

LECTURE VII.

Use of the Fathers in the inquiry concerning the *nature and construction of the Church*. The outline of it, which may be inferred from the Acts and the Apostolical Epistles, filled up by them. A standing ministry deriving its authority from the Apostles, and consisting of three Orders, included in their definition of it. Direct proof of this from the Fathers themselves: indirect, from the practice of heretics. Incidental character of the evidence. Variety of quarters from which it is drawn. Conclusion in the words of Hooker.

THERE is another field of theological inquiry, which it is impossible to occupy with any effect without the aid of the early Fathers: that relating to the nature and construction of the Church. Antiquity becomes in this province more especially the hand-maid of Scripture, and the Priest of the Church of England will find it eminently to his advantage here to fulfil his Ordination vow, and be diligent not only in reading the Holy Scriptures, but also "In such studies as help to the knowledge of the same." Our blessed Lord, indeed, remained upon earth after his resurrection forty days, and during that time was "Speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God."¹ But what his injunctions probably were, we have to gather from the course of events which followed, and from the shape which the Church began to take; the formation of it partly discovered in the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles (for in these writings it exhibits a much more organized aspect than it did in the Gospels), and more fully developed in the writings of the Sub-Apostolic Fathers; these latter, however, be it remembered, not engaged in proclaiming and enforcing peculiar views of their own on this subject in the spirit of polemics, but simply betraying the structure which the Church had assumed in their time, its orderly uniformity,² the elements of it, as represented in the Acts and Epistles, thus completed and filled up.

¹ Acts i. 3. There may seem to be an allusion to one of these conversations of our Lord on the future structure of the Church in Clemens Romanus, Epist. I. § xlv.

² See Irenæus V. c. xx. § 1. Eandem figuram ejus, quæ est erga ecclesiam, ordinationis custodientibus.

The Fathers, then, understand the Church to be a body of persons called out of the world, amongst whom the doctrine is taught and the Sacraments administered, which Christ delivered, and which his Apostles and their successors perpetuated from generation to generation.¹ This standing ministry they ever represent, right or wrong, as deriving its virtue and authority from the commission first conveyed to the Apostles by Christ himself, and passed on from them to those who did or should succeed them by imposition of hands,² by vicarious ordination.³ They appeal to this succession as the test of the validity of that ministry,⁴ as the guarantee for the interpretation of Scripture sanctioned by the Church being Apostolical, and accordingly sound; no other interpretation having the same safeguard.⁵ They actually trace it down to their own times in some instances, and profess to abstain from doing so in all other instances simply as being withheld by the tediousness of the task,⁶ the succession in every Church being regular.⁷ Those who withdrew from this ministry, thus limited, they regard as withdrawing from the Church, falling away from the truth, and as guilty of heresy and schism.⁸ This ministry they uniformly describe as consisting of three Orders, Bishops, Priests, and Deacons. They do not assert it in direct terms only, though in direct terms they do assert it, but incidentally also. They evidently presume it on all occasions. Nor is it one Father only that does so, but all; or, at least, all who touch upon the subject. The question does not rest upon any narrow basis, but if any one testimony were withdrawn, ample would remain. Here, as in so many other cases, the Fathers only take up a matter where the Scripture has laid it down. The dawn is in the one, the day in the other. We find Deacons mentioned in Scripture⁹; we find Presbyters¹⁰; we find Presbyters and

¹ Irenæus, Præf. lib. V.

² IV. c. xxvi. § 2.

³ Cyprian, Ep. lxxix. § 4; lxxv. § 16.

⁴ Irenæus, Præf. lib. V.; Cyprian, lxxvi. § 3; Concil. Carthag. VII. Sentent. Clari à Masculâ.

⁵ See Origen De Principiis, Præf. lib. I. § 2, and IV. § 9, Ἐχομένους τοῦ κανόνος τῆς Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ κατὰ διαδοχὴν τῶν ἀποστόλων οὐρανίου ἐκκλησίας. And Irenæus, IV. c. xxvi. § 5. Ubi igitur charismata Domini posita sunt,

ibi discere oportet veritatem, apud quos est ea quæ est ab apostolis ecclesiæ successio . . . qui . . . Scripturas sine periculo nobis exponunt.

⁶ Irenæus, III. c. iii. § 2.

⁷ Hegesippus, Routh. Reliq. Sac. vol. i. p. 201, or Euseb. Eccles. Hist. iv c. 22.

⁸ Irenæus, IV. c. xxvi. § 2; V. c. xx. § 1.

⁹ Acts vi.; 1 Tim. iii. 12.

¹⁰ Acts xiv. 23.

Apostles as united in act, yet distinguished in order¹; we find those who were commissioned to rebuke some Presbyters and to reward some others with double honour²; to regulate the supply of ministers to the Church by a careful imposition of hands³; one such superior person or angel having the superintendence in each local Church.⁴

We discover these same distinctions reappearing in the short work of *Hermas*, which, whether the composition of St. Paul's friend or no, is certainly a work of the first century: Apostles, and Bishops, and Doctors, and Ministers (*Apostoli, et Episcopi, et Doctores, et Ministri*⁵) being, according to him, the several divisions of the hierarchy; *Ministri* an obvious translation of *διάκονοι*; *Doctores* being no less equivalent to *Presbyteri*, for Tertullian uses the same word in this sense, "*si Episcopus, si Diaconus . . . si Doctor lapsus fuerit*;"⁶ and Cyprian actually talks of *Presbyteri Doctores*, explaining the one term by the other.⁷

Clemens Romanus leads us to draw the same inference with respect to the ranks of the clergy. He is enforcing on the quarrelsome Church of Corinth greater subordination and harmony. He intimates that it is God's pleasure that prayers should be offered at stated seasons, at stated places, and by stated persons. "They, therefore, who make their oblations," he continues, "at the times appointed, are accepted and blessed, for following the laws of the Lord they err not. For to the chief Priest are assigned his proper offices, and their proper part is assigned to the Priests, and their proper services are imposed upon the Levites. The layman is bound by the laws of the layman. Let each of you, then, brethren, in his own order (*ἐν τῷ ἰδίῳ τάγματι*) give thanks to God with a good conscience, not overstepping the appointed rule of his ministration, in all gravity."⁸ What could the illustration mean, when addressed to a Christian congregation quarrelling about their pastors, but a parallel between the Jewish and the Christian Priesthood? He then proceeds to tell historically of the Apostles planting in countries and cities the first fruits of their disciples as Bishops

¹ Acts xv. 2, 4.

² 1 Tim. v. 1, 17.

³ v. 22.

⁴ Rev. ii. 1, 8, &c.

⁵ *Hermas*, Vis. III. § v.

⁶ Tertullian, *De Præscript. Hæret. c.* iii.

⁷ Cyprian, Ep. xxiv. See Bishop Pearson's *Vind. Ignat. P. II. c. xiii.*

⁸ *Clem. Rom. Ep. I. §§ xl. xli.*

and Deacons¹: the term Bishops, here synonymous with Presbyters, the Apostles yet being alive, and consequently the terms Bishop and Presbyter being yet confounded; the three orders, Apostles, Bishops (*i. e.* Presbyters), and Deacons, corresponding to the High Priest, Priest, and Levite, of whom Clemens has spoken just before; as after the death of the Apostles and the distinction established between the Bishop and Presbyter, the Bishop, Priest, and Deacon were the designations of the same.

The testimony of Ignatius on this subject is notorious. I confess I have seen nothing yet in the revived controversy on the genuineness of the ordinary copies of the Epistles of Ignatius, which seems to me weighty enough to set aside the verdict of Bishop Pearson—a verdict arrived at after an investigation the most elaborate, and by one whose qualifications for such a task (as all parties, I suppose, would allow) have never been approached by any theologian since his time. Bishop Pearson, then, not only is satisfied with the authority of the shorter Epistles, but further records his calm opinion of them, by deliberately quoting from the Epistle to the Trallians one of the most pointed passages in the whole series in his Exposition of the Creed, when, to support his assertion in the text, “As there is no Church where there is no order, no ministry; so where the same order and ministry are, there is the same Church,”² he adduces in the notes the saying of Ignatius, that “Without Bishop, Priest, and Deacon, there cannot be said to be a Church”³—a maxim which, strange as it may sound in many ears, is repeated by Cyprian, “If any one is not with the Bishop, he is not in the Church.”⁴ But even if we reduce Ignatius to the Syriac text recently discovered (which, for aught that appears to the contrary, might be just as well supposed to be an abridgment of the three letters, for it gives no more, as the three letters themselves), even thus his testimony to the three Orders cannot be stifled. “My life,” says he, even according to this reading of the Epistle to Polycarp, “My life for those who are obedient to the Bishop, the Priests, and the Deacons; may it

¹ Clem. Rom. Ep. I. § xlii.

² Exposition of the Creed, p. 341, 11th Edit.

³ Ignat. Ep. ad Trallianos, § iii.

⁴ Si quis cum episcopo non sit, in Ecclesiâ non esse.—Cyprian, Ep. lxxix. § 8.

be mine to have my portion in God with them. Co-operate with one another," he then continues, "striving together, run together, suffer together, repose together, watch together as the stewards of God, the assessors, the ministers," (*οἰκονόμοι, πάρεδροι, ὑπηρέται*,¹) these three terms evidently answering to Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, each to each, and illustrating the difference understood to subsist among them in the mind of the writer. What need is there of further witness from him?

We next come to Irenæus, a Father of the highest value, from the light his writings cast on the state and structure of the Primitive Church, though composed with no such intention, but simply in order to expose the wild and mischievous features of heresies, most of them long since passed away. Still, as these heresies violated the principles of the Church in so many different ways, the reply to them naturally gives occasion to the production and assertion of those principles; and thus we obtain numerous glimpses of a Church, which might otherwise have been lost to us. Now, in the first place, it must be admitted that on several occasions where Irenæus is speaking in a loose and popular sense he uses the terms Bishops and Priests indifferently, as we might ourselves do at this day, when under the word Priesthood we might include the Episcopate, and call in colloquial language a Bishop, a Priest; and correctly enough. Thus, in one passage the expression "*cum episcopatus successione*,"² appears to be changed for "*cum Presbyterii ordine*," which occurs shortly after.³ Again, if we compare a paragraph in Book III. c. ii. § 2, with another in c. iii. § 1, we read in the former of the tradition preserved in the Churches by a succession of Presbyters (*quæ per successiones Presbyterorum in ecclesiis custoditur*); in the latter "by Bishops ordained in the Churches by the Apostles and their successors." And in a fragment of an Epistle of Irenæus to Florinus, Polycarp is designated as a blessed and Apostolical Presbyter⁴; whereas the same Polycarp is designated in the work against heresies as "Bishop of the Church of Smyrna."⁵ I cite these passages in pure candour, for no man, I think, can peruse the pages of Irenæus

¹ Ignat. ad Polycarp, § vi.

² Irenæus, IV. c. xxvi. § 2.

³ § 4.

⁴ Fragm. II. p. 340, Bened. Ed.

⁵ III. c. iii. § 4.

at full, and have a doubt of the evidence he affords to the fact of the Primitive Church being Episcopalian. Indeed, in these very instances there is nothing, as I have already said, to the contrary. For nobody disputes that in the Church there is a succession of Priests as well as a succession of Bishops, or that a Bishop may be properly called a blessed and Apostolical Priest. Turn we, then, to other passages in Irenæus more precise and technical in their character. He has occasion to challenge the heretics to test their tenets by tradition; by tradition properly guaranteed, beginning from the Apostles and continued by the Bishops, the successors of the Apostles, in all the Churches.¹ He takes the instance of the Church of Rome, and traces the succession of the Bishopric in that see, using in every case the term *ἐπίσκοπος*. "They conferred the ministration of the Bishopric on Linus. Anacleetus succeeds him. After him, in the third place from the Apostles, Clemens receives the Bishopric . . . Evarestus succeeds Clemens, and Alexander Evarestus. Then Xystus is in the same manner appointed, being the sixth from the Apostles. After him Telesphorus, who suffered a glorious martyrdom. Then Hyginus; then Pius; after him Anicetus. Soter succeeded Anicetus. And Eleutherus has at this moment the office of the Bishopric, the twelfth in succession from the Apostles."² One Bishop and one Bishop only at a time, we perceive, recorded as presiding over the Church of Rome during this whole period. Yet the Christians, we know beyond all doubt, were already most numerous at Rome; "multitudo ingens" is the expression by which Tacitus designates them³; already requiring and receiving the services of a large number of Presbyters. Indeed, Eusebius happens to tell us, on the authority of a letter written by Cornelius Bishop of Rome to Fabius Bishop of Antioch, not more than sixty or seventy years later than the period we are upon, that there were then at Rome forty-six Presbyters, seven Deacons, and seven Sub-deacons, though still only one Bishop, viz. Cornelius. Indeed, Cornelius, as thus reported, makes it a matter of keen pleasantry that Novatus, of whose schismatical proceedings at Rome he was writing to Fabius, whilst setting himself up as he did for a champion of the Gospel, *ὁ ἐκδικητὴς*

¹ See also Tertullian, *De Fugâ in Persecutione*, § xiii.

² Irenæus, III. c. iii. § 3.

³ *Annal.* XV. c. 44.

τοῦ εὐαγγελίου,¹ or as Cyprian has it "assertor evangelii,"² did not, to be sure, know that there ought to be in a Catholic Church but one Bishop; Cornelius evidently thinking that for a man to plume himself upon being evangelical or a scrupulous assertor of the Gospel, and at the same time so far to forget the Gospel as to imagine that there could be more than one Bishop in one Church, is an extreme anomaly. Look again at the character of the synod assembled by St. Paul at Miletus, as understood by Irenæus. "The Bishops," says he, "and Presbyters who were of Ephesus, and of the other neighbouring cities, having been called together."³ Yet the verse in the Acts runs, "He sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the Church."⁴ But in those other expressions in the same chapter, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers" (ἐπισκόπους),⁵ and "I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God,"⁶ Irenæus evidently read a convocation of the ruling clergy, not of Ephesus only, but of all the towns about, both Bishops and Priests; those Bishops, for instance, of whom St. John tells in the Revelation, the Bishop of Ephesus, the Bishop of Smyrna, the Bishop of Philadelphia, the Bishop of Sardis, the Bishop of Laodicea, the Bishop of Thyatira: or those of whom Ignatius makes mention even according to the recital of the substance of his Epistles in Eusebius, letting alone the Epistles themselves which we actually possess, the Bishop of Magnesia and the Bishop of Tralles.⁷ Neither does Irenæus supply testimony for the existence of Bishops and Priests only, but of Deacons too; though here again by the way; for he tells us of a Deacon of Asia, who had been reported to him as having lost his wife through the intrigues of Marcus the heretic.⁸ It is impossible that this sort of unobtrusive evidence for the three Orders in the Primitive Church should thus escape from these Fathers, one after another, without the fact being substantially true.

We next come to the evidence furnished on this question

¹ Ὁ ἐκδικητὴς οὖν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου οὐκ ἠπίσταντο εἶνα ἐπίσκοπον δεῖν εἶναι ἐν καθολικῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ. — Eusebius, Eccles. Hist. vi. c. 43.

² Novatus is called Novatianus by Cyprian, Ep. xli.

³ Irenæus, III. c. xiv. § 2.

⁴ Acts xx. 17.

⁵ xx. 28.

⁶ xx. 25.

⁷ Eusebius, Eccles. Hist. iii. c. 36.

⁸ Irenæus, I. c. xiii. § 5.

by Clemens Alexandrius, a writer on the whole as little concerned, from the nature and object of his works, with questions purely ecclesiastical as any that can be named. It would not, indeed, have been matter of surprise, if no passage in the whole of them had occurred illustrating the subject before us : and as it is, the passages are very few, and the information communicated in a manner the most informal and oblique ; indeed, in a manner evidently bespeaking that the author was living in an Episcopal Church, and consequently had his casual thoughts occasionally tinged by the subject, as they might be by any other which was habitually present before him, but nothing more. Thus the Pædagogus (the title of one of his treatises,) whose office is merely elementary and practical, is represented, whilst conducting his children to school, to deliver them into the hands of a more profound master, as throwing out for their benefit a few of the precepts of the Gospel, and with that contenting himself ; his province not extending further ; and though there are “maxims,” says he, “in the sacred books, relating to particular persons, written, some for Presbyters, others for Bishops, others for Deacons, and others for widows,” yet he declines for his part engaging with them, leaving the application of them to other hands.¹ It will be seen at once that Clemens, when he penned these words, had no idea of proving to posterity that there were three Orders in the Church ; it is not the point his mind was adverting to ; his object simply was to put into the mouth of his Pædagogus a characteristic speech, namely, that he would not meddle with matters which belonged rather to the headmaster’s task, to whom he was about to turn over his young charge. At the same time, that when he used the terms Bishop, Priest, and Deacon, he used them distinctively, as representing the several grades of the hierarchy, is evident both from the turn of the passage itself, which asserts that the Scriptures contained precepts calculated for the guidance of different persons whose duties were different, each adapted to each, *αἱ μὲν* (sc. *ὑποθήκαι*) *πρεσβυτέρους, αἱ δὲ ἐπισκόπους, αἱ δὲ διακόνους*, as though each order had its own work ; but also the same inference follows from another passage not less incidental in its tenour than this, but equally conclusive. It

¹ Clem. Alex. Pædag. III. c. xii. p. 309.

occurs in the *Stromata*.¹ Clemens is inculcating what is his great object in that treatise, the possibility of a progressive advance of the Divine character amongst men, and he urges in proof of this the example of the Apostles; "for the Apostles," says he, "were not chosen from any particular congruity of nature; for Judas was chosen with them; but they were qualified to become Apostles, being chosen by Him who could foresee events. Wherefore Matthias, who was not chosen with them, having shown himself worthy of being an Apostle, was substituted for Judas. So that it is still open for those who exercise themselves in the Lord's precepts, and live according to the Gospel in perfection and knowledge, to be numbered amongst the elect Apostles. That man is, in truth, the Presbyter of the Church, and the real Deacon (or minister) of the will of God, who does and teaches the commandments of the Lord; himself not ordained of man, nor accounted just, because he is a Presbyter, but numbered amongst the Presbyters because he is just; and though he should not be honoured in this world with the primacy (*πρωτοκαθεδρία*), yet will he sit among the four and twenty thrones, and judge the people, as saith John in the Revelation." And afterwards there is added, "for the several grades of the Church here of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, are imitations, I imagine, of the glories of the angels; and they attain unto that dispensation which the Scriptures say awaits those who live according to the Gospel in the steps of the Apostles in perfect righteousness.² The Apostle writes that these being taken up into the clouds, shall first of all *minister*, or serve the office of Deacon; then be numbered amongst the Presbytery by an advance in glory, for glory differs from glory, until they arrive at the perfect man." Here, I repeat, as in the former case, the information we obtain on the question we are investigating, is altogether incidental. Clemens is not engaging in a debate on Episcopacy, or evincing the slightest intention of conveying to us any testimony whatever with respect to it; but having occasion to enforce the duty of going on unto perfection, he casually illustrates the stages of

¹ *Stromat.* VI. § xiii. p. 793.

² Ἐπει καὶ αἱ ἐνταῦθα κατὰ τὴν ἐκκλησίαν προκοπαί, ἐπισκόπων, πρεσβυτέρων, διακόνων, μμῆματα, οἶμαι, ἀγγελικῆς δόξης, κάκεινης τῆς οἰκονο-

μίας τυγχάνουσιν, ἢ ἀναμένειν φασὶν αἱ γραφαὶ τοὺς κατ' ἴχρος τῶν ἀποστόλων ἐν τελειώσει δικαιοσύνης κατὰ τὸ εὐαγγέλιον. βεβιωκότας. — Ibid.

which the Christian life admits by the grades the Christian Church adopts in her ministry ; an image familiar to his own mind, and familiar, as he felt, to those whom he was addressing ; the very nature of his argument meanwhile requiring that these grades should rise one above another ; and that as the Priest was superior to the Deacon, so was the Bishop to the Priest.

And here may be a proper place to remark, that we have clear proof there is no arguing, that the Fathers confound the Bishop and Presbyter, because they occasionally include both under the latter name ; for I look upon it as shown to a demonstration that Clemens drew a positive distinction between the Bishop and Presbyter, and yet we shall find him in another place, when descanting on the nature of the service which the true Gnostic renders to God, dividing all service into the *emendatory* and the *ministerial*, and having illustrated this division in some other ways, he goes on to say, "in like manner with respect to the Church, the Presbyters maintain the emendatory character, the Deacons the ministerial,"¹ as though these were the only two orders in the Church ; whereas the truth evidently is, from what has already transpired, that he must have included the Bishop in the Presbyter.

The language of Tertullian, on this subject, is coincident with that of every other Father we have adduced ; but still be it remembered, it is not the language of a man debating a point, but of one touching on it in the course of the argument he happens to have in hand, whatever it may be. And whatever obscurity there may have been thought to attach to this whole question of Church government arises mainly from this, that the Fathers are in no instance making it the express topic of discussion. They are not, any of them, writing treatises on Episcopacy. Even Ignatius himself is doing no such thing as this ; but carried away from his diocese to suffer death, leaving it in the meanwhile without a head, the duties of his own office and position, and solicitude about a successor trouble him, and naturally turn his thoughts to the more immediate contemplation of the mutual relations of the Bishop and clergy. Hence the fuller information his writings are calculated to afford us on the structure of the Church. To

¹ Stromat. VII. § i. p. 830.

return, however, to Tertullian. In his "De Præscriptione Hæreticorum," he is meeting the objection that some may probably be scandalized at seeing an example of defection from the faith, even amongst confirmed Christians; but "what," says he, "if a Bishop, or a Deacon, or a widow, or a virgin, or a Doctor (Presbyter), or even a martyr, should fall from the rule, must heresies on that account be considered the truth? Do we prove the faith from the man, or the man from the faith?"¹ And again in the tract "De Fugâ in Persecutione," in a passage, the purport of which corresponds with that of this passage, he is maintaining the duty of steadfastness under persecution, and especially on the part of the more distinguished members of the Church, "for when the leaders themselves," says he, "that is, the very Deacons, Priests, and Bishops flee, how can the laity understand in what sense it was said, Flee from city to city?"² His argument on both these occasions, it is perceived, requires him to speak of persons who held conspicuous stations in the Church, and accordingly his pen at once puts down Bishops, Doctors or Presbyters, and Deacons, as of that number. What the difference between them might be, he does not hint, as the argument does not lead him to do so; but the very array of the names suffices to show that he contemplated a difference. This difference is yet more marked in another celebrated passage in the former tract, for it happens to constitute the force of it, to which I have before had occasion to refer.³ He is animadverting upon the prostration of all discipline, the confusion of all order, which characterised the constitution and proceedings of the heretics. "Accordingly," says he, "one is Bishop to-day, another to-morrow; he is to-day a Deacon, who is to-morrow a Reader; to-day a Presbyter, who is to-morrow a layman; for they assign priestly offices even to laymen."⁴ The distinction of these offices, according to the Church, is evidently represented as forming a strong contrast with the confusion made in them by the heretics. Tertullian does not labour, be it observed, to prove that such distinction did subsist, but takes it for granted; regards it as a point on which there cannot be two opinions. But there is yet

¹ Tertullian, De Præscript. Hæret. c. iii.

² De Fugâ in Persecutione, c. xi.

³ Lecture VIII. First Series.

⁴ Tertullian, De Præscript. Hæret. c. xii.

another passage in the same author which conveys to us the clear impression on his mind, that the order of Bishop was superior to the other orders of the clergy, as much as if he had declared it in so many words, and had penned the paragraph for no other purpose. Yet he had no such intention when he wrote it, but simply that of accounting for the secession of Valentinus, the founder of the sect which went by his name, from the Church.¹ "Valentinus," says he, "had expected a Bishopric (Episcopatum), being a man of genius and eloquence, but indignant that another, who had a martyr's" (or rather confessor's) "prerogative to show, had obtained the office, he broke away from the canonical Church, after the manner of persons ambitious of *precedence* who are wont to seek revenge, and set about assailing the truth"; not to speak of the same Father assigning to the Bishop potential rights peculiar to him; as, for instance, that of appointing to the order of widows, and so assigning to the party a maintenance²; that of enjoining public fasts on special occasions, and collections of alms to be made at them.³

And here, again, the remark which I threw out with respect to the testimony of Clemens is equally pertinent, that it is impossible to draw an argument against Episcopacy from the Fathers expressing themselves from time to time on the subject of Church government in such language as does not necessarily imply it. For we have just seen that Tertullian repeatedly distinguishes between the order and functions of the Bishop and of the Priest; yet we find him in the Apology, when he was addressing heathens on whom these distinctions would be lost, designating the leaders of the Church in the general terms, "præsident probati quique seniores,"⁴ as though the government might have been Presbyterian; and for the same reason we may have observed Justin Martyr before him employing the comprehensive word *ὁ προεστῶς*,⁵ for the ecclesiastic who administered the Christian rites; not that he confounded Bishops and Priests, but that the circumstances of the case did not induce him to be more specific in the mention of them.

Turn we next to Origen, and still we have another testi-

¹ Adversus Valentinianos, c. iv.

² De Virginibus Velandis, c. ix.

³ De Jejuniiis, c. xiii.

⁴ Apol. c. xxxix.

⁵ Justin Martyr, Apol. I. § 67.

mony on the side of the three Orders, and of as incidental a kind as that just cited from Tertullian ; leading us to the inference, that, in his mind, the difference of rank between the Bishop and Priest was wide. It occurs in his treatise concerning Prayer, and whilst he is engaged in explaining and enlarging upon the Lord's Prayer. Accordingly he approaches in its turn the clause of that prayer, "and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors," and having set forth various ways in which we are all debtors to God and Christ, he adds, "then besides these more Catholic parties, there is the debt of the widow, which is provided for by the Church, and another of the Deacon, and another of the Presbyter, and the heaviest debt of all of the Bishop, a debt required by the Saviour of the whole Church, and to be judicially exacted by him, unless it be paid :"¹ the magnitude of the debts of the Bishop proportioned to the dignity, authority, and responsibility of his office ; the latter, therefore, regarded by Origen as much surpassing, in these respects, that of the Presbyter, and of course still more that of the Deacon. Again, Origen finds a difficulty in St. Paul's injunction with respect to single marriage, and suggests (for it is confessedly a speculation, a sort of random thought thrown out till something better occurred to some other interpreter of Scripture) whether this monogamy might not have some symbolical meaning. But he introduces his theory thus. "From what has been said, I am disposed to turn my attention to the law respecting the writing of divorce, whether, since the Bishop, the Priest, and the Deacon, are symbols of certain matters of faith in accordance with those names, (Paul) might not mean that those parties should be symbolically monogamists :"² the three orders obviously presenting themselves to his mind spontaneously, as expressing the ecclesiastical body to whom the precepts of the Apostles appertained ; Origen, at the moment, never dreaming of furnishing us with evidence on the question of Episcopacy.

¹ Χωρὶς δὲ τούτων καθολικωτέρων ὄντων, ἔστι τις χήρας προνοουμένης ὑπὸ τῆς ἐκκλησίας ὀφειλή, καὶ ἕτερα διακόνου, καὶ ἄλλη πρεσβυτέρου, καὶ ἐπισκόπου δὲ ὀφειλή βαρυτάτη ἐστὶν ἀπαυτουμένη ὑπὸ τοῦ τῆς ὅλης ἐκκλησίας σωτήρος καὶ ἐκδικουμένη εἰ μὴ ἀποδιδῶται.—Origen, De Oratione, § 28, vol. i. p. 253.

² Ἐκ δὲ τῶν εἰρημένων εἰς τὸν περὶ τοῦ βιβλίου τῆς ἀποστασίας νόμον ἐφίστημι, μήποτε ἐπεὶ σύμβολόν ἐστι καὶ ὁ ἐπίσκοπος, καὶ ὁ πρεσβύτερος, καὶ ὁ διάκονος ἀληθινῶν κατὰ τὰ ὀνόματα ταῦτα πραγμάτων, ἐβουλήθη αὐτοὺς συμβολικῶς μονογάμους καταστήσαι, κ.τ.λ.—Comment. in Matt. tom. xiv. vol. iii. p. 646.

The Father we come next to in order—for I am showing that I spoke accurately when I said in the beginning of this Lecture, that the question rested upon no narrow basis, but was supported by the universal testimony of the Primitive Church—is Cyprian. The light he throws upon the subject of Episcopacy is very great. Many controversies had by his time risen in the Church, which called forth Episcopal interference, and thus became the means of conveying to us an ample knowledge of the Episcopal character and functions of those times. The treatment of the lapsed, the recommendations (or libelli) of the confessors, Baptism by heretics, and a variety of other debatable points both ecclesiastical and theological, in which Cyprian is consulted, serve to develop the construction of the Church of his day, almost as fully as an explicit treatise would have done; more especially as a persecution had withdrawn the Bishop for some interval from his Diocese, and consequently had given occasion to much intercourse by letter between Cyprian and his Church, a correspondence which is still preserved. It would be tedious to produce the numberless passages in which this Father refers to the three Orders. He writes to the Priests and Deacons of Rome on the event of their Bishop's death.¹ He repeatedly addresses as their Bishop the Priests and Deacons of his own Church during his temporary absence from them, and urges on them various duties.² We gather from his Epistles, that a Bishop was in a position to command the Priests and Deacons, to reprove, to admonish them, to proceed against the refractory, to provide against irregularities in the Church of all kinds³; to administer the Church in many matters according to his own discretion.⁴ We perceive from them that in the vacancy of a see many ecclesiastical affairs were suspended till the appointment of a successor⁵; that for Presbyters to act on their own account and without reference to their Bishop was a thing unprecedented⁶: above all, that it was his prerogative to ordain; and that with a view to this he examined the qualifications of the

¹ Cyprian, Ep. iii.

² Epp. iv. v. xvii.

³ His literis et hortor et mando.—Ep. v. § 2. Epp. ix. xxviii. lxx.

⁴ Ep. lxxii.

⁵ Ep. xxxi. § 5.

⁶ Quod enim non periculum metuere debemus de offensâ Domini quando ali-

qui de presbyteris, nec evangelii nec loci sui memores, sed neque futurum Domini iudicium neque nunc sibi præpositum episcopum cogitantes, quod nunquam omnino sub antecessoribus factum est, cum contumeliâ et contemptu præpositi totum sibi vindicent.—Ep. ix. § 1.

candidates¹; consulted the clergy and even the people upon them²; yet was competent to ordain of his own knowledge without this appeal, when the merits of the candidate were conspicuous.³

Moreover, it would appear, which is a distinct and very powerful argument on the side of the Episcopal being the primitive form of Church government, that the primitive heretics themselves, dissatisfied after all with the position they had chosen, affected a similar hierarchy of their own; thus in spite of themselves offering a testimony to the stringency of that institution, and the obligation there was upon all Christians to abide by it; and adopting the names of the several orders of clergy in the Church, they exposed themselves to the censure of the Church Catholic, which uniformly affirmed that to make those names of value, they must represent a clergy who had derived their authority by uninterrupted succession from the Apostles; and that wanting that, they wanted everything which constituted the call.⁴

In conclusion, I would once more draw the attention of my hearers to the nature of the evidence for the three Orders and an Episcopal Church, which has been submitted to them, because I think the character of it gives it a weight of its own. None of the Fathers, it will be observed, wrote expressly on the subject of Episcopacy; I mean as controversialists, or with a view to determine a debatable question. They none of them appeal, as we should now do, in discussing this point, to texts in the Epistles to Timothy or Titus, or to other texts elsewhere of a similar import, construing them in this way or that, in order to support their side of the argument, whichever it might be. They afford no tokens of having any misgivings in their mind upon the question; and consequently the evidence which they furnish upon it, is simply that which escapes from them when they are handling other matters, or matters bearing more or less upon the principles of Church government. I do not remember any passage which would

¹ Cyprian, Ep. xxiv.

² Quod et ipsum videmus de divinâ auctoritate descendere, ut sacerdos plebe presente sub omnium oculis deligatur et dignus atque idoneus publico iudicio ac testimonio comprobetur.—Ep. lxxviii. § 4.

³ In ordinationibus clericis, fratres

charissimi, solemus vos ante consulere, et mores ac merita singulorum communi consilio ponderare. Sed expectanda non sunt testimonia humana cum præcedunt divina suffragia.—Ep. xxxiii.

⁴ See, e. g. Irenæus, V. c. xx. § 1. Tertullian, De Præscript. Hæret. c. xxxii.

seem to militate against this opinion, unless it be one in Clemens Romanus, and this only *seems* to do so. "So likewise our Apostles knew by our Lord Jesus Christ, that contentions would arise on account of the overseership or episcopacy (*ἐπὶ τοῦ ὀνόματος τῆς ἐπισκοπῆς*). For which reason, having perfect foreknowledge, they appointed persons such as we have before said, and then gave directions how, when they should die, other chosen and appointed men should succeed to their ministry;"¹ that is, not that there would be debates about the term *Ἐπίσκοπος* and its meaning, but that there would be strifes about who should have the pre-eminence in the Church: to prevent which the Apostles laid down a rule of ecclesiastical succession, which should obviate the inconvenience. Accordingly, it is the incidental manner in which we have to possess ourselves of such testimony as the Fathers bear to an Episcopal Church, which produces whatever defect there may be, or may be supposed to be, in its clearness. But on the other hand, in proportion as this circumstance may deduct from its precision, it augments its value; for it is supplied without any reference to serving a cause, or maintaining a party; and if after all it proves, as I cannot help thinking it does, conclusive of the question of an Episcopate, it is so in a very abundant degree.

In the next place, I would direct consideration to the great variety of quarters from which this evidence is drawn. It speaks to the structure not of one local Church, but of Churches the most unconnected and remote, of those in France, in Italy, in Greece, in Asia Minor, in Egypt, in Mauritania; in short, in almost all the countries on the borders of the Mediterranean, the choicest and earliest of Christendom; and it is furnished by men of all temperaments, sober and impassioned, philosophical and visionary; in works of various kinds; in Apologies, in letters, in speculative treatises, in controversial ones; by men who lived one or other of them from the age of the Apostles to nearly that of Constantine; the only period during which the question of Episcopacy could admit of any doubt or debate whatever.

And thus, I finally think we may adopt towards the Dissenters the language which Hooker addressed to the learned among the Puritans, and say, "A very strange thing sure it

¹ Clem. Rom. Ep. I. § xlv.

were, that such a discipline as ye speak of should be taught by Christ and his Apostles in the Word of God, and no Church ever have found it out, nor received it till this present time; contrariwise, the government against which ye bend yourselves be observed everywhere throughout all generations and ages of the Christian world, no Church ever perceiving the Word of God to be against it. We require you to find out but one Church upon the face of the whole earth, that hath been ordered by your discipline, or hath not been ordered by ours, that is to say, by episcopal regiment, sithence the time that the blessed Apostles were here conversant.”¹

¹ Hooker's Eccles. Pol. Pref. ch. iv. § 1, vol. i. p. 193, Keble's Ed.