

If all that the critics assert with regard to the presence of fetishism, polytheism, and monolatry in Israel were to be established, still it remains that the so called Jahvism, which they claim was introduced by Moses, is something more than a stage in a development. Even according to the theory of the modern critics it is a new idea, which, although at times obscured, finally overcomes both fetishism and polytheism, and lays the foundation of the monotheism of the prophets.

But if this be so, why should it not be the one great idea of the God of all the earth, who alone is to be worshipped as set forth in the ten commandments?

This idea, if we accept the testimony of Scripture divinely revealed to Moses, shone forth like the sun among the mists and fogs of low-lying meadows at the beginning of Israel's history. At other times it seems to have been almost entirely obscured by clouds; until, after the exile, it burst in undimmed splendour upon the Jewish world.

We conclude therefore, that Israel's religion and Israel's history, while conditioned by human development, are not a result of it, but of the power of God working through human instrumentalities to provide a people of redemption, through whom the written and incarnate Word should be given to man.

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THE ORIGIN OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

PROFESSOR SALMON, in the interesting paper contributed by him to *THE EXPOSITOR* of last July, begins by saying, that "speculations concerning the origin of the Christian ministry have for him only a historical interest"; and he grounds this statement upon the consideration that, just

as conclusions at which the student may arrive respecting the origin of parliaments are not likely to affect in any way his allegiance to the now settled constitution of his country, so "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," he adds, "it is a sin to rend Christ's body by causeless schisms." There is a sense in which these words are wise. Yet there is another in which the Professor would probably himself allow that the interest and importance attaching to such inquiries are far deeper than historical. Conflicting views upon them lie at the bottom of much of that alienation, and irritation of spirit towards one another, which mark the different branches of the Church of Christ in our land. The different opinions entertained upon the points at issue, together with the conclusions to which those who hold them feel themselves impelled, do almost more than anything else that can be named to "rend Christ's body." The most sacred feelings are wounded, the most conscientious convictions are shocked, by the harsh language used, to say nothing of harsh judgments passed, by many who persuade themselves that they, and they alone, faithfully obey the revealed will of Christ. All the melancholy consequences of disunion among Christians, upon which this is not the time or place to enter, immediately appear; and the Church of Christ is hindered from showing herself to the world as the living and visible expression of the living Lord, whose power now, as it was when He was upon earth, is love. To meet the lamentable state of matters around us, the first thing needed is inquiry into the points that lead to this separation of heart and action. Other things may be so far useful. Undenominational societies, Evangelical Alliances, addresses upon the value of unity, and common prayer that unity may be

realized, do this much at least, that they keep the subject before the minds of men. But these expedients will never of themselves cure the evils against which they are directed. Inquiry is what is wanted, calm, patient, and persistent, until we either reach some conclusion that shall obtain general acceptance, or are satisfied that, from the want of materials for judgment, no definite conclusion is possible. Notwithstanding all therefore that has been written upon the origin of the Christian ministry during the past year, it cannot be said that too much has been written. The subject has a most practical and living interest whenever it is looked at from the point of view now spoken of. The results reached may not, at least they may not immediately, affect individual positions in the Church of Christ, but they may affect in a powerful degree the attitude to one another of the different branches of that Church. It is on this ground only that, notwithstanding the obscurity and difficulty of the subject, I venture to add my contribution to its discussion.

In doing so it may be well to select some passage of a writer, near at least to the time of which we have to speak, that is in itself sufficiently clear upon the points under discussion; to determine the conclusions to which we are led either by it or by cognate passages from the same pen; and then to ask how far these conclusions help us to interpret more doubtful statements of other writers. For this purpose we select Clement of Rome, whose early date (not later than the last decade of the first century), high position, historical spirit, and special call to settle controversies arising out of questions of Church-government, recommend him as a peculiarly intelligent and suitable witness. In chap. xlv. of his first Epistle to the Corinthians we meet the well-known words which may be quoted in the original. *Καὶ οἱ ἀπόστολοι ἡμῶν*, he says, *ἔγνωσαν διὰ τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὅτι ἕρις ἔσται ἐπὶ τοῦ ὀνόματος τῆς ἐπισκοπῆς.*

Διὰ ταύτην οὖν τὴν αἰτίαν πρόγνωσιν εἰληφότες τελείαν κατέστησαν τοὺς προειρημένους, καὶ μεταξὺ ἐπινομήν δεδώκασιν, ὅπως, ἐὰν κοιμηθῶσιν, διαδέξωνται ἕτεροι δεδοκιμασμένοι ἄνδρες τὴν λειτουργίαν αὐτῶν. Τοὺς οὖν κατασταθέντας ὑπ' ἐκείνων ἢ μεταξὺ ὑφ' ἑτέρων ἐλλογίμων ἀνδρῶν . . . τούτους . . . μακάριοι οἱ προοδοιπορήσαντες πρεσβύτεροι, κ.τ.λ. There are in this passage two various readings that may be noticed. For *δεδώκασιν* the MS. to which Lightfoot has given the designation of C reads *ἔδωκαν*; but the general tendency of that MS. to make readings smoother, the natural disposition of scribes to follow up the verb *κατέστησαν* by a verb in a similar tense, and the greater difficulty of the first of the two readings mentioned, determine in favour of the latter. It is retained by Lightfoot. Gebhardt and Harnack read *ἔδωκαν*.

The second word *ἐπινομήν* is more important, and the difficulty of translating it has led to many conjectures. A full account of these will be found in Lightfoot's Appendix to his edition of St. Clement of Rome (p. 435), and in his note on the passage itself; but, with the exception of one, they are all justly rejected by him, as either inappropriate, or as diverging too widely from the MS. The single exception is the reading *ἐπιμονήν*, which he introduces into his text of the epistle, and which he understands in the sense of "permanence," translating (p. 368), "and afterwards they provided a continuance." The reading however rests purely on conjecture; and, although it has been adopted by other distinguished scholars, it is exposed to the fatal objection that, while designed to give certainty to the sense, its own meaning is as uncertain as that of the word which it supplants. It is unnecessary however to discuss the question, as the object we have in view is after all but little affected by it; and in these circumstances it seems better to retain the common reading *ἐπινομήν*. Nor is it difficult to find a fair enough meaning for that

word. Liddell and Scott quote Plutarch, in the present instance a more than usually valuable authority, as using the verb ἐπινεμεῖν in the sense "to feed over the boundaries"; and, with Stephanus, they assign to the substantive the meaning of "a grazing over the boundaries." The word may thus mean, an additional charge, a charge beyond that originally given. The Apostles gave directions, first, that one step, and then, secondly, that another should be taken. Rothe's idea, though somewhat akin to this, that the word means a "codicil," an "addition to a will or testament," is rather too far-fetched and too artificial to be easily accepted.

From the readings we turn to the interpretation, the most interesting question connected with which is, What is the subject of κοιμηθῶσιν? Is it the Apostles, or those who are described as the τοὺς προειρημένους? Most commonly it is answered, The latter: and the object of Clement is then to say, that the Church was not to be left at any time without a definite provision for the nourishment of her spiritual life, but that there should be always a succession of approved men in the ministry. The point is difficult of decision; yet it appears to be upon the whole more natural to suppose that the persons spoken of are the Apostles. In the first place, the εἰάν preceding κοιμηθῶσιν is almost of itself inconsistent with any other supposition. Is Clement speaking of the first generation of presbyters appointed by the Apostles? Why does he say, "If they die?" He ought surely to have said, "When they die." There could be no doubt that they would die, and that successors would be needed. Why then speak in this conditional and uncertain manner? or why interpose an unnecessary clause, one implied in that διὰ of the διαδέξωνται immediately following which includes in itself the idea of succession? On the other hand, let us take the Apostles as the subject, and the εἰάν has a distinct

meaning. "It glances at the contingency of the Apostles dying before the presbyters whom they had ordained;—a contingency in the view of which they made provision that others should succeed to their own power of ordaining presbyters."¹ Their position was this: in order that peace might be maintained in the Church, an authoritative succession must be preserved in the ministry. The Apostles had so far provided for this by their first appointments; and, were they to outlive these, they would have done the same thing again. But they might die, and therefore it was needful that they should entrust a further commission, a further work (*ἐπινομήν*), than would otherwise have been required, to those whom they first appointed. This work was to nominate with the consent of the Church, and to set apart to their office, persons who should be successors to themselves. In the second place, if the first generation of presbyters be the subject of the verb we should expect *οὔτοι* in the text as the nominative to *κοιμηθῶσιν*. The Apostles are the subject of all the previous verbs in the sentence, and it is natural for us to keep them in our minds to the close, unless a word be inserted to divert our thoughts to others. So natural is this, that Lightfoot, who adopts the reference, not to the Apostles, but to those appointed by the Apostles, is insensibly led to insert the word "these" in his translation,—“that if these should fall asleep.”² In the third place, the time of *διαδέξωνται* seems to follow that of *ἐὰν κοιμηθῶσιν*; but this cannot be the case if those referred to in this last expression be the first generation of Church officers by which the second generation is ordained. That first generation must ordain its successors before it dies, and the time of *διαδέξωνται* must precede, instead of following, the falling asleep that will be in Clement's eye. The only way, in con-

¹ Liddon: *A Father in Christ*. Second edition, Appendix.

² *St. Clement*, Appendix, p. 368.

sequence, by which due sequence and sense can be preserved on the supposition we are combating is that suggested by Dr. Donaldson when he says, "I conjecture that Clemens means that the Apostles made a second choice of men, in order that if the first should die there would be others ready to take their place."¹ But to this it may be replied that the making such a second choice of men is not only highly improbable (the Apostles might almost as well have made a third), it is inconsistent with the whole strain of the argument in chaps. xlii.-xliv. Succession through the commission of one immediately preceding and authorized to give it, is the point on which Clement dwells. God sends Christ; Christ sends Apostles; Apostles send approved men; and the proper sequence to this is that these approved men send in their turn others, whom they know to be approved. In the fourth place, the next following sentence confirms the rendering now given. The *ἐκείνων* in it is not the Apostles. We could hardly indeed suppose the rights of persons directly appointed by Apostles disputed in the Church. The word refers to the first generation of ministers who had been appointed by Apostles, *i.e.* to the *τοὺς προειρημένους* already spoken of; while the *ἐλλογίμων ἀνδρῶν* are the second generation who had been, with the Church's approbation, appointed by the first, and who are thus the same as the *ἕτεροι δεδοκιμασμένοι* of the preceding sentence. The difference between the two descriptions seems to be that, in the former, we think more of good repute amongst men; in the latter, of the approbation and attestation of the Spirit (comp. chap. xlii.).

With these remarks we may translate the passage as follows: "And our Apostles knew through our Lord Jesus Christ that there would be strife in the matter of the bishop's office. For this cause therefore, having a perfect foreknowledge, they appointed those of whom I have pre-

¹ *Apostolic Fathers*, ed. of 1874, p. 172.

viously spoken, and afterwards have given them a further commission, in order that, if they should fall asleep, other approved men should receive in succession the ministration which they had performed. Those therefore that were appointed by them (the such as were previously spoken of), or afterwards by men held in high repute, etc. . . . For it will be no small sin on our part if we remove those who have blamelessly and holily offered the gifts of the bishop's office. Blessed are the presbyters who have gone before, . . . for they have no fear that any one should remove them from the place assured to them."

Let us now consider the inferences suggested by this passage, comparing with it at the same time the other passages of Clement's epistle that bear upon the point.

1. Those spoken of are styled the *προειρημένοι*, and there can be no doubt that we are thus referred back to chap. xlii., in which we read that the Apostles, "preaching everywhere in country and town, appointed their firstfruits, when they had approved of them by the Spirit, to be bishops and deacons of them that should believe." Two classes of office-bearers seem to be distinctly mentioned here. The quotation from the Old Testament by which the statement is followed, and of which it is given as an illustration, implies this; and the conclusion is confirmed by the opening sentences of the chapter, in which we have one of the clearest statements of the epistle, with regard both to the whole scheme of God's arrangements for His Church and the principle upon which it rests; all things were to be done *εὐτάκτως*; and, after God and Christ, the *τάξις* was—Apostles, bishops, deacons! In the "bishops and deacons" therefore we seem to have certainly two orders and not simply one.

2. As to the relation between the bishops and deacons nothing is distinctly said. Mention of the latter is even at times wholly dropped, as in the beginning of chap. xliv.,

where we are told, that the disputes were about the ἐπισκοπή,¹ although deacons not less than bishops must be included in the immediately following προειρημένους. The best explanation of this, or even of the fact that the disputes at Corinth were confined to the "bishopric," seems to be that the deacons did not occupy so much a separate office, as the position of assistants to the bishop. By such a view we can understand the fact that they are so often passed over in silence when we should expect them to be mentioned; while at the same time it is easy to conceive that they should grow, even rapidly, in importance until they became a distinct grade of officers of the Church. Thus too we can trace a distinct principle ruling the procedure of the Apostles. They had early got assistants to themselves appointed (Acts vi. 1, etc.); and, having found by experience the value of that arrangement, they were led, when appointing persons to take their own place in Churches over which they could not personally preside, to appoint also other persons who might be assistants to

¹ May it not be possible to explain in this way that use of the word ἀρχιερεύς in chap. xl., which has occasioned so much discussion? The argument there is from the analogy of the institutions of the Old Testament, and the analogy must hold. When therefore it is drawn out into so many particulars, the natural inference is that it is meant to apply, not merely to a general principle of order and subordination, but to the several details. The "high priest" spoken of however can hardly be a single officer at the head of the congregation, for such an application of the word is wholly unknown not only to Clement but to his time, and does not meet us till the days of Tertullian and Cyprian. Nor can Christ Himself be the High Priest, for the latter not less than the others mentioned is to follow the precepts of the Master that he may not go wrong. May the officer of the Christian Church analogous to the high priest of old not be the Apostle who was the founder of any particular Church and the supreme earthly power connected with it? With this idea the language of Polycrates may be compared, when he calls St. John a priest who wore the πέταλον, or sacerdotal plate (Euseb., *H. E.* v. 24). Polycrates, though writing late in the second century, may refer to the more than half-century, the "sixty-five" years before, which in the same letter he tells us he remembers. The same result is obtained if, instead of thinking of the Apostles as the high priests, we find their *analogon* in the prophets of the early Church. To this the *Didaché* would lead us: "For they (the prophets) are your high priests" (chap. xiii. 3).

them. When therefore we speak, as we have spoken, of two classes of officers appointed by the Apostles in the early Church, it would be probably more true to the actual history of the case to speak only of one such class. There was at first only one apostolically appointed order of men to which, in a *supreme* sense, was committed the task of guiding the congregation, administering the sacraments, exercising discipline, presiding as shepherds over the flock, and setting apart and commissioning their successors—in short, doing all those things for the maintenance and welfare of the Church which the Apostles would themselves have done had they possessed the gifts of ubiquity and immortality. These were the “bishops.” The “deacons” were, properly speaking, not another order: they were assistants to the first.

3. We come now to a much more difficult point,—the relation between these “bishops and deacons,” on the one hand, and those, on the other hand, who are styled “presbyters.” Of these last Clement makes frequent mention in his epistle, and that in a way which shows that the designation properly belonged to the “bishops,” if not also to the “deacons.” Thus, in chap. xlv., we have already found him saying, at the moment when he contrasts those thrust out of the bishop’s office upon earth with those who, having reached the heavenly rest, could no more experience such a fate, “Blessed are those presbyters,” etc. They who were the bishops spoken of must also have been presbyters. Again in chap. xlvii. it is said that the ancient Church of Corinth was revolting against “the presbyters.” Again in chap. liv., obviously referring to the “bishops,” Clement exhorts the Corinthian Church to be “at peace with its appointed presbyters,” where the same word is used for “appointed,” as had been used in chaps. xlii. and xlv. for appointing bishops and deacons.

A glance at these passages is sufficient to show that the

“bishops,” if not also the “deacons,” of Clement’s epistle were also “presbyters.” Yet this last term cannot denote *official* position in the Church; for, whenever Clement deals distinctly with differing grades of office (understanding the diaconate to be such a grade), he speaks of “bishops and deacons,” and of them alone. How are we to explain this? Let us call to mind two facts: (1) that, as universally allowed, “presbyters” had long been known to the Jews as persons entrusted with the care of their religious ordinances, and (2) that the true interpretation of a word is supplied to us when we know the idea which it would suggest to the minds of those who used it. Let us further remember that the theory which makes “bishops” and “presbyters” synonymous is a mere method of escaping a difficulty, and we seem to have some ground for saying that in the present instance when, not yet rid of old ideas, the Christian Church was making her own organization clear to herself, she was extremely likely to use the word “presbyters” as a *general* term to express religious officers. To her the force of the word may have been similar to that belonging to our day to the use of the word *Reverend*.¹ If an English word may be coined for the purpose, the presbyters of the Jewish congregations were the “reverends,” the “clerics,” of the Church. The name “presbyter” might thus be used by Christians with a double meaning. It might signify officers discharging particular duties in the congregation; but it might also express the general idea of office-bearing; and, in the latter sense, bishops and deacons would be *πρεσβύτεροι* not less than the official presbyters. Looking at the word in this light we can without difficulty understand how Clement might apply it to his bishops and

¹ Prof. Salmon, in the article already referred to, says, “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’” (p. 7). “On that hint I speak.”

deacons (for he seems to speak of both), and we may, in the passages already quoted, substitute the more general for the more special meaning by which we at first render it. We shall then find Clement saying, "Blessed are those religious officers," etc.; "It is a shame that the ancient Church of Corinth should revolt against its religious officers"; "Be at peace with your appointed religious officers." Religious officers had been called "presbyters" by those to whom he writes. The word was associated with the thought of important religious functions. It was surrounded with ideas of respect and honour, and this to an extent which could not yet have fallen to the lot of the words "bishops" and "deacons." By his use of it Clement would awaken these associations, and would call up these feelings. He would, as it were, say, For you, O Corinthians, the Apostles appointed bishops and deacons. These are your presbyters, your reverends; whatever you have been wont to think of as due to the latter is due to them. On this view the word "presbyter" does not express an office in the Christian Church at all. At the moment we have in view it is, in that Church, if one may so speak, a clerical title by which the clergy are distinguished from the laity,¹ and by the use of which the laity are reminded of what they owe to those who have been set over them in the Lord.²

In a matter such as that before us, the test of any theory is that it takes up and meets the different phenomena to be accounted for. We have seen that this is effected in the case of Clement's epistle by the theory now suggested. But that is not enough. The question must still be asked, Does it meet the phenomena in connexion with the same subject presented by the New Testament

¹ Comp. chap. xl. of the epistle.

² Harnack says: "Clement has as yet no idea of an ecclesiastical order of regularly appointed presbyters" (*Expositor* for May, 1887, p. 334, note 5). In his *Apost. Zeitalter*, Weizsäcker has come to the same conclusion, p. 637.

and the other Christian literature of the early Church? We take Scripture first.

In Philippians i. 1, St. Paul salutes all the saints that are at Philippi, "including bishops and deacons." The Apostle does not say, as he is always made to say, "with the bishops and deacons," a form of expression which might have left it possible to allege that he passes over presbyters, because they had taken no part in collecting the contributions which he was about to acknowledge. In such a case we should have had the article before *ἐπισκόποις*. But the absence of the article shows us that the summary of the persons constituting the Christian Church at Philippi is *complete*. Either therefore "bishops" and "presbyters" denoted at Philippi the same *office*, and were interchangeable official terms, or there were no official "presbyters" in the Christian Church of that city. There is an absence of proof, there is even every probability against the supposition, that the first of these explanations is correct, and we must therefore have recourse to the second. Had there been officers known as "presbyters" in the Philippian Church, St. Paul could not have failed to mention them on this occasion.

In his first Epistle to Timothy St. Paul gives directions with regard to the character and qualifications of such as might fitly be appointed officers in the Church. Doing so, how shall we explain the fact that he passes presbyters entirely over, except by the supposition that there were no Christian officers known by that name? At chap. iii. 2, he treats of "bishops," at v. 8 of the same chap. of "deacons." Not a word is said of presbyters; and yet it would appear from chap. iii. 14, 15, that the Apostle intended his instructions to be exhaustive. No doubt we read the word *πρεσβυτέρω* at chap. v. 1, but in such a connexion that we can hardly understand by it anything except an older man. At chap. v. 17, we read also, "Let

the presbyters that preside well over the Church be counted worthy of double honour," but the general meaning of the word "presbyter," the effect of which we are at present trying, not only suits the passage, but gives far more force to it. Why limit the *προεστῶτες* to one of the classes spoken of in the previous chapters of the epistle? Still more, why apply the word to a class of office-bearers not previously named, unless we are compelled to do so? It is much more likely that the Apostle would desire to see double honour paid to deserving deacons as well as bishops, as also more natural to think that he would still have in his mind the office-bearers whose qualifications he had just been engaged in describing. This sense we obtain if we suppose *πρεσβύτεροι* to be used in that wider meaning which had come to be associated with it. Similar remarks apply to the use of *πρεσβυτέρου* in chap. v. 19. One passage in this epistle is indeed more difficult than these, chap. iv. 14, "Neglect not the gift that is in thee which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands *τοῦ πρεσβυτερίου*." But this word does *not* mean a college of presbyters. It was a name applied to the Sanhedrin in its larger form in Jerusalem, and probably also in smaller forms in the country towns.¹ When therefore it was transferred to a Christian court, that court must have borne some distinct resemblance to the Jewish. But the latter included much more than presbyters (Luke xxii. 66; Acts xxii. 5, and comp. 1 Macc. xii. 6; Matt. xxvi. 59). The former must have done so too. It would consist of the Apostles when present, and of the bishops and deacons; and it would receive its name because Christians would say to themselves, That is *our* "presbytery." The Jewish congregations have theirs, consisting of their office-bearers. In like manner we have ours.

In the Epistle to Titus the two words "bishop" and

¹ Comp. Hatch, *Bampton Lectures*, iii.

“presbyter” again meet us, and that in a very instructive connexion. At chap. i. 5, we read, “For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest appoint presbyters in every city”; and then, having alluded to some of the necessary qualifications, the Apostle goes on, “for the bishop must be blameless,” etc. That the words “presbyter” and “bishop” here refer to the same persons, no one will for an instant deny. Are both these official names for the same office? If so, there is immediate danger of confusion. There is no such danger on the supposition we are trying, that the first term suggests the general idea of a person appointed to a religious office, the second the idea of the particular office to which he is appointed.

In the Acts of the Apostles the word “presbyter” frequently occurs. One of the most instructive of these occasions is that, so often referred to, in chap. xx. 17 comp. 28, a passage of which it is unnecessary to say more than that it strikingly confirms all that has been said. The two words “presbyter” and “bishop” are there used precisely as we should expect to find, if the former denotes religious office generally, the latter a particular office in the Church, with those special duties assigned to it which are immediately afterwards described. In Acts xi. 30, xv. 2, 4, 6, 22, 23, xvi. 4, and xxi. 18, we have the Christian Church in Jerusalem before us; and, although it is obvious that in every one of these cases the general meaning of “presbyter” affords an excellent sense, it is also possible that in the sacred metropolis of Judaism Jewish arrangements might be retained longer than elsewhere. These passages therefore do not supply the basis of an argument to the same extent as the others that we have considered. Acts xiv. 23 again is an important text. We are told there of St. Paul and Barnabas, who were passing at the time through a part of Asia Minor, that, when they had appointed for them presbyters in every Church and had prayed with

fasting, they commended them to the Lord on whom they had believed." But one explanation of the statement may be, that we have here no appointment of office-bearers according to the *full Christian plan*. It is at least worthy of notice that, while praying and fasting are expressly mentioned, thus favouring the idea that St. Luke desires to describe the solemnities that took place upon the occasions spoken of, he says nothing of that laying on of hands which the analogy of other passages would lead us to expect (Acts vi. 6, xiii. 3, xix. 5, 6; 1 Tim. iv. 14; 1 Tim. v. 22); while at the same time it is hardly possible to think of the latter as included under the word "commended" (*παρέθεντο*), a comparison with chap. xx. 32 forbidding such a supposition. The word used for appointing (*χειροτονεῖν*) leads us also to the thought of a purely popular election in which the Apostles took no part.¹ The communities alluded to being, then, mainly Judæo-Christian, and, as so recently converted, not yet ready for new arrangements, it is perfectly natural to think that they received at the moment only a temporary provision for their need, until they should be ready for "bishops and deacons." Even this supposition, however, is unnecessary. St. Luke might speak as he does, although he had the latter classes of office-bearers in his eye. To him and to his readers the word "presbyters" suggested the idea of congregational office-bearers, and he might with perfect appropriateness employ it, if he was thinking of office-bearers in general rather than of any special class of such, or of any special duties to be discharged by them.

James v. 14 is also Judæo-Christian, and so are all the passages in the Revelation of St. John where the "presbyters" appear.

St. Peter's use of the word may be noticed for a moment. In 1 Peter v. 1, the Apostle exhorts "presbyters," and

¹ Comp. the use of the word in the *Didaché*, chap. xv. 1.

speaks of himself as their "fellow-presbyter." Yet we have here the idea of a general religious functionary rather than that of a special officer designated by the name "presbyter." In the latter sense St. Peter was not a presbyter; he was an Apostle. He shared no *office* with any Christian official beneath the apostolate. But he was a fellow-worker in God's house, a fellow-ploughman in God's furrow, with all who were labouring in the same spirit, and for the same ends, as himself (comp. 1 Cor. iii. 10); and his presbyterate is thus to be understood in its widest and not in its most limited sense. On the other hand, when in the same epistle he rises to the thought of the great Head of the Church as One who, through His work on His people's behalf, had grounded an official relation between Himself and them, he does not speak of the presbyter, but of the "bishop," of their souls (chap. ii. 25).

On the use of the word "presbyter" in the second and third Epistles of St. John it is not necessary to dwell.

It would thus appear that, in every passage of the New Testament in which we read of "presbyters," that word may be taken in the sense borne by it in the Epistle of Clement, without injury to the meaning, and in some instances with positive advantage to it.

Want of space will hardly permit more than a brief allusion to other literature of the early Christian age. It may be enough to say that, if in the New Testament and in Clement we find the combination "bishops and deacons," we find the same combination in the *Didaché* (chap. xv. 1). So far as I am aware, we never meet at this early date with the combination "presbyters and deacons," but always with "bishops and deacons."¹ Such a fact requires

¹ At a later date we meet with it, as in Polycarp's Epistle to the Philippians, where the younger men are exhorted to submit themselves "to the presbyters and deacons as to God and Christ" (§ 5). Yet even here the word "presbyters" may include "bishops." We know from Phil. i. 1 that there were "bishops" at Philippi, and it is difficult to account for there being no especial

explanation ; and, on the view taken in this paper, the explanation is simple.

One point more demands explanation. How came "presbyters," who, as here contended, were not apostolically appointed officers in the Christian Church, so soon to gain not only an official, but even so important an official, position as they seem at least to hold in the Ignatian epistles? The answer to this question may be found in the following considerations. Although not apostolically appointed, there always were "presbyters" in the Christian congregations. They had had official position in the Jewish Church ; and that alone would lead not only Judæo- but even Gentile- Christian congregations to recognise them as an important class. Even without this precedent, they would soon, as the older men of the congregation, gain a position which, if not official, would touch the borders of official dignity. This would more readily take place if, as there is reason to believe, the teaching of the congregation, which was at first free to all, began to fall mainly into their hands,¹ and that with general consent. Nothing could contribute more than the discharge of this latter function to increase their importance ; and it need not surprise us that by the time Ignatius wrote they became what they were. The result is not to be attributed to pride or ambition or love of power. It would come about by natural and easy steps then, just as it would come about, were the general condition of things the same, by the same steps now.

Thus too we see how the name "presbyter," after having lived for a time with its more vague and general, would

mention of them in Polycarp's epistle, unless on the supposition that, as the religious office-bearers of the Church, they might be called "presbyters."

¹ This idea finds strong confirmation in the words of Hermas in *Vis. iii. 5*, who mentions as the great stones in the building of the Church, *Apostoli et episcopi et doctores et ministri*. These *doctores* would seem to be the presbyters. Comp. Hefele, *Patres Apos.*, in loc.

resume its older and more special, meaning. Only during a period immediately following the apostolical appointment of bishops and deacons would it, as the familiar "clerical" designation, be applied to them. But, as the presbyters, who had not died out, who were still the more venerable men of the congregation, and who as teachers enjoyed so much of the confidence of the people, rose in importance, they would naturally again impart to the word a fulness of meaning equal to what it had once enjoyed, and peculiar to themselves.

If then we now endeavour to sum up the particulars of Clement's historical view of the origin of the Christian ministry (which is at the same time confirmed from other sources), it may be stated as follows. In the very earliest stage of the Christian Church there existed only the lay members of the congregation and, according to their number, more or fewer Church officers called "presbyters," who were probably nominated by the people to exercise a certain control in congregational affairs. Strifes, as was quite natural, arose between the congregation and its presbyters. The latter had been appointed by the former. Why should the former not express dissatisfaction with them, or even displace them if it pleased? The Apostles foresaw this, and, guided by the Spirit, resolved to take means for providing a fixed and definite order of men to superintend the congregations; and that, not only for their own, but for all future, time. In doing so, they had not to think so much of teaching, which was to a large extent at least free, to some extent in the hands of the already existing presbyters; they had to think mainly of the general management of the services and congregational affairs. Already in their own case they had experienced the benefit of the appointment of the seven "deacons." They appointed therefore, not only "bishops" to do in their stead in the congregations what they could

not, but they added assistants to the "bishops." In other words, they appointed "bishops and deacons." In making these arrangements, they left the "presbyters" undisturbed. Then they did not appoint; but they did not interfere with them; they recognised them; they left them to go on with the consent of the congregations in their own way. Still further, however, the Apostles had to think of future generations as well as of the men of their own age. They did so. They made provision that the "bishops," or perhaps these with the aid of their "deacons," should continue a succession of office-bearers like themselves, when suitable persons could be fixed upon with the consent and approval of the Church. By what means such successors were to be solemnly set apart to their office, Clement does not say. But all the other evidence upon the point leads us to the thought of that prayer and laying on of hands with which we are familiar in the New Testament, and which was God's appointed instrumentality for the conveyance of His blessing. As to the names to be used, the proper designation of those thus appointed by the Apostles, and keeping up the succession, is "bishops," assisted if needs be by their "deacons." "Presbyter" is not the name of a Christian *office* instituted by the Apostles. It is an old and venerable title applied to religious officers; and, as such, the new officers may appropriately enough come under the old name. A bishop and a deacon may both be spoken of as presbyters. As time runs on, even so soon as the days of Hermas, there will be a difference; but that lay beyond the horizon of Clement's view.

Of the important consequences deducible from this view of the origin of the Christian ministry there is no time to speak.

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