

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Expositor* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expositor-series-1.php

When the tale of the years is ended, and summer and winter past,
When the one great harvest ripens over all the earth at last,
The Sun shall shine like lightning, for ever from east to west,
To gather the sowers and reapers to the everlasting rest.

G. A. SIMCOX.

THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

IN saying that speculations concerning the origin of the Christian ministry have for me only a historical interest, I had better give an illustration which will explain my meaning. The disputes between Charles I. and his parliament gave rise to controversies as to the relative powers of kings and parliaments, which continued to be carried on long after that monarch's death. In these controversies large use was made of arguments drawn from history, and the origin of parliaments was investigated mainly with a view to practical consequences to which the results arrived at were expected to lead. At the present day the investigation of the origin of parliaments has a purely historical interest, and the conclusions which the student may arrive at are not likely to affect in any way his allegiance to the now settled constitution of the country. In like manner I count that the duty on the part of the individual to submit to the settled constitution of the Church is not affected, whatever be the true history of the process by which, in God's providence, the constitution of the Church was established. In any case, it is a sin to rend Christ's body by causeless schisms. I feel therefore quite free to accept any conclusions as to the history of the beginnings of Christianity to which the evidence may lead us, without any apprehension that I shall be thereby forced to alter my position with regard to modern controversies. As Dr.

Sanday's investigations are quite unprompted by any desire to bring out a foreseen result, his general way of looking at the subject is the same as mine, and any criticisms I may offer on his paper will relate to matters of detail. My differences with him are not many, and they chiefly arise from the fact that there are a few authorities to which we do not attach the same value.

Renan, in the preface to his second volume, has very well expressed the duty of a historian, however ill he may himself have acted on it; *viz.* to represent what is certain as certain, what is probable as probable, what is only possible as possible. I have read many interesting speculations concerning early Church history, with which my chief quarrel is on account of a breach of this rule. It must be borne in mind how very few documents we have dating from the last quarter of the first century and the first half of the second; and of these few how large a part there is which throws little light on the early history of the Church. Where historical light is dim we are bound to walk warily; and if we are forced to piece out proofs with conjectures, we are not justified in laying stress on our conclusions as if they were proved facts.

I have elsewhere described the paucity of documents dating from the age immediately succeeding the apostolic, by saying that Church history passes through a tunnel. We have good light where we have the books of the New Testament to guide us, and good light again when we come down to the abundant literary remains of the latter part of the second century; but there is an intervening period, here and there faintly illumined by a few documents giving such scanty and interrupted light as may be afforded by the air-holes of a tunnel. If in our study of this dimly lighted portion of the history we wish to distinguish what is certain from what is doubtful, we may expect to find the things certain in what can be seen from either of the two

well lighted ends. If the same thing is visible on looking from either end, we can have no doubt of its existence.

Such a thing I take to be the existence of the Christian ministry as a distinct order. That the distinction between clergy and laity was recognised at the end of the second century is so notorious that detailed proof is superfluous. We never lose sight of the distinction as we trace the history back. When we come to one of the earliest of extra-canonical writings, the *Epistle of Clement*, the distinction between the clergy and laity is well marked. The former office is so regarded as permanent, that the deposition of a presbyter against whom no grave offence can be charged is treated as a sin. When we turn to the New Testament writings, we find, in the oldest document in the collection, the First Epistle to the Thessalonians (v. 12), a class of men commended as highly deserving, for their work's sake, of the esteem and love of those addressed; and these are described as "labouring among them," as "being over them in the Lord," and "as admonishing them." From the second of these phrases we infer that the persons described held permanent office in the Church, and from the third that the "work in which they laboured," if at all secular, was not entirely so. This completely harmonizes with the admonition in a later epistle (Heb. xiii. 17), "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch in behalf of your souls, as they that shall give an account." It is needless to produce other New Testament testimony, for I regard it as beyond dispute that the Church from the first had officers, charged not merely with secular but with spiritual duties. What gradations of office there were, and what things there were which a clergyman might do and a layman might not, are points remaining for inquiry.

Let us then commence our further investigations with the end of the second century, a period as to which wit-

nesses are so numerous that our conclusions may fairly be presented as certain. For this reason it is with the same period I have found it convenient to begin when investigating the canon of the New Testament. Both with regard to the canon and to the Christian ministry, we find the same leading ideas holding sway at the end of the second century which have been dominant in the Church ever since. We find at that time the clergy existing, not only as a distinct order in the Church, but with marked gradations of rank. Each Church is then presided over by a single person, known by the title of bishop. We can well believe that his power was not autocratic; but on this point direct evidence is wanting, for at the period of which I speak each Church appears to have followed cheerfully the guidance of the trusted man at its head, and so there are not data to determine what the result would have been if their president had attempted to impose his decisions on a reluctant Church.

At this period, not only is episcopacy everywhere prevalent, but there is no idea that the constitution of the Church had ever been different. The heretics who were then most formidable claimed to be in possession of secret traditions derived from the Apostles, though not recorded in the New Testament; and in these traditions they pretended to have authority for their peculiar tenets. One way of meeting this claim was to deny that the Apostles had taught anything privately which they had not also taught publicly. But another answer was also given; namely, that if any such traditions there were, it was not in the schools of the heretics they were to be looked for, but in those Churches which had been founded by Apostles, and could trace the succession of their bishops up to them. This argument is developed by Irenæus (*Adv. Hær.*, book iii.) in a work written about A.D. 180 or not long after. Though claiming to be able to enumerate, in the case of different

Churches, the succession of bishops from the days when they were founded by Apostles down to his own time, he says that space will not permit him to give the successions for all the Churches, and that it will suffice him to give the succession for the greatest and most ancient and best known Church, the Church of Rome. With its doctrine will agree the doctrine of every other Church which has preserved the apostolic tradition. He then enumerates the succession of Roman bishops, beginning with Linus, whom he represents as appointed bishop by Peter and Paul, who had founded the Church of Rome, and ending with Eleutherus, who was bishop when he wrote. This list, we may reasonably believe, was identical with one previously made by Hegesippus, and apparently with the same object; namely, to make it probable that Churches which had apostolic succession had apostolic doctrine. The list of Hegesippus (see Euseb., *H. E.* iv. 22) purports to have been made by him when at Rome during the episcopate of Anicetus, who, according to Lipsius, died A.D. 167; and at the time of publication Hegesippus adds that to Anicetus succeeded Soter, and to Soter, Eleutherus, who had been deacon to Anicetus.

In the place just cited, Irenæus speaks of the celebrated Polycarp, whom in his youth he had known personally. In order to give weight to Polycarp's testimony to apostolic tradition, Irenæus says that Polycarp not only had conversed with many who had seen Christ, but also had been appointed by Apostles in Asia as bishop of the Church of Smyrna. Probably what Irenæus meant by "Apostles" is the same as is expressed by Tertullian, who, writing a little later (*De Præscrip.* 32), speaks of Polycarp as having been placed over the Church of Smyrna by St. John. The now accepted date for Polycarp's martyrdom is A.D. 155, and he was then not less than eighty-six years of age, so that there is no chronological impossibility in his having had personal

intercourse with Apostles, whether or not we think the evidence for the fact sufficient.

To return to Irenæus, it must be mentioned that to the rulers of the Churches, whom he calls bishops, he also, and sometimes in the same context, gives the title presbyters or elders. Thus the passage just quoted, in which he argues that the apostolicity of the current tradition of the Churches is guaranteed by the succession of their bishops, is introduced by a sentence in which, having plainly the same argument in view, he speaks of the succession of their *presbyters*. Again, addressing Victor, bishop of Rome, he speaks of "the presbyters before Soter who ruled the Church which thou now guidest." It must be remembered that "elder" was, not only the name of a Church office, but also a title of honour. It is used, for instance, by Papias, in speaking of the Apostles and other men of the first generation of Christians, much as we might speak of "the Fathers." John, in his second and third epistles, describes himself as "the elder," and St. Peter (v. 1) claims the same title. It may be concluded, that in the language of Irenæus every bishop was a presbyter; but it does not follow conversely that in his language every presbyter was a bishop.

It is quite true that in the Church of the times under discussion the district under the immediate superintendence of a bishop was ordinarily much smaller than in our present arrangements; and that many a small town would then have a bishop which in the modern Church would be ministered to by a presbyter or presbyters, subject to the oversight of the bishop of some neighbouring great city. The probable reason of the difference is, that now the city is connected with a neighbouring town by a continuous line of Christians, living all through the intervening district; in the second century the rural population were for the most part, as the name implies, pagans, and each town was an independent centre of Christian life. The consequence was,

that in the Church of the second century the total number of bishops bore to the total number of mere presbyters a larger proportion than in the Church of modern times. But it is quite misleading to produce this fact when we are inquiring whether or not there were some presbyters to whom no one gave the title of bishop. Now there is no evidence that at the beginning of the third century more than one person in any city was entitled to be called bishop,¹ although there were many cities in which the number of Christians was so large that it is incredible that they could only have been ministered to by a single presbyter. Thus the passage from Irenæus just referred to shows that the Church of Rome was in his day under the rule of a single person, and that he believed that the same constitution had existed in previous days. Victor ruled the Church then; Soter had ruled it in a former generation; and before Soter the Church had had other governors of the same kind. Yet that there were in Rome presbyters in the plural number appears from Hermas; and the same thing is shown by the account, certainly derived from an ancient authority, which Epiphanius (*Hær.*, 42) gives of the discussions of Marcion with the presbyters of Rome. We actually know the names of two presbyters at Rome during the episcopate of Victor, *viz.* Florinus and Blastus, their names having been preserved on account of their having been deposed for heresy or schism. There is extant a fragment of a letter of Irenæus to Victor, in which the name presbyter is applied to this Florinus.

¹ Dr. Hatch (*Bampton Lectures*, p. 102) speaks of this rule as not firmly established until the dispute between Cornelius and Novatian in the middle of the third century. For this assertion he offers no proof whatever. Cyprian certainly treats it as a monstrous and impious thing, that when one bishop had been duly elected, another should be ordained; but there is no evidence that this view was then either novel or singular. Novatian no doubt had a respectable following, but there is no evidence that he claimed to be anything less than *the* bishop of Rome, or that either he or any of those who acknowledged him as bishop of Rome acknowledged Cornelius also as bishop.

Before parting with the period of which I speak, *viz.* the end of the second century and the beginning of the third, I ought not to omit to mention a work brought to Rome about this time, which undoubtedly had great influence in exalting the claims of the Roman bishop; I mean the history of the preaching of Peter, which, whatever may have been its earlier form, was then published as a work of the Roman Clement, and represented this Clement as ordained by Peter to take his place as bishop of Rome. We reject this story as apocryphal, and account the document which contains it as of no authority for the events of the first century. But the document is notwithstanding of great value for the light which it throws on the period when it was published. A historical novel is quite worthless if offered as evidence that the events it relates really took place; but it is excellent evidence that things commended themselves as probable to the author's sense of fitness and to those readers who accepted it as a true representation of former occurrences. Now the system of Church government which in these *Clementines* is assumed to have been universal is strongly monarchical and episcopal. At the head of the whole Church is James, the bishop of Jerusalem. He is bishop of bishops, and to him even Peter must render periodical accounts of his mission. When Peter in the course of his preaching establishes a Church anywhere, he leaves behind a bishop to rule over it. Directions are given concerning the presbyters, who are to teach in each Church, and concerning the deacons, who are to be the eyes of the bishop. In Clement's letter addressed to James and his Church, there are coupled with James in the inscription "the presbyters and deacons, and all the rest of the brethren."

It has been thought by many that the Church derived its officers from the synagogue; and on this account more weight may be attached to the evidence of a document so

intensely Jewish as the *Clementines*. At all events, it is quite clear that the writer conceived it to be a matter of necessity that every Church should have a bishop, presbyters, and deacons. And this conception was evidently in accordance with the prevalent notions of the Church of the day, which, though it refused to accept the heretical doctrine of the book, yet found nothing to shock its sense of probability in the historical representations of the book, and accordingly wisely accepted them as true. It would be easy to give other proofs, but I will not elaborate proof of a point that cannot be seriously contested; namely, that at the end of the second century every Church was ruled by a bishop, with presbyters and deacons under him; and that it was generally taken for granted that such had been the constitution of the Church from the first, no memory of any other state of things being then surviving. This is one of the things that may fairly be regarded as certain.

Now the general opinion of the Church at the end of the second century concerning its early constitution is certainly entitled to much respect. Just as we think that the Church of that day was likely to be right in its belief that the four gospels, which were then held in universal and exclusive honour, really had descended to it from apostolic times, so there is a presumption, which must hold good until it is displaced, that the Church of that day was right in believing that the Church constitution then universally prevalent did descend to it from apostolic times. Now if we trace the history backward we find nothing to displace this presumption, and much to confirm it. From the absence of opposing evidence, this may be concluded with certainty, that there never had been any violent or abrupt change in the form of Church government. Such a change must have excited controversies which must have left an abiding trace in Church history. And any such change must have been in its nature local, and could not have

established itself without remark all over the Christian world. If therefore the original constitution of the Church were not the same as we find it in the days of Irenæus, the former must at least have been capable of developing itself into the latter by means of changes, silent and gradual, and resulting from causes universal in their operation.

The necessary limitations of space forbid me to go into much detail as to the second century evidence. We can go back immediately to the episcopate of Soter, whose name I have just quoted from Irenæus. A letter from Dionysius of Corinth to the Church of Rome acknowledges a gift of money sent to the Church of Corinth by the Church of Rome through "their blessed bishop Soter." The chronology of Lipsius assigns to the episcopate of Soter eight or nine years, ending A.D. 174 or 175. The correspondence of this Dionysius makes incidental mention of other contemporary bishops: Palmas in Pontus, Philip and Pinytus in Crete, and of a previous bishop, Publius, at Athens, who had suffered martyrdom, and had been succeeded by one Quadratus. Dionysius states that Dionysius the Areopagite had been appointed first bishop of Athens by St. Paul. Of course I make no other use of this statement than as showing that in the year 170 no doubt was entertained that the institution of episcopacy had come down from apostolic times.

Without dwelling on other second century evidence, I go back at once to the *Epistles of Ignatius*, the genuineness of which may, since the publication of Bishop Lightfoot's book, be regarded as fully established. Harnack takes the only ground on which there is now any room for contest, in suggesting that the letters may not be quite so early as has been generally thought; for that the universal Church tradition that the martyrdom had taken place in the reign of Trajan may possibly be erroneous, and the actual date have been some ten or even twenty years later. The matter is

one on which I am not concerned to contend very strenuously. Trajan died A.D. 117. If the date of the Ignatian letters could be pushed down to as late as 130, they would still be of an antiquity to which, in the remains of the early Church, we have little comparable. If I saw evidence to justify it, I should not be sorry to diminish the interval between the martyrdoms of Ignatius and Polycarp. Placing the latter at A.D. 155, if we put the former at 115 we get a duration of forty years, and possibly more, for Polycarp's episcopate. This is an unusual length, but by no means unprecedented, and we must remember that Polycarp's life was unusually long. Of the two prelates who were at the head of the Church of Ireland when I was ordained, the one, Primate Beresford, had an episcopate of fifty-seven years; the other, Archbishop Whately, only of thirty-two years indeed: but if he had lived to be as old as Polycarp was at the time of his death, it would have been one of forty-two. It is certain that Polycarp's episcopate was a very long one; for, as we know from Irenæus, the general belief in his later life was that it had gone back to the times of the Apostles. Eusebius certainly had no doubt that Ignatius suffered in the reign of Trajan, and in the absence of any evidence the other way, the mere possibility that Eusebius may have been mistaken is no sufficient ground for rejecting his authority. And certainly no small proof of the antiquity of the Ignatian letters is afforded by their silence on the questions raised by the great Gnostic teachers, whose theories made such a noise in the Church in the first half of the second century.

When the Ignatian letters came into prominence in the modern controversy between episcopacy and presbyterianism, the idea of those who rejected the letters was that they were documents forged in the interests of episcopacy, then a new institution struggling into life. I do not think that any intelligent critic will now maintain that opinion as to the object of the letters; on this point Lightfoot (*Ignatius*,

i. 377), Hatch (*Bampton Lectures*, p. 30), Harnack (*Expositor*, III. 16) are in full agreement. The object of Ignatius is not to exalt the episcopate at the expense of the presbyterate, or any other form of government, but rather to forbid the making of schisms or the holding private conventicles. It is taken for granted that episcopacy is the settled form of Church government; and the bishop is mentioned because he is the recognised head of the Church, on the duty of union with which the writer is anxious to insist. If the exaltation of the episcopate had been the writer's primary object, we should not meet the strange phenomenon that the letter to the Church of Rome makes no mention of its bishop.

I think it is not a just inference from this last fact that the episcopate was less developed at Rome than in these Asiatic Churches, with whose bishops Ignatius had come into personal contact. He himself gives us no reason to imagine that he supposed episcopacy to be a provincial peculiarity of his own part of the world. On the contrary, he assumes it to be the constitution of the Church everywhere, and speaks of "the bishops settled in the farthest parts of the world" (*οἱ ἐπίσκοποι οἱ κατὰ τὰ πέρατα ὀρισθέντες*.—*Ep.* 3).

The explanation which I am disposed to offer of the silence of Ignatius concerning the bishop of Rome is, that in the second century the bishop was not at all so prominent a figure, when the Church was looked at from without, as when looked at from within. To illustrate what I mean, any one conversant with the House of Commons, at least as it used to be, knows what an important personage the Speaker is in the House, what respect it has been customary to pay him, and with what deference his rulings have been regarded. But outside the House the Speaker possesses no authority, and you might read long accounts of things done by the House of Commons without ever discovering from them that there was such a person. In like manner, it

appears to me that, however great the influence exercised during the second century by each bishop in his own Church, he was no autocrat, and his action had importance for the outside world only so far as it was adopted by his Church.

Lightfoot shows satisfactorily from the Ignatian letters themselves (see *Ignatius*, i., p. 282) that, according to the conception of Ignatius, the bishop was no autocrat, and was not thought of acting independently of his presbyters or of his Church. So we need not be surprised to find that though the great, rich, and powerful Church of Rome exercised much influence, yet until, through the success of the Clementine fictions, the succession from Peter came to be believed in, the question for other Churches was, not what the bishop of Rome would do, but what the Church of Rome would do. The letter of Clement, though speaking in a high tone of authority, is written, not in the name of Clement, but in that of the Church of Rome. Clement's name is not mentioned, either in the opening salutation or in the body of the letter; and it remains a problem how it came to be so generally known that Clement was the writer. The same thing is to be said about the letter of Dionysius of Corinth already mentioned. This letter is addressed to the Church of Rome, not to its bishop, though Soter is mentioned as the agent in communicating the liberality of the Roman Church. If it had not been for this, there would apparently have been no occasion for mentioning his name. To the bishop's share in administering the funds of the Church I shall return presently.

Coming down still later, to a period when, it has been thought, we have the power of the bishop of Rome full grown, I mean the attempt of Victor to excommunicate the Asiatic Churches, we find that Victor acted but as the mouthpiece of his Church; nor do I think that there is ground for the violent contrast which Lightfoot (*Philippians*,

p. 222) draws between the "mild and peaceful counsels of the presbyter-bishop Clement" and the "autocratic pretensions of the haughty pope Victor." It seems to me to admit of no doubt that the *De Pudicitia* of Tertullian, from which Lightfoot here cites a passage, is later than the episcopate of Victor, and therefore that the passage has no relevance when the question of the pretensions of Victor is under consideration. The letter of Polycrates concerning the paschal controversy is described by Eusebius as addressed to Victor and to the Church of Rome; and therefore it is reasonable to believe that Victor's name was mentioned in the opening salutation, which has not been preserved. But the extracts which Eusebius gives from the letter itself show that it was addressed, not to Victor individually, but to his Church. We have in one place, ἐγὼ οὖν, ἀδελφοί; in another place, τῶν ἐπισκόπων οὗς ὑμεῖς ἠξιώσατε μετακληθῆναι ὑπ' ἐμοῦ. The plural ἠξιώσατε shows further that not only was the letter of Polycrates addressed to the Church of Rome, but that the original letter, to which this was a reply, had been written, not in Victor's own name, but in that of his Church.

We shall be unjust to Victor and his Church if we do not bear in mind what provocation they had received before resorting to such a step as excommunication. The Church of Rome had for a long time tolerated diversity as to the time and manner of paschal celebrations. Diversities in the usages of Churches at a distance from one another would cause little or no practical inconvenience. But in the time of Victor, a presbyter, Blastus (see Euseb., *H. E.* v. 15, 20; Pseudo-Tert. 22), raised a schism in Rome itself on the paschal question, asserting that it was unlawful to hold the celebration on any other day than on the day of the Jewish passover. Naturally it was felt to be intolerably inconvenient that a schismatical party at Rome should pronounce it unlawful to join in the common celebra-

tions of the Church, and should declare themselves bound by God's law to keep their paschal feast, not on the Church's day, but on the same day as the Jews. Accordingly Irenæus addressed to Blastus a letter "Concerning Schism"; but the conduct of this presbyter was suspected of being heretical as well as schismatical, and it was imagined that he aimed at imposing on the Christian Church the yoke of subjection to the Mosaic law. It was not unnatural then that the Roman Church should feel that this Judaizing practice ought now to be put down. Yet they took no hasty step, but proceeded to collect testimonies as to the practice, with respect to paschal celebrations, of the whole Christian world. The assembling of a general council was in heathen times a thing impossible; but each bishop was requested to collect the evidence of the neighbouring bishops, and send a report of their views to Rome. And it was only when the evidence thus collected established the fact that Quartodecimanism was but the local peculiarity of a small minority that steps were taken at Rome to put it down altogether by the excommunication of that minority if they refused to conform to the elsewhere prevalent usage.

I am not willing to admit that even the excommunication of a provincial Church by the Church of Rome can properly be described as an act of "autocratic pretension." Every Church is within its own rights in deciding with whom it will hold communion. If in consequence of a dispute between the courts of England and Russia the English ambassador were withdrawn from St. Petersburg, this suspension of friendly relations would not imply that the English nation claimed sovereignty of any kind over the Russian. But a suspension of friendly relations between the Church of Rome and a provincial Church was to inflict a very severe penalty on the latter. Leading men from every part of the provinces had constant occasion to visit

Rome on business. If their Church were in communion with Rome, they had but to bring letters from their own bishop, and they were at once acknowledged as Christians; and if clergymen in their own Church, were acknowledged as clergymen. If their Church were put out of communion, their bishop's letters would no longer be recognised, and the members of it on visiting Rome would find themselves in a humiliating position. But the Church of Rome desired that the action which she took should be joined in by the other Churches which agreed with her on the paschal question; and in this she failed, mainly owing to the resistance of Irenæus. It appears to me that Victor's excommunication was not then persevered in, for I find no evidence of its having been in force during the next century.

Although I have given reason for thinking that Victor only acted in the name and with the authority of his Church, yet it is proper to mention that this excommunication is spoken of by early writers as specially Victor's act; and I believe that in those days an excommunication was always regarded as the act of the bishop who solemnly pronounced it, even though he may not have acted without the concurrence of his Church. Eusebius (*H. E.* v. 28) tells, from a contemporary authority, of another person excommunicated by Victor for denying our Lord's divinity, and in the same chapter of the excommunication of one Natalius by Victor's successor, Zephyrinus. In St. John's third epistle also another attempted excommunication is spoken of as the act of a single person, Diotrephes. But that the Church as well as the bishop were parties to the excommunication may be inferred, I think, from what we are told of the efforts made by the just-mentioned Natalius in order to obtain restoration; who threw himself at the feet, not only of the bishop, but of the clergy, and even the laity, imploring with tears readmission into the Church.

Before quitting this period, I have to speak of another

function which then specially belonged to the bishop, the administration of the funds bestowed by the liberality of the Church. I have already mentioned one illustration of this; namely, that the bishop Soter is specially mentioned as the agent in the bestowal of a gift by the Church of Rome on the Church of Corinth. We have a description by Justin Martyr of Christian worship in the middle of the second century. In this there is one prominent figure, a person whom Justin, writing for heathen, and all through avoiding the use of ecclesiastical terms, calls the president. To him candidates for baptism are brought; by him the weekly worship is conducted; and as part of that worship a collection of alms is made, which is brought to this president, who distributes it through the instrumentality of his deacons to those who are in need. In the Church of Rome, the richest of the Christian Churches, the office of the chief of the deacons, who, under the bishop's authority, conducted this distribution, came into great prominence. His office of searching out and examining into all cases of distress would bring him into daily intimate contact with the people, and would enable him to confer many favours, so that naturally he would be the most widely known and the best loved of Roman ecclesiastics, and therefore was most frequently chosen in due time to fill the bishop's place. Not to mention many later instances, a testimony has been already quoted that Eleutherus, the bishop in the time of Irenæus, had been deacon to the earlier Bishop Soter.

And here it is necessary to take notice of an unfortunate speculation of Dr. Hatch, that it was with special reference to his financial functions that the name bishop was given to the president of the Christian community. The idea would scarcely have occurred to him but for his adoption of a faulty method. I hold it to be wise, in exploring the dark period of Church history, to make all the use we can

of the light from both ends of the tunnel: Dr. Hatch carefully shuts out the light from both ends. That he should exclude the light from the later end is a course defensible on the ground that we are bound to be careful not to attribute to the earliest age of the Christian Church the ideas or language of a later period. But I can find no excuse for his systematic disregard of the New Testament books; that is to say, in tracing the origin of Christian institutions, his leaving out of sight the earliest and most authentic documents that speak of them. This process of shutting out the light is just what one does when one wants to exhibit fancy pictures with a magic lantern. In the present case, Dr. Hatch begins by offering proof from inscriptions that the name *ἐπίσκοπος* was given to the financial administrators of heathen associations. The proof offered is extremely meagre; and proof that the general word, meaning overseer, was limited to this special meaning is scarcely offered at all. But suppose we accept it as fully satisfactory, this is no explanation of the much earlier use of the word in Christian communities. We might nearly as well argue that because in England the name overseer has been given to parish officers charged with the relief of the poor, therefore it was with special reference to the relief of the poor the name "overseer" was given by Christians to the head of their society. The word is found in the Septuagint, and for the Christian use of the word the New Testament is the primary authority. It seems to me to admit of no doubt that in the New Testament use of the word the oversight contemplated is not financial but spiritual. One example might suffice. Dr. Hatch has so firmly convinced himself that the word *ἐπίσκοπος* denotes primarily a financial administrator, that he calls (p. 41) it a startling metaphor that God should be called by Ignatius the overseer of all (*πατέρα τῶν ὅλων καὶ ἐπίσκοπον*). If he had looked into the New Testament, I cannot conceive

how he could have found finance in St. Peter's description (1 Pet. ii. 25) of our Lord as the "Shepherd and Bishop of our souls." Or again read St. Paul's solemn charge (Acts xx. 28), "Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in the which the Holy Ghost hath made you bishops, to feed the Church of God, which He purchased with His own blood," and imagine that it means no more than a direction to the overseer to look sharp after the finances of the little community. Want of sympathy with the subjects of his story is the gravest fault of which a historian can be guilty; and it seems to me that Dr. Hatch has turned his thoughts so exclusively to the secular side of the Christian associations as not to perceive how very subordinate was this aspect of them in the minds of the Christians themselves. It was the hopes and fears of another life which led to the formation of the Christian societies. Living in this world, these societies could not help attending to the bodily wants of their poorer members, but what drew the societies together was concern, not for their bodies, but their souls; and their officers were honoured not for their skill in finance, but because they "watched for their souls as men that must give an account."¹

The result of the method hitherto pursued, namely, that of beginning with the end of the second century and tracing the history backwards, is that we get back to the time of Ignatius, that is to say, to the latter part of the first quarter of the second century, without finding any indication that the organization of the Christian ministry was different then from what we find it in the time of Irenæus. But

¹ It seems to me that Dr. Hatch lays undue stress on the use of the Latin word *regere* in connexion with the office of presbyter, through not having observed that in the old Latin version *regere* is the ordinary rendering of the Greek *ποιμαίνειν*, a word for which it is hard to find a single equivalent in another language. The "feed" of our Authorized Version takes notice only of the shepherd's office in feeding the flock, the Latin *regere* only of his duty in guiding and directing them.

the aspect of things is somewhat different if we begin our investigations at the other end. The authorities we then have to use are, in addition to the books of the New Testament, the epistles of Clement and Barnabas, the lately recovered *Teaching of the Apostles*, and the *Shepherd of Hermas*. In counting this last among our more ancient authorities, I adopt an opinion from which several living scholars of eminence dissent. If I could be sure that their adoption of a current opinion was the result of serious independent investigation of their own, I should not venture to say at all, what I now only say with fear and trembling, though it is my honest belief; namely, that to assign a late date to Hermas is incompatible with understanding the history of the progress of Christian thought and of Church organization during the second century.

What I have here to speak of is the prophetic office as it appears in Hermas. In Justin Martyr's account of Christian worship, he makes no mention of exhortations addressed to the assembly by any one but the president. Ignatius frequently speaks of "the prophets," and he always means the Old Testament prophets, and gives no indication that there is any ambiguity in the term, or that it was then used to denote an order of men in the Christian Church. In Hermas, on the contrary, we find the prophetic office in full vigour. We learn (*Mandat.* xii.) that in the public assembly for worship, after prayer made, the angel of the prophetic spirit would fill the prophet, who would then speak unto the people as the Lord willed. Hermas finds the necessity of distinguishing between the true prophet and sham prophets. The former was meek, lowly, and unworldly, and would only deliver his prophecies in public in the manner just described: the latter were self-seeking, ambitious of precedence, luxurious in their life, would act as soothsayers in private, answering questions put to them and taking money for it, but were dumb in the

public assembly. From this point alone it is evident that Hermas, who evidently was himself a prophet, belongs to an earlier period of ecclesiastical organization than Ignatius.¹ In the Pauline epistles (1 Cor. xii. 28, Eph. iv. 11) we read of prophets and teachers as bearing office in the Church, the former word no doubt denoting men endowed with supernatural gifts of the Holy Ghost, the latter denoting uninspired teachers. We find from 1 Corinthians xiv. that those endowed with prophetic gifts were allowed to address the assembly in turn, and therefore we have reason to think that in the first age of the Church the right of publicly addressing the assembly was not the exclusive privilege of the presbyters. We cannot say how long miraculous gifts continued in the Church; but though the *Teaching of the Apostles* and Hermas both indicate that addresses in the assembly were, when these books were written, still given by those who were recognised as prophets, it is also evident from both writings that the Church was then embarrassed by the difficulty of distinguishing true prophets from false pretenders; and though Hermas himself was apparently recognised as a prophet in the Church of his day, his claims to inspiration were, after about a century, generally rejected.²

¹ It may of course be said that in Rome, where Hermas wrote, Church organization had developed itself more slowly than in Syria. And we might believe this, if there were any good evidence for the late date of Hermas. But for the early date there is the testimony of Hermas himself, who claims to have been a contemporary of Clement, that is to say, to have lived at the end of the first century and the very beginning of the second; for the late date there is only the testimony of an anonymous person, of whose means of information we have no guarantee, who probably had good authority for saying that Bishop Pius of Rome had a brother named Hermas, but none for saying that it was this Hermas who wrote the *Shepherd*.

² The *Didaché* contains a prohibition against trying or proving a prophet speaking in a spirit. Every sin shall be forgiven, but not that sin. Yet it goes on to tell how, by his manner of life, the false prophet can be discerned from the true. I consider that this is explained by what took place in the Montanist controversy, when the bishops, persuaded that the Montanist prophetesses were possessed by an evil spirit, attempted to exorcise them, an attempt which naturally was indignantly repelled by the Montanists. This testing by exorcism, if applied to one really inspired by the Spirit of God, involved the risk of

When speaking of prophetic gifts I must say something about Montanism, concerning which I consider that two mistakes are sometimes made. The first is to regard it a survival of the primitive constitution of the Church; whereas I believe it to be, not a survival, but an unsuccessful local attempt at revival. Montanism is not earlier than the last quarter of the second century; but by the end of the first quarter the gift of prophecy, though not supposed to be completely withdrawn from the Church, had ceased to be an ordinary feature of Church life, and the attempt to revive it in Phrygia was discredited by the frantic behaviour of the so-called prophets.

But it is a more important mistake to treat it as a thing to be regretted that the Church rulers refused to obey the commands given in these utterances supposed to be in-

incurring the penalties denounced by our Lord (in words to which the *Didaché* plainly refers) against the sin against the Holy Ghost. That this prohibition was not produced in the Montanist controversy gives us a right to think that the *Didaché* had a very limited circulation. A further proof is that Apollonius, writing against the Montanists (Euseb. *H. E.* v. 18), treats it as a thing forbidden by Scripture, and manifestly indefensible, that a prophet should receive money or presents. But the reception of such gifts is expressly sanctioned in the *Didaché*.

It may now be considered as certain that the *Didaché*, as published by Bryennius, is not the earliest form of the document. Prof. Warfield rightly called attention to the importance of the extant fragment of the Latin translation, which, though it carries us but a little way, proves that a great part of Bryennius's first chapter, containing large extracts from the Sermon on the Mount, is a later addition. The conclusions drawn from the Latin fragment are amply confirmed by Lactantius and other authorities, who use the *Didaché* in its original form. In my opinion, the interpolated section is clearly later than Hermas. Evidently he who interpolated this section may also have interpolated others, so that any conclusions are precarious that we may arrive at as to the original form of certain portions of the *Didaché*. What has been said above may give rise to a suspicion that the interpolations were made in Montanist interests; but if this had been so, I think we should have had some reference in the *Didaché* to the question whether one under the influence of the Holy Spirit retained his self-possession. My own view is, that the original was a Jewish manual used in the instruction of proselytes, and which with certain modifications continued to be used for the same purpose in the Jewish Christian Church, but which had very limited circulation or influence in Gentile Churches.

spired ; that, for example, when the prophetesses proclaimed themselves authorized to institute new annual fasts, they treated the new institutions as of no authority ; that they regarded the question whether a person who had been excommunicated ought or ought not to be restored as one to be settled by the calm deliberation of the Church rulers, and not by what a prophetess might declare herself inspired to pronounce for or against his readmission. If the Church had taken a different line, its doctrine and discipline, instead of being guided by calm and thoughtful men, would have been left at the mercy of excitable women. It is true that the Montanist prophetesses uttered nothing repugnant to the orthodoxy in which they had been brought up ; but what guarantee could there be for the soundness of doctrine if left to be developed by such hands ? It seems to me that the ancient Church, which rejected the Montanist pretensions, was far wiser than the modern Church of Rome, which has yielded to them ; as when, for example, she instituted the feast of Corpus Christi in obedience to the inspired direction of one prophetess, or sanctioned the devotion to the sacred heart of Jesus in compliance with another.

I return now to the question of gradations of rank in the ministry, which, as I already said, presents a different aspect when looked at from opposite ends of the dimly lighted period. The distinction between bishop and presbyter, which remains so marked as we go back from Irenæus to Ignatius, seems to disappear when we consult the earlier authorities. In the Acts we read of the apostolic missionaries appointing in each Church presbyters, not a bishop and presbyters. In the same book (xx. 17, 28) the same persons are called both *presbyteri* and *episcopi* ; only two orders in the ministry, bishops and deacons, are recognised in St. Paul's later epistles (Phil. i. 1 ; 1 Tim. iii.). The same two orders only are mentioned in Clement's epistle and in the *Didaché*. Hermas, though he makes special

mention of Clement, who, according to early tradition, was bishop, and certainly was a prominent member, of the Church of Rome, yet speaks of the government of that Church as in the hands of "the presbyters" (*Vis.* ii. 4). He twice speaks of bishops, who may or may not be the same as those whom he has called presbyters. On the other hand, it is to be said that it does not appear from the New Testament that the presbyters were at any time the supreme authority in the Church. During the lifetime of the Apostles, the rulers of each Church were of course subject to them. We do not find that the Christian ministry was developed by a process of spontaneous generation; that is to say, not through the process of each Church looking out its best and fittest men, and placing them in office. We find from the Acts that the presbyters were appointed not by each Church, but by the apostolic missionaries who founded it. Even when the apostolic generation was passing away, we find from St. Paul's pastoral epistles two men of the second generation, Timothy and Titus, exercising similar authority both in the original appointment of presbyters and in the adjudication of charges brought against them.

There is one case in which the New Testament completely harmonizes with second century opinion; namely, with regard to the position held by James in the Church of Jerusalem. Several passages (*e.g.* Acts xii. 17, xv. 13, xxi. 18; Gal. ii. 12) agree with the tradition that James was at the head of that Church; but he exercises no despotic authority. It is to "the elders" that Paul and Barnabas bring the gifts of the Church of Antioch (Acts xi. 30); the decision (Acts xv.) as to the obligation of Gentiles to observe the Mosaic law is taken after conference with the elders, and with their approbation. So likewise the elders are assembled to receive Paul and Barnabas on their later visit to Jerusalem (Acts xxi. 18). I have already compared the authority exercised by the bishop and the early

Church to that exercised by the Speaker of the House of Commons; but a closer parallel would be that exercised by the chairman of a railway company, who combines the functions of speaker and leader of the house; that is to say, who not only presides at the meetings of the company, but takes a foremost part in the debate, proposing to the meeting the resolutions which are usually adopted on his recommendation, though until so adopted they have no authority. The case of Pericles at Athens, not to quote instances from modern statesmen, shows what really despotic authority can be enjoyed by the first citizen of a free country.

A few words may be said as to the cases of Timothy and Titus. It is clear that Timothy was not a mere delegate of Paul, but that he held an office which had been conferred on him in the face of the Church by solemn ordination (1 Tim. iv. 14). But what was the office? It must have been higher than that of the presbyters, over whom Timothy exercised authority. Was it not then that of bishop, as the ancients held, who inferred that Timothy was first bishop of Ephesus, Titus of Crete? We are here in the region of conjecture, and since no one is entitled to make a positive affirmation, I shall venture to add my guess. In the list of Church officers (Eph. iv. 11), after the inspired "apostles and prophets," and before the ordinary "pastors and teachers," we read of an office not mentioned in the Epistle to the Corinthians, evangelists. The only other places in the New Testament where the name occurs is that Philip is called the evangelist (Acts xxi. 8), and that Timothy is exhorted to do the work of an evangelist (2 Tim. iv. 5). My guess is that "evangelist" was an office created in the later apostolic Church, when with the growth of the Church the Apostles no longer sufficed for its missionary needs, and that the work of an evangelist included the planting new Churches, the appointing their ministers, and the exercising apostolic authority over them. Such, I imagine, may have

been the office held by Timothy, one not continued in the settled constitution ultimately established in the Church.

Before leaving the epistles to Timothy, I will add a few words about Linus, whom the earliest tradition recognises as first bishop of Rome. His name is mentioned in the salutations at the end of Paul's epistle (2 Tim. iv. 21), but not in a prominent place: "Eubulus greeteth thee, and Pudens, and Linus, and Claudia, and all the brethren." We may regard this as a strong presumption in favour of the antiquity of the epistles to Timothy; but if Paul had appointed him bishop, we should have expected him to have put his name in the first place. Here again we are reduced to conjecture; but then it is natural to think, that the presbyters who had been directly appointed by Apostles would always enjoy pre-eminent authority in the Church. If one of them outlived the rest, and if his character were such as to inspire high respect, he might almost be dictator to the Church. This may have been the case with Linus: he may have been appointed by Paul; he may have exercised episcopal authority in the Church of Rome, and yet not been appointed by Paul as its bishop, but only allowed the sole authority when no other person had credentials such as his. We are here in the region of conjecture. The tendency of the age was to desire to have authority concentrated in the hands of a single ruler. As far as the evidence goes, no sooner had a Church been deprived of the rule of the apostolic missionaries who had founded it, than one of its own members took the leading part in its guidance. It was the universal belief of the second century that the transition from the temporary to the permanent form of Church government was made by apostolic authority. The transition was so early, and the life ascribed to the Apostle John is so long, that it is highly credible that at least that Apostle had a share in this transition. But direct evidence on the subject is wanting.

GEORGE SALMON.
