

for mere show and adornment. The effects of their fruits were neither mythical nor accidental. Knowing that man would disobey, God in infinite wisdom prohibited that which was in its own nature deadly. "Eat not, for the fruit is death!" This is the sum of the prohibition and warning. And if by necessary consequence, the product of the one was death, the conclusion that the product of the other was, by necessary consequence, life, may not be evaded. The works of God are known unto himself from the beginning; and none of his works are imperfect in structure, office, or effect. And surely, none of them can be affected by any finite causes or contingencies.

### ARTICLE III.

#### DR. THORNWELL ON RULING ELDERS.

This article, which is not accessible to our readers generally, we are sure will be acceptable to them, at the present time particularly, both on that account and also because of its eminent ability. It is taken from the *Spirit of the Nineteenth Century*, for December, 1843. We append to this preface a portion of a private letter from DR. THORNWELL to the Editor of the work above named, which appears there in the form of a note to the article, and which, as the Editor well says, "contains matter worthy of itself to be seriously pondered, and which cannot fail to impart additional interest and importance to the article itself and to the subjects which it treats."—EDS. S.P.R.

"My DEAR BROTHER: In conformity with my promise, I send you an article upon the right of Ruling Elders to impose hands in the ordination of ministers. I have confined my argument exclusively to the constitution and usage of the Apostolic and Primitive Church. It was my intention, at first, to have noticed some of the general principles upon which the right has been denied; but I soon found that the limits of a single article were too narrow to allow so extensive discussion; and, upon the whole, I thought more good would be done by drawing attention to that branch of the subject discussed in my piece. I know not how to account for it, that there

is so much ignorance among our ministers and churches in regard to the distinctive features of our system. Our name is derived from our form of government, and the characteristic element of that form in the importance which we attach to *Ruling Elders*, in contradistinction from *Preachers*. To say, therefore, that a ruling elder is not entitled to the appellation of presbytery, either in conformity with Scripture usage or primitive antiquity, is just to say that the fundamental principle of our polity is a human institution. The essay which I send you, though short and simple, has really been the fruit of much patient study and laborious investigation. I gave particularly the Apostolic Fathers a careful perusal in order to see what their testimony actually was, and I formed my own opinions without looking into the books which profess to collect their testimony. I afterwards compared the results at which I had arrived with the labors of King and Bingham, and I saw nothing in them which induced me to change my opinion. I am still persuaded that *Presbyter* means simply a *Ruler*, and that the *office* of preacher is a function superadded to the presbyterate—that the preacher in the primitive church was selected from the consistory, and in the age of Ignatius was distinguished from the *presbyters* by the title of *bishop*, and that it was owing to accidental circumstances that the presbyters ever came to be preachers. I can trace in Ignatius the constitution of our own Church. His extravagant language is certainly to be condemned; but I am inclined to think we err on the opposite extreme, and attach too little importance to the courts of God's house. I have long been convinced that our present method of conducting the affairs of the Church through institutions which can hardly be regarded as anything more than secular corporations, is absolutely fatal to our beautiful system. Boards have usurped the place of Presbyteries, and the strength of the Church is sought in them, rather than in the healthful action of the organisation which God hath appointed. We have, in fact, two systems of polity—one in our constitution which is a dead letter, and another in vigorous operation, which like Pharaoh's lean kine, eats up its rival. I was delighted to find that you were not ashamed to maintain the *divine right of Presbyterianism*. Our ministers and elders must be brought to this point before they will feel the obligation of trying their own system."

There is but one hypothesis upon which, consistently, with the Scriptures, ruling elders can be excluded from the right of imposing hands in the ordination of ministers, and that is, that they are not presbyters—that they do not belong to that class of officers, who, when assembled in council, possess according to Paul, 1 Tim. iv. 14, the right in question. If they are recognised in the word of God as *presbyters*, they are certainly

entitled to be members of the presbytery; and as certainly endowed with all the presbyterial authority which attaches to any of their brethren. The whole controversy then, must turn upon the question, whether or not they are scriptural *presbyters*? What then is a *presbyter*?

I have no hesitation in asserting, that the fundamental idea conveyed by the term as a title of office, is *that of legitimate authority to rule or govern*. The princes of tribes and the heads of families in the Jewish State were denominated *elders*, because they were invested with subordinate jurisdiction in the conduct of the commonwealth. How such an application of the term originated, it is not, perhaps, important to determine; but whatever reason we may choose to assign—whether it be that in the origin of states, superior age as implying superior wisdom and experience was the first prerequisite to official elevation, or whether it be that the reverence and esteem, the veneration and respect, which should always be accorded to the hoary head, were intended by a delicate allusion to be transferred to rulers; certain it is, that among all nations whose institutions are known to us, terms which in their private and personal applications are descriptive only of superior age, are found as titles of authority and place. In their appropriation to stations of distinction in the state, they lose all reference to private and personal characteristics. In their public applications they cease to designate a man, and are used exclusively to designate an *office*. The Jewish Elder and the Roman Senator retained these titles of rank and authority, however few their years, or limited their wisdom. In the Jewish Synagogue, from which the word was confessedly introduced into the Christian Church, *presbyter* and *ruler* were synonymous terms. It would seem, indeed, that as these assemblies of the people were especially convoked to listen to the law, and to engage in acts of public adoration, to communicate oral instruction was no necessary part of the service. Hence there was no office in the synagogues corresponding to the preacher of the Christian churches. Any who received permission from the elders was at perfect liberty to address the people—an arrangement which could not have been admitted, if there

had been any public functionary whose duty required him to teach the congregation. To the Zakinim or elders pertained the offices of government and discipline. They could bind and loose, and preside in the assemblies, but never seem to have looked on the imparting of oral instruction as any part of their appropriate functions. The angel of the synagogue, if he were anything more than a menial servant, probably received his appellation from the fact that he acted as the messenger of the people to God in being the organ to express their prayers.

It is manifest, then, that presbyter and preacher were not originally interchangeable terms. There were *presbyters* in the synagogue, but no *preachers*. That the apostles, in transferring the word to the Christian Church, enlarged its common and received acceptance so as to include the additional idea of authority to teach, making a Christian presbyter and Christian preacher equivalent expressions, is a proposition equally unsustainable by *scriptural usage* or *ecclesiastical antiquity*. That presbyters as such were not entitled to preach, nor preachers as such entitled to rule, would seem to be an obvious conclusion, from the marked difference which the apostle repeatedly draws between the gift of teaching and the gift of government. Rulers and teachers are different endowments with which the ascending Saviour furnished the Church; and no ingenuity of criticism can fasten the same signification upon such terms as doctrine and government. The miraculous gifts too, which according to Paul, 1 Cor. xiii. 8, were speedily to cease, the gifts of prophecy, tongues, and knowledge—all had evident reference to the function of teaching. The extraordinary officers who possessed these endowments were certainly teachers; and yet from the fact that they did not continue to adorn the Church beyond the age of the apostles, it may be safely inferred that they were not presbyters. Among the first permanent officers of the Church, Ambrose enumerates “rectores” or rulers. (Com. on Ephes. iv.) While, however, it was the specific duty of a presbyter to rule, he who was a presbyter might also be a teacher. There was nothing in the nature of the presbyterial office to prevent the individual who filled it, from adding to its

duties the function of public instruction; and we have the testimony of Paul himself, that in the constitution of the Primitive Church, some of the elders did in fact preach, while others confined themselves to the appropriate duties of the eldership—that is, to government and discipline. “Let the elders,” says the apostle, “that rule well, be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine.” 1 Tim. v. 17.\* To rule well was the duty of all elders, regarded simply as elders; to labor in word and doctrine, was to do something more than the Presbyterate required, and therefore such persons were entitled not only to the respect which was due to elders, but also to that which was due to preachers. From this passage, it would also appear to have been the custom in the Apostolic Church, to have selected the preachers from the class of elders. Instead of making an additional order in the Church, the apostles, it would seem, in the permanent arrangement of its constitution, required those who were to labor in word and in doctrine, to be also strictly and properly presbyters. Hence the common distinction between teaching and ruling elders. The distinction, however, is not strictly accurate. The eldership as such never includes teaching—this is always a superadded function—and it is not in consequence of his Presbyterial authority that an elder preaches. For obvious reasons, the elder who preached would always be the moderator or president of the council of his brethren, just as in the constitution of Presbyterian churches, at the present day, the minister always moderates the session.

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\*The interpretation given in the text is certainly the obvious interpretation of this celebrated passage. For a full, complete, and satisfactory defence of this ancient and general exposition, meeting all the arguments of Scultetus, Erastus, Bilson, Saravia, Mead, Grotius, Hammond, and Mosheim, see Owen on the True Nature of the Gospel Church, chap. 7, vol. 20, Works. With Owen concur Calvin, Cameron, McKnight, Rosenmuller, and the vast majority of Protestant writers.

†The following passage from Jerome may be regarded as proof of some such permanent arrangement: “Alexandriæ a Marco Evangelista usque ad Heraclam et Dionysium Episcopos, *Presbyteri semper unum ex se electum*, in excelsiori gradu collocatum, episcopum nominabant; quomodo si exercitus imperatorem faciat.” Ep. 85 ad Evang.

Though they were all equal in office, and equal in jurisdiction, and all equally constituted the bishops of the Church, yet in the age immediately succeeding that of the apostles, the term bishop became generally restricted to the presbyter who preached. An instance of a similar restriction of a generic term exists at the present day even among us. The word pastor belongs as much to elders as preachers, and yet is generally confined exclusively to preachers. Hence the limitation of the term bishop should by no means astonish us. The reason of this restriction is to be sought in the fact, that he always presided over the Presbytery. He differed from his brethren in nothing but the authority to preach and to dispense the sacraments—the dispensation of the sacraments being in fact only a symbolical method of preaching, and, therefore, an exclusive function of the preacher's office. It was in consequence of possessing this power and this alone that he was entitled, according to the apostle, to double honor. He shared in a larger degree, the affections of the people, and received from his associates in office the high distinction of a permanent presidency. It is clear from all the documents of early antiquity, that preaching was the leading and characteristic distinction of him who received the special appellation of bishop. He preached by an inherent right—it pertained to his office, and he was bound under solemn sanctions to dispense the word and sacraments.\* Those, on the other hand, who retained the

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\* In Cyprian's Letters, such phrases as "Episcopo tractante—episcopos tractantes," are continually recurring, showing that the ideas of a *bishop* and preaching were continually associated in this Father's mind. There is just as conclusive testimony to this point in the Epistle of Ignatius to Polycarp. In chap. 6, of that Epistle, (Russell, vol. 2, p. 75,) *bishops* are called οἰκονόμοι, *stewards*, in evident allusion to 1 Cor. iv. 5, "stewards of the mysteries of God"—that is, *preachers* of the gospel and *dispensers* of the sacrament. Elders are called πᾶρεδροι, *assessors*—that is, assistants in council—a plain allusion to their authority to rule; and deacons are called ὑπηρέται, *servants*, in allusion to their service—dispensing the bounties of the Church. In the same Epistle he directs Polycarp to *speak* to every one as God should give him help, and characterises his flock as "*disciples*," evidently presenting Polycarp in the light of a teacher. (Russell, vol. 2, p. 64.) In his Epistle to the Trallians, C. 3.—Russell, 2, 172, he

original name of elders had no such inherent right. "It is not lawful," says Ignatius, "either to baptize or celebrate the eucharist without the bishop." Again: "let no one perform any ecclesiastical office—(such as preaching or the sacraments)—without the bishop." The same was determined in the Councils of Laodicea, Arles, and Toledo; and such also was the testimony of Tertullian, Jerome, and Ambrose.\*

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directs them to "reverence the deacons as an institution of Christ—to reverence the bishop as the Son of the Father, and the elders as the council of God" Here is still the same distinction—the *Son reveals* the Father, and the bishop *reveals*, that is, *teaches* the *truth*, while the presbyters are his assessors in council. If the reader wishes to see the respective qualifications of bishops and elders in the time of Ignatius and to be yet more fully satisfied that the one had primary reference to *teaching*, and the *other* to *ruling*, let him compare the 1st and 2nd sections of the Epistle to Polycarp, (Russell, 2, pp. 64, 65,) with the Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians, section 6. (Russell, vol. 2, p. 240.) It is plain also from the Apostolical Constitutions, that the peculiar duties of a bishop were precisely *such* as are now imposed upon those who in the Presbyterian Church are now denominated pastors. Vid. Lib. 2nd. c. 27, 28, etc., and Lib. 8th, c. 4, 30, 31. These testimonies might be indefinitely increased—but enough has been said to show the *real* distinction between a bishop and an elder. It was not a distinction of *order* or *ecclesiastical jurisdiction*. In all acts of government and discipline, they were united; but *one* was a *steward* of the mysteries of God, a dispenser of the word and sacraments; and the other was *not*. The bishop and elders of *Ignatius* are *precisely* the *pastor* and *session* of a Presbyterian congregation. So it was in the days of Cyprian, as might be shown at large.

\* Ignat. Epist. ad Smyr. c. 8. (Russell, 2, p. 50.)—Μηδεὶς χωρὶς τοῦ ἐπισκόπου τι πρᾶσέτω τῶν ἀγκόντων εἰς τὴν ἐκκλησίαν. Οὐκ ἐξόν ἐστιν χωρὶς τοῦ ἐπισκόπου, οὔτε βαπτίζειν, οὔτε ἀγάπην ποιεῖν." There is proof in this context, it may be observed by the way, that the bishop was simply the pastor of the church. "Wherever the bishop appears, there let the multitude, (the congregation) be." Ὅπου ἂν φανῇ ὁ ἐπίσκοπος, ἐκεῖ τὸ πλῆθος ἔστω.

The Council of Arles, according to one reading, says: Ut presbyteri sine conscientia episcoporum nihil faciant—can. 19. The Council of Laodicea says, (can. 57, Labb. 1. p. 1505,) Τοὺς πρεσβυτέρος μηδὲν πράττειν ἄνευ τῆς γνώμης τοῦ ἐπισκόπου. The Council of Toledo says, (Labb. 2. p. 1226.)—Sine conscientia autem episcopi nihil penitus faciendum—or as it is in the margin—nihil presbyteri agere presumant.—To these may be added xxxviii. can. Apost. Labb. 1, p. 33.

We learn from Posidonus, that until the time of Austin, in the African churches, elders were not permitted to preach in the presence of the bishops; and only by his authority and as his substitute when the bishop was absent. They did not officiate by virtue of any power inherent in their order.\* From the same authority, we gather that the custom of permitting them at all, was introduced from the eastern churches.† How is such language consistent with the supposition, that they were *ex officio* ministers of the word? After the disturbance created by Arius, we are informed that the presbyters of Alexandria were debarred from preaching by the authority of the bishops.‡ Now, if they possessed the same divine right with himself to dispense the word—if they had regarded themselves in any other light than as exercising a delegated trust, and acting under the responsibility of the bishop whose proper place it was to preach, how could they, with a conscience void of offence, have submitted to such an edict from one who was not officially their superior? The truth is, it is perfectly preposterous to make presbyter and preacher synonymous terms. To effect such a confusion of things separate and distinct, was the work of time. The custom of permitting the elders to preach, originated in the first instance, from a laudable desire on the part of the bishops, to have their people instructed during their absence. What at first, however, was granted as an indulgence, soon came to be

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Dandi jus quidem, says Tertullian, de Baptismo, c. 17—*summus sacerdos, qui est episcopus: dehinc presbyteri et diaconi: non tamen sine auctoritate episopi, propter ecclesiae honorem.*

Jerome (Dial. cont. Lucif.) testifies: *Inde venit ut, sine jussione episcopi, neque presbyter, neque diaconus jus habet baptizandi.* See also Ambrose de Sacrament. 1. 3, c. 1.

\* *Eidem presbytero potestatem dedit coram se in ecclesia evangelium praedicandi ac frequentissime tractandi: contra usum quidem ac consuetudinem Africanarum ecclesiarum; unde etiam ei nonnulli episcopi detrahebant. Postea bono precedente exemplo, accepta ab episcopis potestate, presbyteri nonnulli coram episcopis tractare cœperunt verbum Dei.* Vit. Aug. c. 5.

† *Ibid.*

‡ *Socrates, Lib. 5. Soz. Lib. 7.*



demanding as a right, and the innovation did not stop with elders. Even the deacons, from a similar permission, granted under similar circumstances, claimed eventually to be preachers of the word and stewards of the mysteries of God. This was a more remarkable change than that which took place with reference to the eldership. Here, an office notoriously instituted for the express purpose of protecting preachers from secular affairs, undergoes a transformation so astonishing, and wonderful as to assume the very duties which it was intended to relieve. The same ambition which would prompt the elders to aspire to the double honor which was due to the preacher's office, would prompt the bishops to indulge their humor; since as the presbyters expanded into preachers, they themselves would expand into prelates. Hence from the common pride and vanity of both bishops and elders, preaching came eventually to be regarded as a necessary element of presbyterial authority, though in the beginning it was unquestionably otherwise. Still, however, as late as the fourth century, when prelacy had made extensive and formidable encroachments, and almost, if not entirely, obliterated, the original application of the term presbyter, we find some traces of the ancient constitution in the churches of Northern Africa. The *seniores plebis*, who are confessed to have been ecclesiastical officers, were the ruling elders of the primitive age. Some learned men have been inclined to deny this position, because in the writings of the times, they are distinguished from presbyters. But about this time, presbyter had generally become a title of the ministry, and hence in distinguishing the *seniores plebis* from presbyters, the meaning is that they were not preachers, they were not the presbyters of the day. This, however, is no sufficient proof that they were not precisely the presbyters who, in the times of the apostles, were content to rule without attempting to preach; no more than the studied distinction which the writings of the *fathers* make between elder and bishop proves that they were not originally the same. In the rapid tendencies to prelacy which the Church was every where exhibiting, it is impossible to account for the introduction of a class of officers so repugnant to the genius and spirit of the hierarchy as

these seniors of the people, at any period subsequent to that of the apostles; and hence I am compelled to regard them as venerable monuments of a race that was rapidly dying away. As bishops had now discarded the ancient title of presbyters and assumed the prerogatives of prelacy, and as presbyters had aspired to the more honorable functions of laboring in word and doctrine, these humble rulers were content to manifest their modesty and wisdom by the unassuming and scriptural name of elders of the people—(πρεσβύτεροι τῆ λαόν.)

From the preceding statements it appears that in the Primitive and Apostolic Church, presbyters as such were simply and exclusively rulers. One of the presbytery in each congregation was usually invested with authority to preach and dispense the sacraments, and became, in consequence, the permanent president of the body. This preaching elder received in process of time, as his distinctive appellation, the title of bishop, while the others continued to be called by the general name of office—presbyters or elders. The sole distinction in the first instance between the bishop and the elders, lay simply in the power of preaching. It was his privilege and duty, by virtue of his office; but it did not pertain to the essential nature of the presbyterate. Gradually, however, from indulgence on the part of the ministers, and ambition on the part of the rulers, they began to labor as preachers of the gospel, so that in process of time, presbyter lost its original meaning of ruler, bishop lost its primitive meaning of preacher, and those who ought to have been rulers became ministers, and those who ought to have been ministers became prelates; and diocesan episcopacy, with all its abominations, was established upon the ruins of parochial presbytery. This view of the primitive constitution of the Church reconciles the testimony of the ancient fathers, which, upon any other hypothesis, is full of contradiction and absurdity; and certainly accords with the obvious interpretation of the accounts which are furnished in the Acts and Epistles touching the organisation and arrangement of the churches founded by the apostles. As, then, ruling elders are strictly and properly the presbyters of Scripture, they are, according to the apostle, entitled to lay on

hands in the ordination of ministers. The argument is as simple as it is irresistible. The imposition of hands is the prerogative of presbytery; presbytery is composed exclusively of presbyters; presbyters are strictly the rulers of the Church: therefore, presbytery consists of rulers, and therefore rulers are entitled to ordain. Every proposition in this chain is sustained by express words of Scripture. There is no possibility of excluding ruling elders from the right to impose their hands, without showing in the first instance that they are not presbyters, or, what is the same, that a presbyter must necessarily be a preacher. When this last proposition is established, ruling elders may not only give up the right to ordain, but every other right which pertains to their office. They become a mere human appendage to the church: officers of man's institution, whom, it is presumption to admit into ecclesiastical courts. Presbyterianism stands or falls with the distinction between ruling and teaching elders. There is, in addition to this scriptural argument, satisfactory proof that for three hundred years after the time of the apostles, the right of the presbyters to ordain presbyters was universally acknowledged. The third canon of the fourth Council of Carthage provides, that in the ordination of elders, while the bishop of the church offered up the ordaining prayer, the whole consistory or presbytery should join with him in imposing hands upon the head of the candidate.\* The Council of Ancyra, which was still earlier, recognises the rights of city presbyters to administer ordination even in different parishes from their own, with the consent of the bishop.† That they could also participate in the ordination of bishops, to say nothing of the testimony of Scripture in the case of Timothy, is decisively proved by the fact, that Pelagius, Bishop of Rome, was ordained by one presbyter in conjunction with two bishops; and as the canons at the time

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\* *Presbyter cum ordinatur, episcopo eum benedicente, et manum super caput ejus tenente, etiam omnes presbyteri qui presentes sunt manus suas juxta manum episcopi super caput illius teneant.*-Labb. 2, p. 1199.

† *Χωρεπισκόπους μὴ εἶναι πρεσβυτέρους ἢ διακόνους χειροτονεῖν, ἀλλὰ μεθ' ἐπρεσβυτέρους πόλεως, χωρὶς τῆ ἐπιτραπῆναι ὑπὸ τῆ ἐπισκόπου μετὰ γραμμάτων, ἐν ἑτέρα παροικία.*—Labb. 1. p. 1461.

required the presence of at least three bishops, and as the ordination of Pelagius was admitted to be valid, a presbyter must have been equal to a bishop, and the imposition of his hands just as available.\* To these cases may be added the testimony of Firmilian, in the age of Cyprian. That presbyters, however, did not ordain by indulgence—as they preached and baptized, is clear from the oft repeated testimony of Paul, which vests an absolute right of ordination in the presbytery. “All power and grace,” says Firmilian,† “is constituted in the church where elders preside and have the power of baptizing, confirming, and ordaining.” Jerome distinctly asserts that from the days of Mark the evangelist, until the time of Heraclas and Dionysius, the presbyters at Alexandria made their own bishop. He was elected in the first place, from among themselves, and then ordained by the parochial presbytery, as Timothy was ordained by the presbytery of Derbe or Lystra. This seems to be the obvious meaning of the words, and is a plain proof of the existence, in primitive times, of that arrangement to which we have already referred, by which the minister of the church—he who was to labor in word and doctrine—was required to be a presbyter.

The argument from Scripture and antiquity might here be regarded as complete, and the right of ruling elders to impose hands in ordination unanswerably established, if it were not that a mass of testimony exists apparently inconsistent with this hypothesis, which the interests of truth require to be explained. Bishops, it must be confessed, began at a very early period to be ordained by bishops alone. According to the first Council of Arles, and the third of Carthage, the presence of at least three bishops was necessary to give validity to the ordination of a bishop. The canons and constitutions, which go under the

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\* *Lib. Pontif. Vit. Pelag.* Dum non essent episcopi, qui eum ordinent, inventi sunt duo episcopi, Joannes de Perusio et Bonus de Ferentino, et Andreas, Presbyter de Sotia, et ordinaverunt eum.

† *Apud Cypr. Epist. 75*—Omnis potestas et gratia in ecclesia constituta sit ubi præsident majores natu, qui et baptizandi et manum imponendi et ordinandi possident potestatem.

name of the Apostles'—though clearly the products of a later age—required, as indispensable, the presence of but two. These testimonies do not, as is generally supposed, exclude presbyters from participating in the process—though the presumption is, that as their cooperation was not regarded as essential, they soon ceased to unite with the bishops in this act of ecclesiastical authority. That they had the right to unite with them is plain from the case of Pelagius. Now if, in the times of the apostles, the parochial presbytery was the proper ordaining body, how was so remarkable a change effected? How, especially, did it happen in so short a time that ruling elders should rarely exercise the right of ordination except in reference to their own associates? There are two causes which will be found, I apprehend, to explain the phenomenon. After the extraordinary officers of the Church had ceased, it devolved, of course, upon the neighboring churches to supply new congregations with ecclesiastical officers, and as it would be more convenient for the pastors to meet—as they were the persons most likely to be known and most likely to be summoned to attend in council—the presbytery which ordained in new and vacant churches was composed, for the most part, of preaching elders or bishops. Presbyters at first were not excluded; but as they were summoned only through their pastors, and as all the neighboring pastors were summoned alike, a college of elders could be easily constituted without their presence; and hence they, no doubt, soon ceased to appear. In a vacant church, the existing eldership might have ordained, but as they had been always accustomed to the presidency of a pastor, they would call in the neighboring bishops to assist them.\* Hence there soon arose a distinction betwixt the method of ordaining a presbyter and the

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\* The passage from Jerome has been already cited. It is a mistake to suppose that he has reference to the election of a bishop, because, (1) that was done by the people, as Cyprian testifies, (Epist. 68,) and (2) the bishop is spoken of as elected when the presbyters do what is implied in the verb *nominabant*. How did the presbyter elect get the name of bishop? Evidently by ordination. This installed him in the office, and of course gave him the name.

method of ordaining a bishop. The one continued to be done by the parochial presbytery, and the other was done by a provincial presbytery; and the canons which have already been noticed, and which are usually pleaded as proof of the exclusive right of bishops to ordain, should, perhaps, be regarded as only defining the number of ministers necessary to constitute a quorum of the provincial presbytery. There was no need to mention elders, because they were always found on the spot, in the case of vacant churches, without being gathered from other congregations; and because, in new churches, ministers being elders, a true presbytery existed, though composed only of the rulers who preached. Such a provincial presbytery was evidently necessary; it was only a fuller development of the same principle on which the session was founded. In the age of Cyprian, however, it was an occasional, not a permanent body, as it is with us, which regularly meets upon its own adjournment. It was called together, only when needed to ordain a bishop. In this way arose the distinction betwixt the ordination of bishops and elders. What was first a mere custom, originating in convenience, soon became the law of the Church. The change thus accidentally introduced, was next confirmed by a miserable fallacy. Ordination was early regarded as a sort of spiritual generation of ministers, and as like could only beget like, it was supposed impossible for those who could not preach, to invest others with authority to do so. The ordainer could only transmit to the ordained the rights which he himself possessed; and hence, presbyters were regarded as incompetent from the nature of their duties to participate in the ordination of any but presbyters. This false principle of itself, without any previous neglect on the part of the elders, would have been sufficient to have excluded them from the provincial presbytery. An error of this sort is too strong for argument: ancient customs and prescriptive rights might have been pleaded in vain, and in spite of all the considerations drawn from apostolic practice, the fallacy would have ultimately triumphed. The power of a sophism to drown the voice of reason and Scripture may be seen in the case of transubstantiation, which led to the withholding of the cup from

the laity, though this measure of high-handed tyranny was in open defiance of law, precedent, and truth. Combine this principle, however, with the previous neglect of the elders, and the foundations of prelacy are open, palpable, and clear. When the presbyters were excluded from the provincial presbytery, bishops became a distinct order, superior to elders, and accountable only to God. Now that both the causes really existed as facts, cannot be denied. The letters of Cyprian show that it was the custom, on the death of a bishop, to issue such a circular to the neighboring bishops, and that the presence of all the bishops in a province at the ordination of a successor in the vacant church was usually requested.\* The first canon of the fourth Council of Carthage, in prescribing the examination of the bishop to be ordained, adds, that when he has given satisfaction touching his faith and qualifications, "he should then be ordained by the consent of the clergy and people, and with the concurrence of the bishops of the whole province."† Other testimonies, to the same purport, might be easily collected, but the custom will hardly be disputed. That the erroneous conception in regard to the nature of ordination, to which reference has been made, prevailed at an early period, may be gathered from the remark of Epiphanius, that "the order of bishops begets fathers to the Church, which the order of presbyters cannot do, but only begets sons by the regeneration of baptisms." (Hæres. 75.) This passage requires no comment.‡ If these

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\* Cyprian Epist. 63.

† Labb. 2, p. 1199.

‡ In the misconception of Epiphanius, we see the germ of the *sacrament* of *orders*. In such fatal and miserable blunders—such gross and flagrant fallacies, one is often reminded of the memorable parody of Johnson: "Who drives fat oxen must himself be fat." It is to be regretted, that even in the Presbyterian Church, there is too strong a disposition to look upon ordination as a mystic charm which communicates an invisible *charisma* to the person ordained, which he did not possess before. Divested of all obscurity, it is evidently nothing more than a process or series of acts, by which the people of God and the rulers of his Church manifest their conviction of a divine call to the office of ruling and teaching. The people express their approbation by election; the rulers of the Church, after a full

two causes, which unquestionably existed, were adequate to produce the effect, it is easy to explain how, consistently with the original right of elders to ordain, they gradually ceased to exercise it, and eventually surrendered it in the case of bishops. This hypothesis completely reconciles the apparently conflicting testimony of ancient documents. From Jerome we would infer, that it was the custom of the elders at Alexandria to ordain their own bishop. From the authorities cited above, it would appear to have been the custom of the Church to ordain a new bishop by a council of his neighbors, of whom three were necessary to constitute a quorum. Both may have been true. In later times, we find no allusion to the elders—their touch was profaneness—because the neighboring bishops had taken the matter into their own hands. The progress can be distinctly traced, by which the ordination of bishops passed from the hands of the parochial presbytery to the episcopal council. That whole mass of testimony, therefore, which seems to vest the right of ordaining ministers exclusively in the hands of minis-

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and thorough examination, express theirs by *prayer* and the imposition of hands. They declare in this way that the candidate before them is called of God to the elder's office. What is there in this, inconsistent with the character of him who rules? And why may not *one* ruler as well as another express his conviction that A. or B. is called of God, and accordingly commend him by prayer and imposition of hands to the word of his grace? If the Presbyterian part of ordination is not a *sacrament*, but a simple act of *government*, I confess it passes my comprehension to perceive why an elder may not join in it. If it *were* a sacrament, then it would be a seal of the covenant, and a *symbol* of its blessings. To administer it under such circumstances would be a *virtual preaching*, and therefore a ruling elder could not do it. Hence, the session examines a man and admits him to the *communion* of the church, but the *pastor alone baptizes*. Baptism, however, does not *admit* the individual into the church—it is administered to him because he is in, and of course entitled to its privileges. The act of the session, of the *parochial presbytery*, *admitted* him; by their vote they expressed their conviction that he was in the covenant, and, *therefore*, the pastor applies to him its precious seal; and so in reference to the Lord's Supper. There is no alternative between making ordination a *sacrament*, and allowing elders to unite in the process. One or the other must be done.



ters, is thus satisfactorily discarded, and the divine authority of ruling elders to impose hands in the ordination of preachers, is placed on an impregnable basis.

#### ARTICLE IV.

### THE RELATION OF BAPTIZED CHILDREN TO THE DISCIPLINE OF THE CHURCH.

*Being the substance of a Speech before the General Assembly, at Memphis, November, 1866. By the Rev. A. W. MILLER Charlotte, North Carolina.*

The Book of Discipline offered by the Revision Committee is, in many respects, vastly superior to the present Book. The brethren have laid the Church under many obligations for the great pains they have taken in the important work committed to them, and for the very satisfactory character, upon the whole, of its performance. Particularly, all honor is due to them for the attention they have given to the baptized youth of the Church. The several sections devoted to them, contrast most favorably with the bald and meagre statements of the old book. But, in one particular, the old book is better than the new; viz., in the preservation of an important scriptural principle, the relation of all baptized persons to the discipline of the Church—a principle which the new has dropped. True, the Revised Book uses the term “discipline” in relation to baptized non-communicants, but in a general sense only, as embracing instruction, training, oversight; not in a technical sense, involving censure or judicial prosecution—the only sense admissible in a “Book of Discipline,” or “Canons of Discipline,” as distinguished from a “Confession of Faith,” a “Form of Government,” a “Directory for Worship;” all of which, especially the “Directory,” treat of the oversight and instruction of the children of the