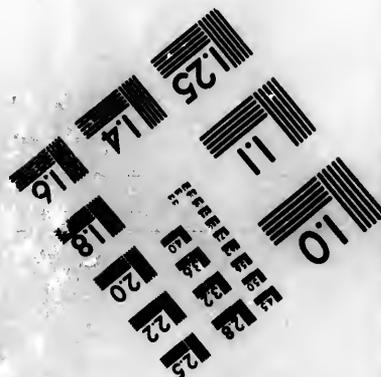
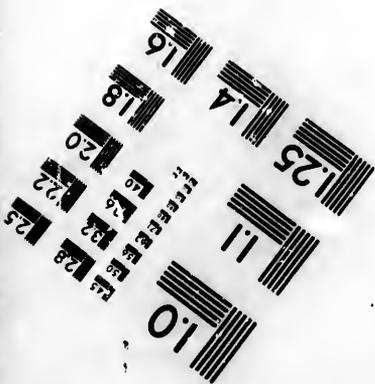
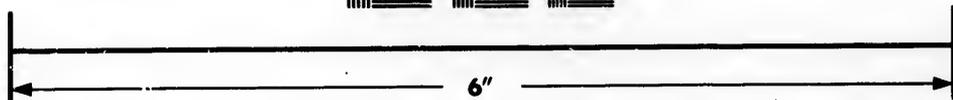
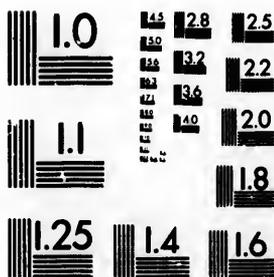


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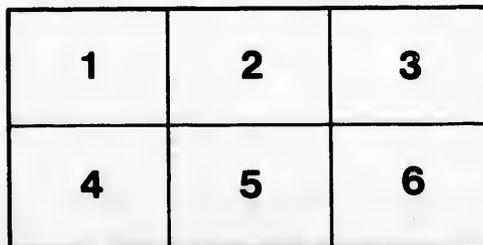
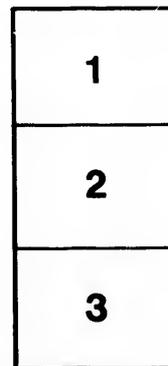
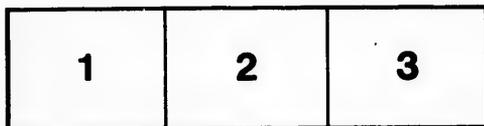
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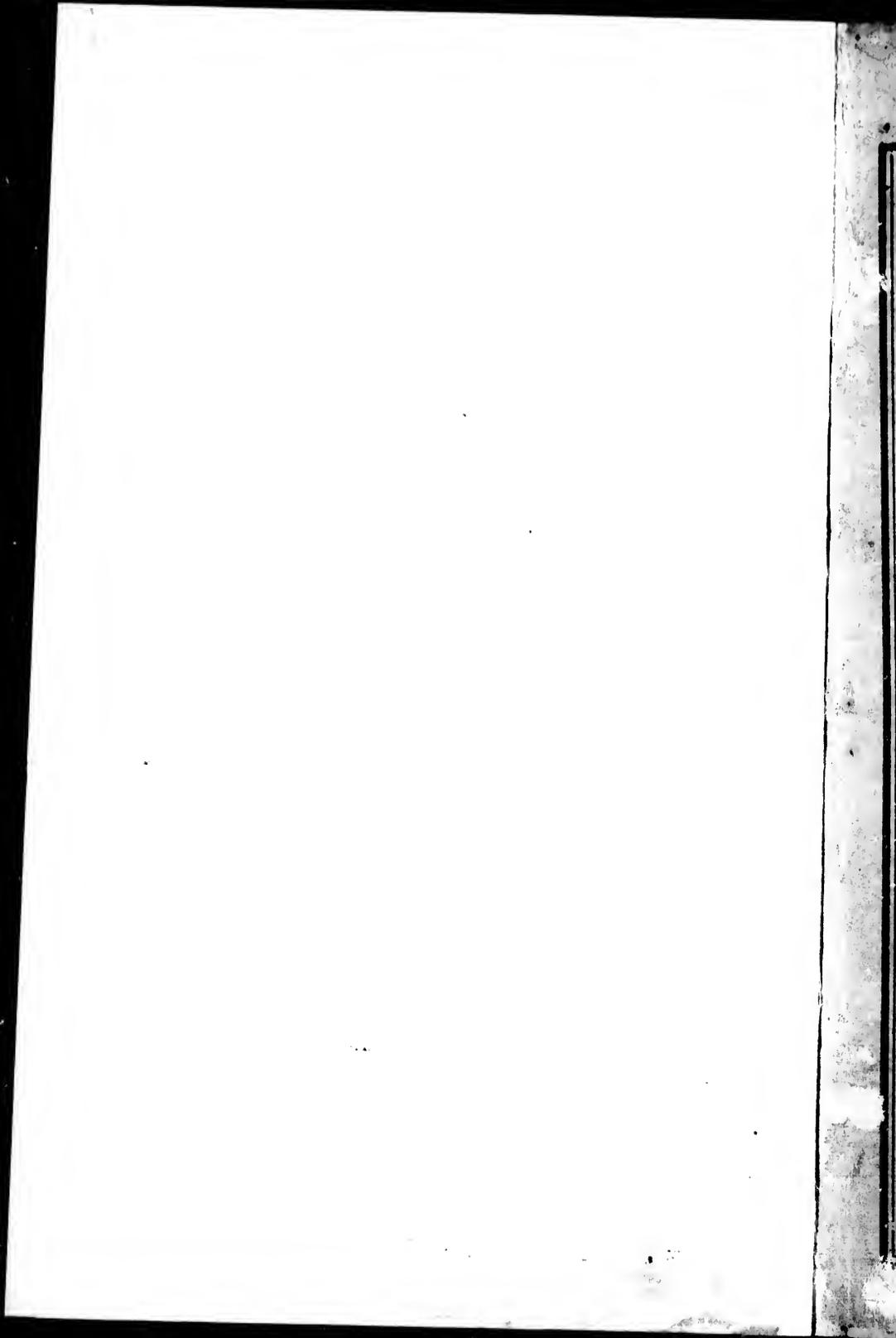
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IN THE CHURCH,
BISHOPS, PRIESTS, AND DEACONS,
PROVED FROM THE NEW TESTAMENT.

By WILLIAM HEY, Esq., F.R.S.



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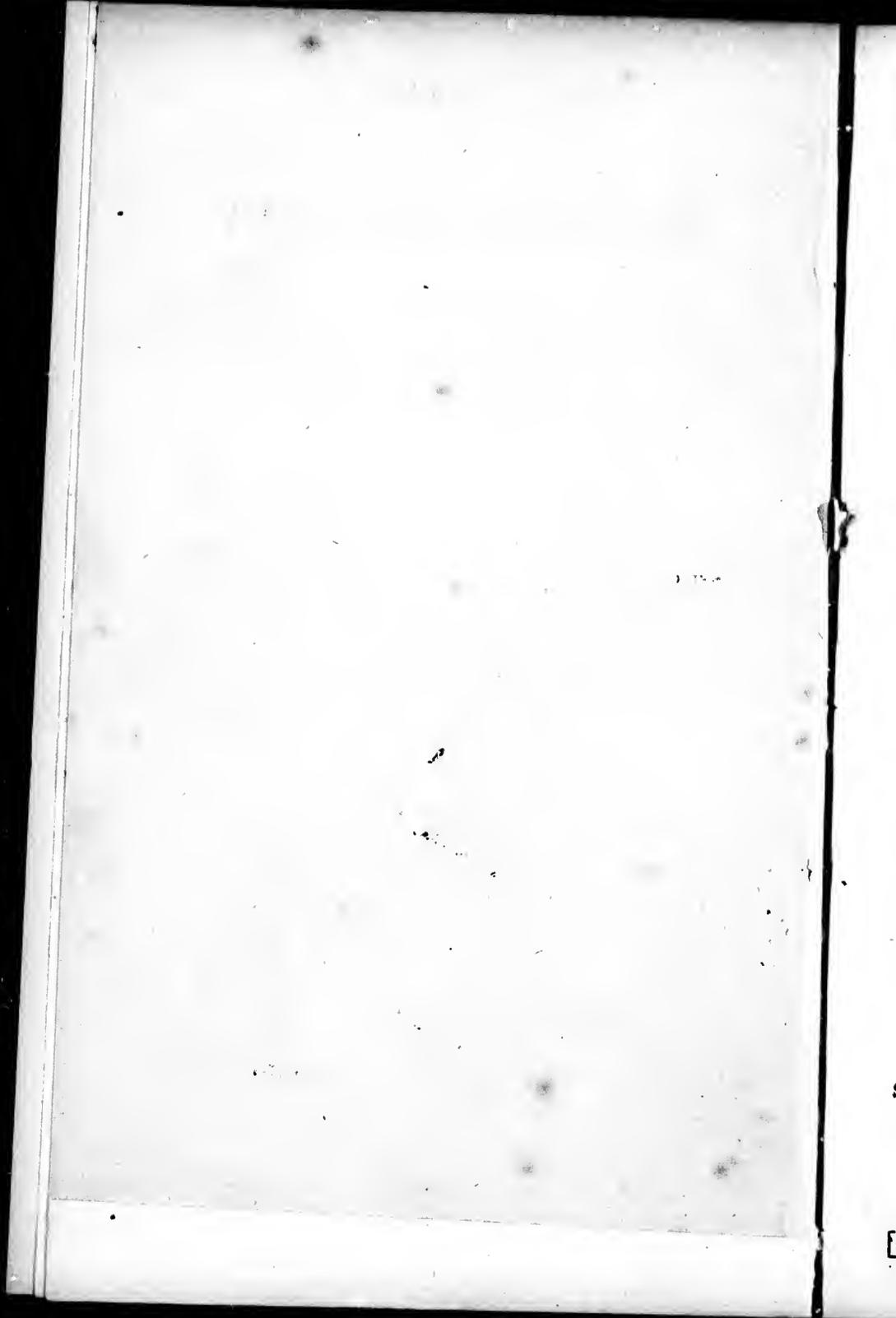
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By **WILLIAM HEY, Esq., F.R.S.**

MEMBER OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS IN LONDON; HONORARY MEMBER OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS IN IRELAND, OF THE ROYAL MEDICAL SOCIETY OF EDINBURGH, OF THE LITERARY AND PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY OF MANCHESTER; AND LATE SENIOR SURGEON OF THE GENERAL INFIRMARY AT LEEDS.



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THE
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*General Reflections on Church Government*¹.

1. IT appears, from various declarations of our Saviour and his apostles, that the Christian Church will never cease to exist in the world. We may, therefore, fairly conclude, that the directions which are given in Holy Writ for the formation of the Church in the time of the apostles, are to be applied to the same society in all ages; allowance being made for the cessation of those miraculous powers which were granted to the first Christians, and for the unavoidable disturbance to which the regular order of the Church may be exposed in times of persecution. What the inspired apostles considered as important in the formation of the Church, ought not to be considered by us as of little import. The Church must be formed after some model; and we have no authority to deviate from that model which inspiration dictated, unless it be in such things as are, by a change of circumstances, rendered impracticable. It is not a sufficient objection to say,—the apostles did not *declare*, that this order was to be perpetual. Such a declaration was unnecessary. A

¹ Written about the year 1789.

regulation appointed by divine authority, in a society that was designed to continue to the end of time, bears the stamp of perpetuity upon the face of it. It should become impracticable, before it should cease to be practised by those who take the Word of God for their guide. All laws which are not expressly made for a limited time, are of course perpetual, until they are abrogated by an authority equal to that by which they were enacted. Christians of all persuasions seem to agree in these sentiments; for they either profess to form their Church government on what they conceive to be the primitive model, or attempt to support, by the authority of Scripture, that order which they have adopted for accidental circumstances.

2. The commands relative to Church government, like those which relate to many other duties, are partly positive, and partly discretionary.

In this case we are as much bound by the positive declarations, as if nothing had been left to our discretion. General directions are also given for the regulation of those circumstances which are committed to our discretion. We stand in the same predicament with relation to other duties. Alms-deeds, for instance, are positively enjoined, but no specific proportion of our wealth is directed to be set apart for this purpose. Yet we have general directions to guide our conduct in this discretionary circumstance. It is our duty to collect those particulars which the apostles clearly enjoined, by precepted example, in the formation of the Christian Church, as far as they are applicable to a settled state of the Church. Such injunctions we are bound to follow. No private opinions of what is best, can authorise us to depart from them. In all matters left to our discretion, we must conduct ourselves by those general rules which the Scriptures afford for the guidance of that discretion. If it should appear, for instance, that the apostles appointed different orders of mi-

ministers in the Church, but did not appoint a particular mode of conducting public worship; the Christian Church is bound to retain those orders of ministers, but may exercise its discretion with respect to the mode of worship, provided the general rules given for the guidance of that discretion are observed. Or, if the apostles have marked out with precision the duties of an officer of great consequence in the Christian Church, whose continuance in the Church was necessary for the execution of that plan of Church government which they, by Divine inspiration, had appointed, and yet have left no directions how this officer should be elected in future ages; we are bound to consider the office as perpetual, but the mode of election to that office as discretionary.

3. Some persons have imagined, that if matters relative to Church government had been of importance, they would have been more clearly revealed. Such imaginations are highly improper, if Divine revelation has given any directions relative to this subject. We must not pretend to dictate to the all-wise God, how he shall reveal his will to us. If he has revealed it in *any* way, this ought to be considered as sufficient to command our obedience.

That excellent writer, Bishop Butler, has observed, that a preponderance of argument in favour of any duty requires our obedience, as well as a more clear and explicit revelation. Let it be granted, for sake of argument, that no particular form of Church government is *commanded* in Scripture; yet, we cannot thence conclude, that all Christian Churches have equally the support of Divine authority. For the inspired apostles formed the first Christian Church after a particular model; and if any modern Church has the example of the apostles on its side, all other things, being by the supposition equal, this Church has a preponderance of argument in its favour.

4. But the example of persons acting by Divine

authority, not only affords a preponderance of argument in favour of any branch of conduct, in which they may be imitated; but it is expressly proposed in Holy Scripture, as a model of our conduct. The apostle Paul says, "Walk so as ye have us for an example;" and no good reason can be given why his example should be followed only in things pertaining to private life. His example, as a superintendent of the Christian Church, calls for imitation. We may, therefore, rank among the number of Divine precepts, such rules as he prescribed for the formation and government of the Christian Church, as far as they relate to it in a settled state, in which no miraculous powers were to exist, nor special inspiration to direct its governors.

5. Though the Scriptures are our only sure guide with respect to Christian doctrines and practice, yet, if it should appear, that the Scriptures are silent with respect to a matter of fact, well known to those whom the apostles addressed in their Epistles; we seem to be directed in this particular to the first writers in the Christian Church, who have mentioned the fact concerning which we are enquiring. If, for instance, an officer of some consequence in the Christian Church is frequently mentioned in the New Testament, in the choice of whom great care was to be observed, and yet the Sacred Writings are silent with respect to the duties of his office; we are evidently led to inquire of the first Christian writers what these duties were, and to acknowledge them to be the proper duties of the office.

6. It has been considered by many as a sufficient proof of the rectitude of the government subsisting in any Church, that the labours of its ministers have been beneficial to mankind. If these have turned sinners unto righteousness, they are regarded as possessing a sure testimony of the Divine approbation of their conduct. The conversion of sinners has perhaps never been effected by any who have

opposed, or neglected, the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel; but success in this important concern will not prove that a minister is altogether right in his sentiments or conduct. The differences which subsist among pious and successful ministers of different persuasions must convince us, that errors to a certain degree are not inconsistent with success. Yet we should always keep in mind, that a *wilful neglect* of any Divine command can admit no apology. We must not argue, that, because our obedience is strict in matters of great concern, we may allow ourselves to depart from the Gospel rule in matters of inferior moment. We should always keep in mind the declaration of our Saviour when comparing the tithing of mint, anise, and cummin, with the weightier matters of the law; "These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the others undone." We may not be aware of the injury which religion, in a course of time, may sustain, by a departure from that order in the Church, which Divine authority has established: nor are we allowed to weigh the consequences of disobedience, with the view to satisfy ourselves in the neglect of any divine command.

One general command respecting Church government is, "Let all things be done decently and in order;" and if success is to be considered universally as a proof of right conduct, then no one was ever instrumental in turning a sinner from the error of his way, who, in that part of his conduct which proved beneficial, was guilty of a breach of this command. I will not at present consider what decency and order require, but will, in this argument, leave every one to his own judgment. I will only appeal to the conscience of every reader, whether he is persuaded, that the spiritual good above-mentioned was never effected by a *y* one, while departing from such conduct as decency and order required.

Again; the same conduct may do good in one respect, and mischief in another. If we are to regu-

late ourselves by events, and not by Divine commands, we must first know whether the conduct in question will do more good or harm. This rule is very uncertain, and must always be superseded by the authority of a Divine command. It can only be called in aid in matters of which the consequences are doubtful, and of such as are left entirely to our own discretion.

If even greater good should appear to be done, for a time, by following our own plans; yet a conduct not regulated by Divine authority, may bring on a course of events attended with irreparable mischief, far outweighing the present temporary advantage.

Further, when we allow ourselves to break through the order of Divine appointment, with the prospect of doing a greater good, we depart from that subordinate station in which Divine Providence has placed us. We take upon ourselves to direct, where we ought to obey. We disregard that express Divine prohibition of doing evil that good may come; and forget that sentence which the apostle has pronounced upon all who conduct themselves by such a principle, "whose damnation is just."

7. The charge of uncharitableness seems to deter many from entering upon the inquiry, whether any mode of Church government has exclusively the stamp of Divine authority. They see good men of all persuasions, and therefore think it needless to inquire, which form of Church government is most conformable to the plan laid down in Holy Scripture. They are also deterred from this investigation by the idea, that a claim to Divine authority in an affair concerning which good people are so much divided, would imply an uncharitable censure upon all who differ from ourselves.

True Christian charity will never deter us from the most strict inquiry into our duty. We are not to guide ourselves by the conduct of others, who have no greater claim to inspiration than ourselves.

The unerring word of God, the Bible, is our rule of faith and practice. "Let God be true, and every man a liar." It is our duty to examine the word of God carefully, that we may regulate our conduct aright in every particular. We shall not be excused in any neglect or error, concerning which Divine authority would set us right, by pleading the example of others. Nor does it necessarily follow, that we must condemn others, who profess to follow the same guide as ourselves, because we may differ in our interpretation of some things contained in Divine revelation.

*On the Orders of Ministers in the Christian Church
and the manner of their Appointment.*

WHEN our blessed Redeemer took leave of "the eleven disciples," he commanded them to teach all nations, and promised to be with them, "always, even to the end of the world¹:" but he gave no instructions respecting the different orders of ministers in his Church, nor the manner of their appointment. This promise, however, implied that there should be a succession of ministers in the Christian Church to the end of the world. And as our Saviour also promised to instruct his apostles by his Holy Spirit, and to guide them into all truth, we must look into the acts of the Apostles, and their Epistles, to discover the will of our Lord on this subject.

The question to be investigated in these observations is this,—What instructions have the apostles given, either by example or precept, respecting the different orders of ministers, in a settled state of the Church, after their departure? I say, in a *settled* state of the Church, after the departure of the

¹ Matt. xxviii. 20.

apostles : because its first state was so extraordinary, and so fraught with miraculous powers, that a perfect imitation of it cannot be adopted. This original state of the Church is thus described by the apostle Paul. "God hath set some in the Church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues¹." Apostles and prophets are gone : gifts of healing, and diversities of tongues have ceased. We must be content with teachers and governors. Let us inquire what the Scripture has said concerning these.

This list is a little varied in the Epistle to the Ephesians, where it is said, "He gave some, apostles ; and some, prophets ; and some, evangelists ; and some, pastors and teachers²." What the word *evangelist* means, if it implied a distinct order, cannot be collected from Scripture. It is but mentioned in two other places, viz. Acts xxi. 28. "We entered into the house of Philip the evangelist." And 2 Timothy iv. 5. "Watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry." The word literally means a preacher of the Gospel. The use of it in any other sense must be conjectural.

The titles appropriated to ordinary teachers in the Church of Christ, are *bishops*, *presbyters* or *elders*, and *deacons*. Perhaps we shall discover another order to which the Scriptures have given no exclusive title, except in the Book of the Revelations. It may be proper to remark, for the sake of those readers who are not acquainted with the original language of the New Testament, that the terms of *presbyter* and *elder* are strictly synonymous ; the former being only

¹ 1 Cor. xii. 28.

² Eph. iv. 11.—*Prophets* are so clearly distinguished, in both these passages, from *pastors* and *teachers*, that we cannot, by any just reasoning, consider the conduct of the former as conveying a direction for that of the latter.

a Greek word with an English termination, and the latter, a translation of that Greek word into pure English. To avoid confusion, I shall only use the word *presbyter*, as having less ambiguity.

It seems that *presbyters* were the ordinary ministers of the Church. Paul and Barnabas, in their first tour from Antioch, *ordained them* *presbyters* in every church¹. Paul being in haste to be at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, determined to sail by Ephesus, and called the "*presbyters of the Church*"², giving them his parting advice, as to ordinary ministers of the Church. Paul left Titus in Crete, to "*ordain presbyters in every city*"³. The business of *ruling* and *teaching* the flock belongs to them. "Let the *presbyters* that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine"⁴.

The terms *bishop* and *presbyter*, are used in the New Testament for the same kind of minister. There are five passages from which this appears to be the case. When St. Paul sent from Miletus for the *presbyters* of Ephesus, he commanded them "to take heed to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost had made them *overseers*, (it is the same word in the original, which is elsewhere translated *bishops*), to feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood"⁵. St. Paul says to Titus, "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest ordain *presbyters* in every city, as I had appointed thee. If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children, not accused of riot or unruly; for a *bishop* must be blameless"⁶; &c. In these two passages, the terms are clearly synonymous.

The same apostle addressed his Epistle to the *Philippians*, "To all the saints in Christ Jesus,

¹ Acts xiv. 23.

⁴ 1 Tim. v. 17.

² Acts xx. 17.

⁵ Acts xx. 28.

³ Titus i. 5.

⁶ Titus i. 5—7.

which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons. Can we suppose, that there were many bishops, and no presbyters at Philippi; or that St. Paul would omit mentioning these, while he addresses the deacons? These suppositions are so improbable, that I can entertain no doubt of the term *bishop* being here used for *presbyter*.

Again; the apostle, in his first Epistle to Timothy, chapter iii., gives particular directions respecting the character of those who were to be admitted to the offices of *bishop* and *deacon*, but does not in that chapter make mention of *presbyters*. The passage is natural and void of difficulty, if, by the term *bishop*, we understand *presbyter*: in any other sense, the omission of the term *presbyter* is unaccountable; since Timothy was left at Ephesus, as Titus was in Crete, for this purpose, among others, of ordaining presbyters.

Lastly: St. Peter, in his first Epistle, chapter v. says, "The presbyters, who are among you, I exhort, who am also a presbyter," (for though the apostles were superintendents of other ministers, they still fulfilled the office of ordinary preachers of the Gospel,) "feed the flock of God which is among you, *taking the oversight* thereof," (or, as it might be rendered, "executing the office of a bishop,") "not by constraint, but willingly¹," &c. From these passages it is plain, that the terms *bishop* and *presbyter* were used as synonymous by the writers of the New Testament².

¹ 1 Peter v. 1, 2.

² No difficulty can arise from the application of the term *bishop*, to ordinary presbyters, if we take into consideration the original meaning of the word, and the manner in which it is applied in the Scriptures. The word in the original signifies an *overlooker* or *overseer*, and is thus properly translated in the English Testament. Acts xx. 28. For the presbyters were the overseers of the flock of Christ; and it is with relation to the *flock*, and not to other ministers, that the presbyters are called bishops: as in the passage last quoted; "Take heed to the *flock* over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers" or bishops. So also in 1 Peter, chapter v. "Feed the *flock* of God which is among you

Before I proceed to inquire whether the Scriptures have given us any intimation of a church officer, superior in rank to that of a presbyter, let us hear what is said respecting *deacons*. No instructions are given to Titus respecting this office; but in the first Epistle to Timothy, the same character for piety and good conduct is required in deacons as in presbyters. Nay, it is added, "Let these also first be proved, then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless:" chapter iii. 10. Yet this office seems to have been probationary with respect to a higher office, for it is said, "They that use the office of a deacon well, purchase to themselves a *good degree*." *Ib.* 13. But wherein did the office of a deacon consist? The Scriptures have not informed us. Some readers may be surprised at this assertion, and ask, Were not seven deacons appointed to take care of the public stock in the church¹? It is true, that "even men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom," were chosen by the people, and appointed by the apostles to take care that no partiality should be shown in favour of the Hebrew women, in distributing the daily portion of food provided by the Church; but these men are not called *deacons*, except in the running title of our Bibles. The text does not give them that name. Indeed, if it did, we should gain but little information as to the perpetual office of a deacon; for the employment imposed upon them was local and temporary, and has long since ceased to exist. In no part of the New Testament, that I recollect, is the office of a deacon described.

Though the office of a deacon is not described in the New Testament, it must have been perfectly

taking the *oversight* thereof," &c. Whereas, *superintendents*, as the apostles, and by delegation from them, Timothy and Titus, were overseers or bishops of other pastors, as the Epistles to Timothy and Titus abundantly prove.

¹ Acts vi.

understood, not only by Timothy, to whom minute directions were given for the choice of proper persons to fill that office; but also by the Christians of that period, among whom the duties of the office were daily exercised. The Christian Church of modern times ought, therefore, to search out the nature of the office in those ecclesiastical writings which approach the nearest to the times of the apostles.

Two properties of the office may be *collected* from the Scriptures. First, that it was an *office*, which, in point of importance, was similar to that of presbyter; for the same marks are laid down for the guidance of Timothy in the choice of deacons, as in the choice of presbyters. They were to be men of similar piety and good conduct in every relation of life. And, secondly, the office is described as probationary. It was designed to be a step to something higher. The rest must be supplied from the stores of ecclesiastical history.

We proceed then to inquire, whether the apostles did appoint any officer in the Church, of a degree superior to that of a presbyter; such an officer as would now be called a bishop¹. That we may, with greater certainty, discover the truth in this investigation, let us first state what is the peculiar office of a bishop, considered as superior to a presbyter; and then inquire, whether the apostles appointed any such officer in the Church.

The peculiar office of a bishop consists in these four particulars.

1. In ordaining presbyters and deacons.
2. In superintending the doctrine of these ministers.

¹ The reader must not understand me as hinting, that this appropriate use of the word *bishop* is of modern date. By consulting ecclesiastical history he will find, that it was used in this appropriate sense by those who had been contemporary with the apostle John, and that the Christian Church continued to use it in this sense after the death of the apostles. But my observations are confined to the account which is given of the Christian Church in the New Testament.

3. In superintending their conduct.

4. In regulating those matters in the Church, which are not settled by Divine authority.

Now these duties of a superintendent or bishop, were committed by the apostle Paul to Timothy and Titus.

1. They were appointed to *ordain* other ministers, as the apostles had done before them. "For this cause," says the apostle to Titus, "left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest ordain presbyters in every city, as I had appointed thee;" chapter i. 5. So, likewise, special directions were given to Timothy respecting the choice of those whom he should ordain presbyters or deacons¹. Of these directions I shall have occasion to speak hereafter.

2. They were appointed to *superintend the doctrine* of these ministers. So says the apostle to Timothy: "I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine²."

3. They were appointed to *superintend the conduct* of other ministers. "Against a presbyter receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses³." He who is authorised to receive *accusations*, and *hear witnesses* against any person, is authorised to be the *judge* of that person.

4. They were appointed to *regulate such matters* in the Church, *as were not settled by express divine command*. "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting;" that are left *undone*, as the margin expresses it⁴. This was a branch of apostolic authority which is here delegated to Titus, as appears from 1 Corinthians ii. 34. For, when the apostle Paul had rectified the erroneous manner of receiving the Lord's Supper, into which the Corinthians

¹ 1 Tim. iii.

³ 1 Tim. v. 19.

² 1 Tim. i. 3.

⁴ Titus i. 5.

had fallen, by stating to them the nature of that ordinance according to its original institution, he adds, that he would regulate inferior matters when he should be present with them. "And the rest will I set in order when I come."

Some other peculiarities of the office of superintendent might perhaps be collected from the New Testament: but these will suffice to show, that there was an office in the Church, superior to that of presbyter (but including it) though no name is given in the New Testament, except in the Revelations, to the persons who were to fill that office by delegation from the apostles. The office itself, however, is described with great clearness; and two persons are mentioned to whom that office was delegated by the apostle Paul.

We will now consider what was the mode of appointing presbyters and deacons; and to whom was the choice of persons, to fill those offices, committed.

The persons chosen were solemnly set apart by prayer and imposition of hands, in which (if we may form a judgment from one instance) the presbytery joined with the apostle. In the first epistle to Timothy, the apostle Paul says, "Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery;" chapter iv. 14. In the second Epistle, speaking as it seems, of the same transaction, the apostle says, "I put thee in remembrance, that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee, by the putting on of *my hands*;" chapter i. 6. These passages are of equal authority, and therefore prove, that the presbytery joined with the apostle in the imposition of hands, when Timothy received the gift of God, whatever that gift implied. Supposing, then, the expression to refer to the ordination of Timothy, and supposing this ordination to be a specimen of all other ordinations, it will then follow, that the presbytery

joined with the apostle, or some delegated superintendent, in the imposition of hands ; but no mention is made in the New Testament of any ordination to the ministry by presbyters, without the presence of an apostle, or some superintendent delegated by an apostle.

But to whom was the choice committed of persons who were to fill the office of presbyter or deacon ? To the persons who were delegated by the apostles to execute the office of superintendent or bishop, for thus runs the apostolic injunction respecting ordination : "The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same *commit thou* to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also ¹."

When the "daily ministrations" of the food provided for the widows was conducted with partiality, the apostles desired the people "to look out among themselves seven men of honest report, whom they appointed to serve the tables." Or when the charitable contributions of the Corinthians was to be carried to Jerusalem, St. Paul tells them, "that whomsoever they should appoint, them would he send to bring their liberality to Jerusalem ²." But I recollect no instance of the people choosing either presbyter or deacon. The seven men chosen to serve the widows, as I have already observed, are not called deacons in the Acts of the Apostles.

After the traitor Judas had destroyed himself, the disciples, by the direction of Peter, appointed two persons out of the number of those who had accompanied our Lord through the whole of his ministry, that one might "be ordained to be a witness," with the other apostles, "of his resurrection." The choice of this person was submitted to the Almighty, by the intervention of the lot. "They prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, who knowest the hearts of all men, show whether of these two *thou hast chosen*."

¹ 2 Tim. ii. 2.

² 1 Cor. xvi. 3.

This was a singular case, and was not considered by the apostles, or their delegates, as a precedent for future ordinations.

Some persons have been of opinion, that the original word, used to express the ordination of presbyters by Paul and Barnabas¹, implies, that it was done with the suffrage, or voting, of the people. As this word has been thus paraphrased by an excellent writer on the New Testament², I shall subjoin a remark or two on this paraphrase. The word in this passage, translated *ordained*, does undoubtedly imply a choice or election, and did in its primary sense, I believe, express the election by lifting up of hands. But every person conversant in the original language of the New Testament must know, that it often signifies choice or election, simply, without voting³. Now since this is the case, as is allowed by the author to whom I allude, it is impossible to prove that the votes of the people had any thing to do with these ordinations, merely from the use of that Greek word, unless the context had given some intimation, that the votes of the people directed the choice of the apostles. But no such hint is given in the context. The most fair method of discovering the meaning of an author in any doubtful word, is to examine how he uses that word in other parts of his writings. Now the word here supposed to imply the votes of the people, is used but once besides, I think, by St. Luke; and there it could not imply any voting, or other interference of the people, for it is used to express the choice of God himself. "God showed him openly; not to all the people, but unto witnesses *chosen before* of God⁴." St. Paul does not use this Greek word when he commands

¹ Χειροτονησαντες δε αυτοις πρεσβυτερους. Acts xiv. 23.

² Dr. Doddridge. "Family Expositor," vol. iii. page 228.

³ The reader may see many instances of this collected by Dr. Hammond, in his note on the text in question.

⁴ Προκεχειροτονημενους ὑπο του Θεου. Acts x. 41.

(Titus to *ordain* presbyters chapter i. 5. ¹), but another word, which has no relation to the suffrage, or other interference of the people; and which is properly translated *ordain* (*i. e.* constitute or appoint) presbyters.

There is abundant proof, that the election of the presbyters and deacons was to be made by the superintendents who were appointed to ordain them: For what end does the apostle Paul give Timothy and Titus such minute directions respecting the character of persons to be ordained by them, if these directions were not to guide their choice? After all these directions, Timothy is commanded to use great caution in his choice; in scriptural language, to "lay hands suddenly on no man." If the choice was not committed to him, and his business was only to lay hands upon those whom the votes of the people presented to him, it was no matter how suddenly he laid his hands upon them. Though these considerations seem quite sufficient to produce conviction, yet the evidence is not exhausted; for the apostle expressly says, that the directions which he gave to Timothy concerning the character of the persons to be ordained, were designed to guide *his* conduct. "These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly; but if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the Church of the living God ²."

The persons who filled the office of superintendent or bishop, were chosen by the apostles themselves; and allowing that no delegation of their power to choose successors is positively mentioned in the New Testament; yet the office having been established without any limit as to its continuance, the Church of Christ can only be supposed to be left to its own discretion with respect to the manner of continuing it.

¹ Καταστήσης κατα πολιν πρεσβυτερους.

² 1 Tim. iii. 14,

Now the superintendent was clearly the next in station to the apostle, as far as related to the ordinary and permanent state of the Church. And, with respect to the ordination of presbyters and deacons, and the regulation of inferior matters in the Church, he was manifestly endowed with apostolic power. The Christian Church will, therefore, make the nearest approach to the primitive model, by continuing a succession of superintendents through the intervention of their predecessors of the same order. At any rate, a succession of these officers *must* be continued, if the primitive model of Church government is to be pursued; for there is no instance in the New Testament of any ordination of presbyter or deacon, either by the people, or by the presbytery alone.

The importance of the episcopal office will more clearly appear, if we sum up and reduce into one view, those passages in the Epistles to Timothy and Titus, which exhibit its peculiar duties; at least, those which relate to the four branches of the office which I have already mentioned.

Let us then suppose the apostle Paul to have given the following commission to one who was already a presbyter¹.

“ My dear son ;

“ As my affairs have called me out of Asia into Greece, and I have ‘ besought thee to abide at Ephesus when I went into Macedonia ;’ I think it proper to give thee in writing such instructions as are necessary for the guidance of thy conduct. There are many presbyters at Ephesus, and these require some one to superintend them, as they superintend ‘ the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made them overseers².’ I have observed with

¹ To prevent interruption by quoting the chapter and verse of each text as it occurs, I shall only give the text between inverted commas. The reader may easily find the passages, as they are all contained in the Epistles to Timothy and Titus, unless where it is otherwise noted.

² Acts xx. 28.

sorrow, that there are some of them in danger of 'giving heed to fables;' nay, who *have* already 'turned aside unto vain jangling; desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm.' Now, I beseech thee, look well to that doctrine of these ministers. If it be possible, prevent error from spreading in the Church. Remember, that for this purpose I left thee at Ephesus, 'that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine,' than that which they have received from me. 'Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord, that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers.' Be diligent both in government and instruction; and what thou hast learned from me, 'these things command and teach.' Exert the authority with which I have invested thee, and put to silence improper teachers. 'For there are many unruly and vain talkers, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not.' And as heresy is destructive to the purity of the Church, suffer not a person tainted with this contagious disease to remain in the communion of the faithful, when repeated advice and counsel have failed to reclaim him. 'A man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject.'

"I also command thee, that thou look well to the conduct of the ministers over whom I have placed thee. But execute this delicate business with discretion. The character of ministers is of great consequence. And, although I have appointed thee to be the judge of their conduct, yet be not hasty to condemn any one without a fair hearing. 'Against a presbyter do not *even* receive an accusation, but before two or three witnesses.'

"See that the ordinances appointed by Christ are observed in the Church according to his appointment. Yet there are many inferior matters which

thou must regulate as *decency* and 'good order shall require'.¹ 'For this cause left I thee at Ephesus, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and that have hitherto been left undone.'

"Use the utmost caution in the choice of persons who are to execute the office of ministers. I do not consider all as forward, who seek to be overseers of the flock of Christ; for, 'if a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.' But accept no candidate for this office, unless he 'be blameless, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour,' and 'have a good report of them that are without' the Christian Church, 'lest he fall into reproach.' Do not ordain 'a novice, lest being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil.' Be not hasty in forming thy judgment of men's characters, however fair they may appear; 'lay hands suddenly on no man. Stir up the gift of God which is in thee, by the putting on of my hands, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.' And in the solemn act of ordination, let the presbytery join with thee in the imposition of hands, seeing thou canst not follow a better example than that which was shown at thine own ordination².

"Finally, my son, 'be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same *commit thou* to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.'"

These passages of Scripture, (which, I hope, have not been in any degree perverted by my paraphrase,) with others of the same import, have satisfied my mind, that in the primitive Church there were *superintendents*, answering to the officers now called *bishops*. By what name these should be distin-

¹ 1 Cor. xiv. 40.

² This is the method enjoined by the Church of England in her ordination service for presbyters.

guished in after ages, is of no consequence. Whether they should be itinerant, or stationary; whether they should exercise their functions over a small or a large district; whether they should stand totally unconnected with the government under which they might live, or be called to give their advice in matters of public concern, would depend on a variety of circumstances, which we are not at all concerned to inquire after and enumerate.

Observations on the Government of the Christian Church, during the last period of the Sacred History contained in the New Testament.

IF we are desirous of knowing what kind of government was established by Divine authority in the primitive Church of Christ, we must not look for it in those passages of Scripture which represent the apostles and other ministers as engaged in the exercise of the miraculous powers with which they were endowed; nor in those passages which describe the disturbed state of the Church, through the violence of persecution. We must look for it in those appointments which have an evident respect to futurity; and fix our regard on those passages of Scripture which describe the Church in its most settled and ordinary state.

My inquiries have hitherto been confined to the formation of the Christian Church during the life of the apostle Paul. But the sacred history carries us somewhat further, and exhibits the government of the Church at a later period. The epistles which St. John was commanded to write to the seven Churches in Asia, will throw further light on this subject.

St. John is supposed to have outlived the rest of

the apostles¹, and the Churches to which he wrote seem to have been for some time in a settled state. We have, therefore, a good opportunity of learning from these Epistles, what was the true apostolic form of Church government.

Our information will chiefly arise from considering what kind of minister was designed by the term, "angels of the Churches." I take for granted, that the term implies a minister of some description. The strain of the Epistles, and the distinction made between the *angel* and the people of which the Church consisted, point out this so clearly, that no doubt can arise in the mind of any one who is content to take the Scriptures in their most obvious meaning.

It seems also sufficiently plain, that the *angel* was an individual person. He is always addressed as such by the inspired writers. And as it is expressly said, that there were *seven* angels, and one in each Church, there can be no ground for contest on this subject. I shall not dwell, therefore, on the absurdity of a contrary supposition, though that is manifest from the minute description which is given of each of the angels.

By the term *angel* must then be meant, either the sole presbyter presiding over the congregation of Christians at Ephesus, Smyrna, &c. respectively; or a *superintendent* in each Church, presiding over the presbyters as well as over the flock.

In order that we may form our ideas on this subject in exact conformity to the Scripture history, let us consider the state of the first of these Churches addressed by the apostle John, concerning which we have the most ample information, and apply our conclusions to the rest of the Churches; in doing which,

¹ "Domitian banished him into the solitary Isle of Patmos, where he was favoured with the visions of the Apocalypse. After Domitian's death, he returned from Patmos, and governed the Asiatic Churches. There he remained till the time of Trajan." *Milner's Ecclesiastical History*, vol. 1. edit. 2. page 138.

we shall find ourselves supported by the instructions addressed to the angels of the other Churches.

The labours of St. Paul had been abundant in the Lesser Asia. He had at one time preached in the Jewish Synagogue at Ephesus "for the space of three months;" and, "when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus. And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of 'he Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks. So that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul" (in the language of Demetrius) had "persuaded and turned away much people¹."

It is probable, therefore, that by the "Church of Ephesus" was meant, not only the Christians in that city, but those also in the adjacent country; a great number of whom must have been converted to the truth during this long residence of the apostle. If this was the meaning of the term used by St. John, the "angel of the Church of Ephesus" must have been a minister presiding over a considerable district. But omitting this reasonable supposition, it is clear, that the number of Christians residing in the city of Ephesus was so great, as to require the care of several presbyters. For, when St. Paul passed by this city, in his way from Greece to Jerusalem, he summoned these presbyters to meet him at Miletus. "From Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the *presbyters* of the Church²."

It is certain, therefore, by the term "angel of the Church of Ephesus," could not be meant the sole presbyter, or minister of the congregation of Christians at Ephesus.

The *angel* of the Church must, of consequence,

¹ Acts xix. 8—10. 26.

² Acts xx. 17.

have been the *superintendent* presiding over the presbyters, as well as over the flock.

This establishment was not new. It had subsisted for some time in the Church of Ephesus, as I have already shown, when describing from the Scriptures the authority which St. Paul had delegated to Timothy. He had been left by the apostle at Ephesus, to superintend the teaching and the conduct of the presbyters in that part; and to ordain others, as the state of the Church might require.

The Epistle of St. John to the Church of Ephesus shows, that the same authority which St. Paul had delegated to Timothy, was possessed by the *angel* of the Church who resided at Ephesus when the Apocalypse was written.

When St. Paul appointed Timothy and Titus to be superintendents, or bishops, over other presbyters, he gave them minute directions for the regulation of their conduct in that important office. It was not necessary that such directions should be given to the angels of the seven Churches in Asia, as they were already settled officers in the Christian Church, and were in the actual exercise of those powers which St. Paul committed to Timothy and Titus. We must not, therefore, expect to find the duties of a superintendent amply displayed in these short Epistles to the angels of the seven Churches, as this had been already executed in the Epistles to Timothy and Titus. St. John was led to mention the duties of the office only incidentally, as the persons who now held it required praise or reproof, according to their respective conduct in the execution of that office. But the incidental mention of the peculiar functions of the office affords as clear a proof that it was held by the persons addressed, as is afforded by the more minute description contained in the Epistles to Timothy and Titus.

Nothing can prove more clearly that, the *angel* of

the Church of Ephesus was the superintendent of other ministers, than the notice which is taken of his authority to try the pretensions of those who laid a claim to the highest office in the Christian Church. "Thou hast tried them which say they are *apostles*, and are not; and hast found them liars¹." The angel of this Church had exercised his superintending authority with zeal and discretion, and now receives the approbation of his conduct from the great Head of the Church, through the hands of the apostle.

The same authority is recognised with respect to the *angel* of the Church at Thyatira, but in a way of reproof, instead of commendation. For, after the apostle had expressed our Lord's approbation of his faith and patience, &c., it is added, "Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman, Jezebel, who calleth herself a prophetess, to teach," &c. Now it could not have been the subject of blame in the angel of the Church in Thyatira, that he suffered this pretended prophetess to exercise her talents among the Christians in that city or district, unless he had possessed the authority of examining the pretensions of those who laid claim to the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit, and of silencing improper teachers; which, as hath been already shown, were the functions of a *superintendent*; that is, of a minister in the Christian Church, who, ever since the apostolic age, has exclusively received the title of bishop.

From these passages of Scripture I am convinced that *Diocesan Episcopacy*² was established by *Divine authority* in the Christian Churches in Asia, before the death of the apostle John; and I can find no reason from Scripture to think that the govern-

¹ Rev. ii. 2.

² By *Diocesan Episcopacy*, I mean the government of the church by *superintendents* or *bishops*, each presiding over his own district, though subject to a general synod of bishops and presbyters. Acts xv. 6; xvi. 4.

ment of the Churches in Asia differed from that of other Christian Churches. They were all under the care of the same persons¹; matters of great concern, respecting them universally, were determined by a synod of the apostles and presbyters at Jerusalem²; and the decrees made for the government of the Churches were distributed by Paul and Silas, as they went about preaching the Gospel³.

My duty to the great Head of the Church compels me to respect that authority which appears to me so clearly to have been established by his direction; and I pray God, that his authority may always be exercised for the benefit of his "Church, which he hath purchased with his own blood;" that it may be presented to Him at length, "a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but holy and without blemish⁴."

¹ "That which cometh upon me daily, the care of *all* the Churches."

² Cor. xi. 28.

³ Acts xv. 6.

⁴ "And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and presbyters which were at Jerusalem." Acts xvi. 4.

⁴ Ephes. v. 27.

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