbyters of this period were to teach the people chiefly the moral duties of their profession, to admonish the erring, and enforce the discipline in the appointed way upon all offenders;<sup>2</sup> and the bishop could not judge offenders without them.<sup>3</sup> They also administered the sacraments of the Lord's Supper and Baptism, and took a part in ordinations, sometimes ordaining without the presence of the bishop, even after his office had become so important as we find it in the hands of Cyprian.<sup>6</sup>

The deacons were mainly engaged in the distribution of alms, seeking out cases of indigence, collecting alms, enforcing order in the assemblies, and the distribution of the elements in the Eucharist; they were considered as the attendants and helpers of the bishop chiefly.<sup>4</sup> Deaconesses were also appointed, with appropriate functions for their own sex.<sup>5</sup> Readers became officers first about the middle of this period; their duties were to read the lessons out of the Scriptures.<sup>6</sup>

Now the question occurs: Had there been any change in the mode of appointing these officers, as compared with the earlier periods? From the evidence we possess the method of election and appointment appears to retain still its early character, and the following points may be considered as fairly proven:

1. All the words now in use denote simply election, appoint-

<sup>1</sup> Milman: *Latin Christianity*, Vol. I. p. 44, sq. note. Bunsen, *supra*, Vol. I. pp. 207, 308, sq.; Vol. II. pp. 156, 258. The objections of Döllinger are the result of his very peculiar theory. Dr. Salmon: *Dict. Christian Biography*, Vol. III. p. 89, sq. Both Wordsworth and Killen, representatives of opposite tendencies, agree with the view given in the text.

<sup>2</sup> Coptic Const. I. cc. 17, 18; IV. c. 73; Epitome also; Tertullian, Ap. 39. Origen: c. Celsus, 3, 51.

<sup>3</sup> Cyprian: Ep. 33, 2.

<sup>4</sup> Cyprian: Ep. 49; for *constituere*, see *Ordination*, names of, 1, 6; Hatch: *Smith and Cheetham's Dict. Christian Antiquities*, Vol. II. p. 1502.

<sup>5</sup> Coptic Constit. I. 20, 22; IV. 73. <sup>2</sup> Ibid I. 21, 26, 27, 28; II. 37; IV. 73.

<sup>6</sup> Coptic Const. II. 35. Tertullian: *Prescript. Heretics*, c. 41. and *Epitome*.

ment, or accession to rank, and all these words were used to express appointment to civil office.<sup>1</sup>

2. All the elements of appointment to ecclesiastical office were, with one exception, common to appointments to civil offices. These were nomination, election, approval and declaration by a competent officer.

3. The earliest mode in the state and in the church, was a free election by the people, subject only to the veto of the presiding officer. Afterwards, the presiding officer nominated, and the people approved.

4. There was no formal act of admission; the person duly elected simply entered upon his office, and was in full possession of it as soon as he had discharged without let or hindrance one of its ordinary duties.

These facts show that ordination was still simply appointment and admission to office in the church, and was the act of the whole church, conducted in a regular way, sanctioned by the usages of two centuries.<sup>2</sup>

But there is one part of the ordination, the laying on of hands, which has in later ages been considered the most important of the whole, and the absence or uncanonical performance of which has been supposed to invalidate the whole procedure, however correct in other particulars. Now of this rite we have proof that in ancient times it was not universal. In the contested appointment of Cornelius, Cyprian, in enumerating all the elements which combined to make it a valid ordination, does not name imposition of hands.<sup>3</sup> In the Apostolical Constitutions, where there is a minute account of the elaborate ceremonial observance which took place in the appointment of a bishop, this

<sup>1</sup> *Cheirotonein, Kathistanein, Klerousthai, constituere, ordinare.*

<sup>2</sup> Hippolytus: Ref. Heresies, 6, 9. Eusebius 5, 10; 6, 29. Coptic Constitution I. 16, 20; II. 31, 33; IV. 65. Cyprian: Epistles, 54, 6; 68, 3, 4; 39, 3; 51, 8; 33, 1. Apostol. Constit. Bk. VIII. 4. Neander: G. Hist. Vol. I. p. 199. Smith & Cheetham: Dict. Antiq. Bishops, Vol. I. p. 213; Election, p. 599; Ordination, Vol. II. p. 1501, sqq. Hatch: Bampton Lecture, p. 126, sqq. with the original authorities cited therein.

<sup>3</sup> Cyprian: Ep. 51, 8.

is entirely omitted.<sup>1</sup> Its significance remained the same as before, where it was adopted, retaining the simplicity of the ancient Jewish rite, and was used in the church not only in the appointment of bishops, presbyters, and deacons, but also in the admission of ordinary members into the church, and in the readmission of penitents.<sup>2</sup>

There is nothing to lead us to conceive that the church of this age supposed that imposition of hands conveyed any special and exclusive spiritual powers. Corroborative of this judgment is the fact that no writer of the first two centuries either states or implies that ordination conferred such exceptional spiritual powers. Long after this time, so far from any mystical import being attached to it, Jerome supposed that it was adopted to prevent a man being ordained without his knowledge.

During this age, as in the former periods, most of the church officers were obliged to supplement the free-will offerings of the people by the result of their own labours to obtain adequate support. This fact gave rise to the taunt of Celsus, which is amply discussed by Origen in his treatise. Celsus described the Christian ministers, or "teachers of the Word," as "workers in wool and leather, and fullers, and persons of the most uninstructed character."<sup>3</sup> There was truth in the taunt, for the ministry of that and the succeeding age were farmers and traders, tended sheep, kept banks, practiced medicine, wrought as smiths, were weavers, ship-builders, and traders in the open markets. Many of the ancient laws were for the regulation of these trading clergy.<sup>4</sup> The pernicious results of this system, after the first

<sup>1</sup> *Apost. Constitutions*, Bk. VIII. 4, sqq. *Coptic Const.* Bk. IV. 65; where, instead of imposition of hands, "The deacons also holding the holy Gospels, spread open upon the head of him who is to be ordained, the bishop praying to God over him."

<sup>2</sup> Hatch: *Bampton Lecture*, p. 132, sq., and article *Ordination*, *supra*.

<sup>3</sup> Origen: c. Celsus, Bk. III. c. 56; and c. 55.

<sup>4</sup> Hatch: *Bampton Lecture*, p. 147; the epigraphical evidence is cited in the notes. Withrow's *Catacombs*, p. 513, shows the continuance of this usage in times posterior to this. *Greek and Latin Christian Inscriptions*, *Contemporary Review*, June 1880, Jan. 1881, Rev. G. Stokes. *Council Elvira*, Can. 19. Hefele: *History Councils*, p. 145.



supernatural glow of holy Christian fervour had been subdued, is graphically described by contemporary writers. It was referred to by Hermas, but more particularly by those of this age. Cyprian describes the character of many of the Christian ministers just before the Decian persecution in the following manner: "Each one was desirous of increasing his estate, and forgetful of what believers had either done before in the times of the apostles, or always ought to do, they, with the insatiable ardour of covetousness, devoted themselves to the increase of their property. Very many bishops, who ought to furnish both exhortation and example to others, despising their divine charge, became agents in secular business, forsook their throne, deserted their people, wandered about over foreign provinces, hunted the markets for gainful merchandise, while brethren were starving in the church. They sought to possess money in hoards, they seized estates by crafty deceits, they increased theirs by multiplying usuries."<sup>1</sup> The evils became more glaring as time advanced, and the need of more liberal and permanent provision was keenly felt and sought after.<sup>2</sup>

The clergy of this period were generally married men; the case of Tertullian, and the great controversy between Hippolytus and Callistus about the second and third marriages of the clergy, need only be mentioned.<sup>3</sup>

Let us proceed now to consider the exact character of the relations existing between the clergy and the other members of the church in this age. We have seen that all the words used as collective terms for the Christian ministry agree in connoting the idea of presidency, leadership, or ruling. The abstract terms exhibit the same phenomenon; they are those who occupy the chief seats, the senate, the order or class that governs. Now, compare with these, the words and passages which describe the relations of the ordinary members, and uniformly they imply the

<sup>1</sup> Cyprian: *On the Lapsed*, 5. Commodianus, c. 69.

<sup>2</sup> Neander: *G. H.*, Vol. I. p. 198.

<sup>3</sup> Hippolytus: *Ref. Her.*, Bk. IX. Withrow's *Catacombs*, p. 524, sqq., proves the survival of the practice long after. Bingham: *Antiq.*, Bk. IV. 5.

correlative idea of subjection and obedience to constituted authority.<sup>1</sup> So, in the concrete, pastor and flock, bishop and people, president and congregation, presbyter and church, ruler and ruled, are correlative, and stand or fall together. The analogy has been drawn between these Christian communities and the numerous contemporaneous communities, and we have found the same titles appropriated to the officers, members, and meetings, and have shown that the officers in the latter had a priority of order only; and have seen the same features in the Christian church.

But did these officers possess, in addition to this relation, something peculiar to themselves as such officers, which those to whom they ministered could not possibly possess? The answer has been partially given already, in showing that their appointment was like that of civil officers, and therefore could not communicate any new powers. That the imposition of hands was not essential—for it was sometimes omitted—and where used, was looked upon as a simple form, conferring no spiritual grace.

It follows therefore that the divine illumination and support needed for the discharge of their appropriate functions must be sought for and obtained in the same way that an ordinary member obtains the grace he needs, by the use of prayer, faith, diligent study and meditation upon the sacred Word. That the difference between these church officers and the rest of the Christian community was one of status and degree;<sup>2</sup> that as respects the inward spiritual life, the two classes, or orders, stood on the same footing; and that the functions the one discharged, apart from the question of order, might be performed by the other. The ministry were the clergy, because a certain place had been allotted to them in the Christian church, according to the Word of God and by His providence, using the choice of the people as His instrument. They were a class, or order, set apart for a particular purpose.<sup>3</sup> The laity constituted a clergy, a rank, or class, and they were so called.<sup>4</sup> The martyrs were also called the

<sup>1</sup> Hatch: Bampton Lecture, p. 111, sqq.

<sup>2</sup> Neander: G. H., Vol. I. p. 189.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p. 196.

<sup>4</sup> Orders: Smith and Cheetham's Dict. Chris. Antiquities, Vol. II. p. 1470.

clergy.<sup>1</sup> The Levitical meaning—beginning to be imported into this appellation at the close of this age—was not the original one, but the product of the sacerdotal views then being disseminated.

We now proceed to show that the proper functions of these officers could be performed by the order of the laity as well as by the order of the ministry when occasion required, or the necessities of the church demanded. The Christian ministry was a service which, if it were not or could not be rendered by those properly and specially appointed for this purpose, could be legally and efficaciously given by other members of the flock. That this right inhered in this class of believers from the beginning, has been proved in the preceding portions of this enquiry.

Preaching was frequently and officially undertaken by laymen. The so-called second Epistle of Clement is a homily written and delivered to the church in Rome by a layman.<sup>2</sup> The case of Origen, who about 216 A. D. preached, at the request of the bishops, before them in the church at Cæsarea, is an eminent example, and because of the controversy which arose over it, very instructive. When Demetrius complained of his preaching, it was not because a layman preached, but because a layman preached before bishops; and Alexander, bishop of Jerusalem, answered him as follows: "And he (*i. e.* Demetrius) has added to his letter that this is a matter that was never heard of before, and has never been done till now, namely, that laymen should take part (in public speaking or preaching, *homilein*) when there are bishops present. But in this assertion he has evidently departed far from the truth by some means; for indeed wherever there are found persons capable of profiting the brethren, such persons are exhorted by the holy bishops to address the people. Such was the case at Laranda when Evelpis was thus exhorted by Neon; and at Iconium, Paulinus was thus exhorted by Celsus; and at Synada, Theodorus also by Atticus, our blessed brethren. And it is probable that this is done in other places also, although we know not the fact."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Eusebius, 5, 1. Pressense: Life and P., p. 53.    <sup>2</sup> Cc. 19, 20, 17.

<sup>3</sup> Eusebius, 6, 19. Smith and Wace's Dict. Chris. Biography, Vol. 1, p. 86. Bingham: Antiquities, Bk. XIV. 4. Pressense: Life and P., p. 113.

The Coptic Constitutions also recognize and teach the great prerogative of a believer: "Be ye lawgivers to your own selves, be ye teachers to yourselves alone, as God hath taught you."<sup>1</sup> "But if we have omitted anything, the things will teach you, for we have all the Spirit of God."<sup>2</sup> "When the teacher hath ended the sermon, let the catechumens pray by themselves apart, and the faithful apart. When the teacher, after the prayer, shall lay his hands on the catechumens, let him pray, dismissing them, whether he be an ecclesiastic or layman who delivers it, let him do thus."<sup>3</sup>

In the Greek Constitutions, still later, amid their sacerdotalism, the preaching of laymen is admitted: "Even if a teacher be a layman, still if he be skilled in the Word, and reverend in habit, let him teach, for the Scripture saith, 'They shall be taught of God.'"<sup>4</sup> Thus the right of preaching and praying is fully established by usage and express declaration of the most ancient church canons. That laymen could baptize in case of emergency was admitted also. Tertulian writes, "Besides these, even laymen have the right, for what is equally received can be equally given, unless bishops, priests or deacons be on the spot, disciples are called to the work. The Word of God ought not to be hidden by any: in like manner too, baptism, which is equally God's property, can be administered by all."<sup>5</sup>

Laymen might also celebrate the Lord's Supper. "We take also from the hands of none but the presidents the sacrament of the Eucharist."<sup>6</sup> This was the rule of order, having apostolic sanction, but in emergency a layman could officiate as well as a bishop. "It is the authority of the church which has established the difference between the order and the laity; accordingly, where there is no joint session of the ecclesiastical order, you offer, and baptize, and are priest, alone for yourself. But where three are, there is a church, although they be laymen."<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bk. I. c. 14. Here and in the Epitome, these remarkable words are spoken by Bartholomew.

<sup>2</sup> Bk. II. c. 41. <sup>3</sup> cc. 43, 44. <sup>4</sup> Bk. VIII. 32. <sup>5</sup> Baptism, 17.

<sup>6</sup> The Crown, 3. <sup>7</sup> Exhortation Chastity, 7.

The congregation selected its bishop and examined him; he was elected by all the people.<sup>1</sup> They are asked if they choose him; only then is he ordained.<sup>2</sup> The presbyter and deacon likewise must have the sanction of the church congregation; and three laymen, at least, must give their testimony to his fitness.<sup>3</sup> It is the boast of Cyprian that he was elected by all the people, and he expounds the scriptural authority for this rule and practice: "And this was subsequently observed, according to divine instruction, in the Acts of the Apostles, when Peter speaks to the people of ordaining an apostle in the place of Judas. 'Peter,' it says, 'stood up in the midst of the disciples, and the multitude were in one place.'" Neither do we observe that this was regarded by the apostles only in the ordinations of bishops and priests, but also in those of deacons, of which matter itself also it is written in their Acts: "And they twelve called together," it says, "the whole congregation of the disciples and saith to them;" which was done so diligently and carefully, with the calling together of the whole of the people, surely for this reason, that no unworthy person might creep into the ministry of the altar, or to the office of a priest."<sup>4</sup>

In the administration of discipline, the members share with their bishops and other ministers. Tertullian, when speaking of the Christian assembly, proceeds, after describing the acts of worship: "In the same place also exhortations are made, rebukes and sacred censures are administered. For with great gravity is the work of judging carried on among us, as befits those who feel assured that they are in the sight of God; and you have the most notable example of the judgment to come, when any one has sinned so grievously as to require his severance from us in prayer, and the meetings, and all sacred intercourse."<sup>5</sup>

When one of the questions which agitated the church was to be considered, the council called, even by the sacerdotal Cyprian, was to be composed of the laity with the ministers. "An assem-

<sup>1</sup> Coptic Constit., I. cc. 16, 17. Cyprian: Ep. 67, 4, 5.

<sup>2</sup> Coptic Const., II. c. 31. Ethiopic Canon 1. <sup>3</sup> Coptic Const., II. 20, 22.

<sup>4</sup> Cyprian: Ep. 67, 4.

<sup>5</sup> Tertullian: Apology, c. 39.

bly for counsel being called together, with bishops, presbyters, and deacons and confessors, as well as the laity who stand fast, we should deal with the case of the lapsed." Again, addressing the people, he says, "with your opinion;" and in another place: "The case of each one must be considered separately, and fully investigated, not only with my colleagues, but also with the whole of the people themselves."<sup>1</sup> These quotations amply prove the concurrent jurisdiction of the clergy and the laity in all matters of importance.<sup>2</sup>

During this age, those conventions of Christians for deliberation and counsel which afterward played such an important part in the organization and history of the Christian church, began to be held. Under the Imperial administration, provincial assemblies still met annually, and deputies from the chief towns came together for the transaction of their appropriate business. Provincial councils were as important and necessary a part of provincial life then as county councils are to-day with us. These were to be found in full activity in all the provinces where Christianity was prevalent, and where Christian councils came to exist; and they generally followed the existing political divisions.<sup>3</sup> They seem to have been first held in Greece, and were somewhat of a novelty in Tertullian's days; for he writes: "Throughout the provinces of Greece, councils or synods are held in the name of all the churches. In these councils the gravest subjects are discussed for the common benefit. These assemblies, representative of the Christian name, are regarded with great respect."<sup>4</sup> Called at first, as the occasion arose, they were a conference of the representatives of neighbouring churches, convoked by some leading mind, and generally at the request of a church needing advice.

<sup>1</sup> Cyprian: Ep. 31, 5; 11; 26, 6; 28, 3. Pressense: *Life and P.*, pp. 189-193. Neander: *G. H.*, Vol. I. p. 197.

<sup>2</sup> Yet Dr. Pusey affirmed in "Councils of the Church," p. 34, "That bishops alone had a definite voice in synods."

<sup>3</sup> Hatch: *Bampton Lecture*, p. 165, sqq, and notes.

<sup>4</sup> Tertullian: *Fast. c. 13*. Killen: *Ancient Church*, p. 550, sqq, entertains an opposite view, but one not well sustained. Neander: *G. H.*, Vol. I. p. 206, sq.

As for instance, those held for the decision of the Easter question, and concerning Montanism, held in Asia Minor, c. 160-180, A. D.: of the latter, we have a full account in Eusebius, already referred to.<sup>1</sup> Beside these questions, they very early took under consideration the canonicity of the books of the Scripture. Tertullian speaks of the "judgment of the council of the churches," on the Shepherd of Hermas.<sup>2</sup> It was the practice to send the result of the deliberations in a letter to other churches, and generally these missives were received with respect. But they had no binding force on other churches, nor even on a dissident minority of the council itself. The absolute independence of each community found no stronger advocate than Cyprian, who was also foremost in calling councils, and in whose days they first became of great importance. "To each shepherd, a portion of the Lord's flock has been assigned, and his account must be rendered to his own master."<sup>3</sup> Councils might admit the lapsed, but each bishop must decide for himself: "he disposes and directs his own acts."<sup>4</sup> The council utters no decree, but gives its judgment, which carries with it a moral force, but no other. "We neither do violence to, nor impose a law upon any one, since each prelate has in the administration of the church the exercise of his will free, as he shall give an account of his conduct to the Lord," is the language of one of the councils of Carthage.<sup>5</sup>

All ranks in the church attended these councils: the presence and participation of the laity has been conclusively proved by the quotations already given. The influence exerted by these conferences was very beneficial, and tended to preserve the unity of the church against the numerous and powerful attacks of its external and internal foes.

The conception of the nature of that unity which is predicated of the church, had varied with the changing times. The first idea of this unity, was that of a common life in Christ,—a unity wrought, by being under the dominion of the one Spirit, and

<sup>1</sup> Eusebius: 5, 16. Pressense: L. and P., p. 93. <sup>2</sup> Tertul.: Modesty, c. 10.

<sup>3</sup> Ep. 55, 14. <sup>4</sup> 52, 21. <sup>5</sup> 72, 3.

having a common hope, therefore being members of the body of Christ,—it was based on a common experience of the practical effects of Christianity.<sup>1</sup> This view prevailed till about 160 A. D.

The second idea of this unity arose under the pressure of heretical opposition, and the necessities of the controversies which took place, and it was now made to consist in a reception of the true tradition of Christian teaching: it was the unity based on a common creed. This prevailed till nearly the close of this age.

The third notion of this unity was, that it consisted in a common organization. A good and holy life was not sufficient, but to this must be added a common belief. But these were not enough; the possessor of these must also belong to a church which was united with all other churches, thus forming the one Catholic church.<sup>2</sup>

The germ of this idea of Christian unity began with Cyprian, and developed till in the fourth century it was perfected, and has remained the dominating, mistaken, and misleading idea till to-day. But the true unity was that which Tertullian describes: "They are all proved to be one in unbroken unity by their peaceful communion, title of brotherhood, and bond of hospitality."<sup>3</sup> "The true communion of saints, upon which all churches are built, is not the common performance of external acts, but a communion of soul with soul, and of the soul with Christ. It is a consequence of the nature which God has given us, that an external organization should help our communion with one another: it is a consequence both of our two-fold nature, and of Christ's appointment, that external acts should help our communion with Him. But subtler, deeper, diviner, than anything of which external things can be either the symbol or the bond, is that inner reality and essence of union,—that interpenetrating community of thought and character which St. Paul speaks of as the "unity of the Spirit," and which, in the sublimest of sublime books, in the most sacred of sacred words, is likened to the one-

<sup>1</sup> 2 Clem. Rom. 14. Hermas: Vis., 2, 4.

<sup>2</sup> Neander: G. H., Vol. I. p. 207, sqq. <sup>3</sup> Prescript: Heret. 20.



ness of the Son with the Father, and of the Father with the Son."<sup>1</sup>

I have accomplished, very imperfectly, the task I aimed to perform; and now, the question may be asked, Were all the primitive institutions intended to be permanent? In light of all the evidence, the query must be answered in the negative. The great principles of church government set forth in the inspired Word are unchanging; the method of their development into practice is changeable; as the having "all things in common," soon passed away. But the sublime principle of brotherly charity survived, and the widows, orphans, and poor, were ever the first care of the church. To the pure all things are pure, and the early church took up the then existing elements of social and public life, and transformed them, and purified them for her own purposes. It is ours to watch the process, rejoice in and copy the successes, but avoid the failures. The government of the church in Cyprian's time is no more binding upon us than the doctrines and practices of that period; and a greater calamity could scarcely befall the church of Christ, than the universal adoption of some of these. Its history is helpful in the direction of our own efforts in organization and government. No church to-day represents in all features the early church, and none need do. But in the simplicity, brotherliness, and elasticity of its government, we all may study its records with advantage.

An earnest Christian layman, an erudite scholar, and an accomplished diplomatist, the late Baron Bunsen, after an elaborate review of modern church governments, as compared with that of this period, gives the following axioms as necessary to restore a suitable government to the churches of to-day: "Bishops and elders are essentially rulers. Rulers must have power. Power must have law. Law must have people. The church-people, to make laws, must have organized congregations. Congregations must form synods, which are representative congregations. Synods must represent organically the lay and clerical elements. The clerical element is either a parochial or an eccle-

<sup>1</sup> Hatch: Bampton Lecture, p. 187, sq.

siastical one. The complete synod, therefore, will in general have three orders; first, the bishops or superintendents, personally; secondly, the deputies of the parochial clergy; and thirdly, the representatives of the laymen, elected either by the communicants of the congregations, or by the lay elders forming the church council or presbytery. These last must have the right to demand the vote by order, and thus exercise their legislative veto by themselves. Bishops elected or nominated without the coöperation of the synod, have no natural ecclesiastical basis."<sup>1</sup>

Putting aside the technical phraseology, the analogy between the suggested ideal and the actual realization among ourselves is apparent. And in so far as it takes up the great elements of the social and political life of our day and purifies them for the service of Christ, it is apostolical. As all political power tends towards the people, and all the ancient Christian organizations—the product of mediævalism—are losing their hold upon the masses, so, the tendency of all Christian societies is, and must be, towards a return to the primitive democratic organization which recognizes more fully the absolute brotherhood of all Christian believers. One of the great evils of the present age is a degenerate and fungous socialism. This will be overcome only by a Christian society imbued with the feeling of the early Christian church; exhibiting in her government, and expressing in her formularies and practice, the great principle—"Sirs, ye are brethren, one body in Christ, and every one members one of another."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Hippolytus and his Age, Vol. III. p. 245.

<sup>2</sup> Acts vii. 26. Romans xii. 5.

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