Drift of St. Jerome’s Statement.

BOOK VII. Ch. v. 6.

saith he, the Church of Alexandria did always keep, till in Heraclais and Dionysius they began to do otherwise. These two were the very first not chosen out of their college of presbyters.

The drift and purpose of St. Jerome’s speech doth plainly shew what his meaning was: for whereas some did over extol the office of the deacon in the church of Rome, where deacons being grown great, through wealth, challenged place above presbyters; St. Jerome to abate this insolency, writing to Evagrius diminisheth by all means the deacon’s estimation, and lifteth up presbyters as far as possible the truth might bear. “An attendant,” saith he, “upon tables and widows proudly to exalt himself above them at whose prayers is made the Body and Blood of Christ; above them, between whom and bishops there was at the first for a time no difference neither in authority nor in title. And whereas afterward schisms and contentions made it necessary that some one should be placed over them, by which occasion the title of bishop became proper unto that one, yet was that one chosen out of the presbyters, as being the chiefest, the highest, the worthiest degree of the clergy, and not out of deacons: in which consideration also it seemeth that in


St. Jerome’s Reproof of overweening Deacons.

BOOK VII. Ch. v. 6.

Alexandria even from St. Mark to Heraclas and Dionysius saith he, the presbyters evermore have chosen one of themselves, and not a deacon at any time, to be their bishop. “Nor let any man think that Christ hath one church in Rome and another in the rest of the world; that in Rome he allow-eth deacons to be honoured above presbyters, and otherwise will have them to be in the next degree to the bishop. If it be deemed that abroad where bishops are poorer, the presbyters under them may be the next unto them in honour, but at Rome where the bishop hath ample revenues, the deacons whose estate is nearest for wealth, may be also for estimation the next unto him: we must know that a bishop in the meanest city is no less a bishop than he who is seated in the greatest; the countenance of a rich and the meanness of a poor estate doth make no odds between bishops: and therefore, if a presbyter at Eugubium be the next in degree to a bishop, surely, even at Rome it ought in reason to be so likewise, and not a deacon for wealth’s sake only to be above, who by order should be, and elsewhere is, underneath a presbyter. But ye will say that according to the custom of Rome a deacon presenteth unto the bishop him which standeth to be ordained presbyter, and upon the deacon’s testimony given concerning his fitness, he receiveth a: the Bishop’s hands ordination: so that in Rome the deacon having this special preeminence, the presbyter ought there to give place unto him. Wherefore is the custom of one city brought against the practice of the whole world? The paucity of deacons in the church of Rome hath gotten the [them?] credit; as unto presbyters their multitude hath been cause of contempt: howbeit even in the Church of Rome, presbyters sit, and deacons stand; an argument as strong against the superiority of deacons, as the fore-alleged reason Coth seem for it. Besides, whosoever is promoted must needs be raised from a lower degree to an higher; wherefore either let him which is presbyter be made a deacon, that so the deacon may appear to be the greater; or if of deacons presbyters be made, let them know themselves to be in regard of deacons, though below in gain, yet above in office. And to the end we may understand that those apostolical orders are taken out of the Old Testament, what Aaron

VOL. III.
BOOK VII.

Ch. vii. 7.

“and his sons and the Levites were in the temple, the same
in the Church may bishops and presbyters and deacons
“challenge unto themselves.”

[7.] This is the very drift and substance, this the true construction and sense of St. Jerome’s whole discourse in that epistle: which I have therefore endeavoured the more at large to explain, because no one thing is less effectual or more usual to be alleged against the ancient authority of bishops; concerning whose government St. Jerome’s own words otherwhere are sufficient to shew his opinion, that this order was not only in Alexandria so ancient, but even as ancient in other churches. We have before alleged his testimony touching James the bishop of Jerusalem. As for bishops in other churches, on the first of the Epistle to Titus thus he speaketh 1, “Till through the instinct of the Devil they grew in the Church factions, and among the people it began to be professed, I am of Paul, I of Apollos, and I of Cephas,” churches were governed by the common advice...

St. Jerome counted Episcopacy Apostolical.

“of presbyters; but when every one began to reckon those
whom himself had baptized his own and not Christ’s, it
was decreed in the whole world that one chosen out of the
presbyters should be placed above the rest, to whom all
care of the Church should belong, and so the seeds of
schism be removed.” If it be so, that by St. Jerome’s own confession this order was not then begun when people in the apostles’ absence began to be divided into factions by their teachers, and to rehearse, “I am of Paul,” but that even at the very first appointment thereof [it] was agreed upon and received throughout the world; how shall a man be persuaded that the same Jerome thought it so ancient no where saving in Alexandria, one only church of the whole world?

[8.] A sentence there is indeed of St. Jerome’s, which being not thoroughly considered and weighed may cause his meaning so to be taken, as if he judged episcopal regiments to have been the Church’s invention long after, and not the apostles’ own institution; as namely, when he admonisheth bishops in this manner 1: “As therefore presbyters do know that the custom of the Church makes them subject to the Bishop which is set over them; so let bishops know that, rather than the truth of any ordinance of the Lord’s maketh elders, by whose council they were ruled... Neither do we read at any time that the elders of the church of Corinth gave the occasion of this schism, but that it was taken of the people by reason of that opinion they had of their pastors and elders. They for whose sake this schism was set abroad at Corinth were not at Corinth: so that for the avoiding of this schism the elders which were to be set in some better order under one bishop were Paul himself and Apollos and Cephas, &c. And p. 67. “The error of Hierom and Aerius grew of the... confused use of these titles (a) If these titles (b) Bishop and an Elder as they were then in use. But when the same thing befalles the title of an Apostle also, is it not strange that they should rather err in the one than the other? For whereas as Barnabas, Epaphroditus, and many others are called apostles; yet no man thereby ever thought at any time that there was no difference between them and the twelve apostles.”

1 V. 5. [i. vii. 694 E. “Ante quam Diaboli institutum studia in ecclesia [religionis] fierent, et diceretur in populis, Ego sum Paulus, ego Apollo, ego autem Cephe; communio presbyterorum consilio Ecclesie gubernatar. Postquam vero unusquisque eos quos baptizaverat suos putabat esse, non Christi, in toto orbe decretum est, ut unus de presbyteris electus superponeretur caeteris, ad quem omnis ecclesie cura pertinere, et schismatum semina tollerentur.” Sarav. remarks on this passage, “Quod hic dicitur communio presbyterorum consilio ecclesie in principio fuisse gubernatas, non diffinere sed non arguir dominice institutionis episcopos non fuisse postea praestos ecclesie, non magis quam presbyteros et diaconos non ex ordinatione divina creatos ab Apostolis, quia ecclesie absque presbyteris et diaconis sub apo-stolis regebantur, antequam cre- rentur diaconi et presbyteri.” C. 23. p. 51. “Inde non sequitur, ab apostolis, ubi viros idoneos Deus dederit, non fuisse prefectos singulius ecclesie singulos episco-pos supra ipsos presbyteros, cui in apostolorum locum suum succe-dent, et illa eadem praestantur, que ipsi praestissint, si ubique semper praestantes ecclesie adesse, aut semper vivere putissent.” p. 52.] 2 [Sarav. Tract on diverse Degrees of Ministers, Eng. Transl. p. 65. Lond. 1591. “But now those factions began in the apostoles, and therefore that custom began in good time, and the Apostles themselves for the avoiding of schism altered (if not abrogated) the Lord’s institution. The which, methinks, were more than absurd to say. Our Saviour, no doubt, who is the wisdom of His Father, knew much better than the Apostles what was needful and commodious for the preventing of schism. Whom as it did not beseem to seem more wise than their master, so was it not their parts for the default of one church to alter God’s institution. Again, how knew Hierome, that before those schisms brake forth the church of Corinth had their...”.

1 Ibid. v. 5. [vii. 695 E. “Sicut ergo Presbyteri scilicet se ex Ecclesie consuetudine et qui sibi praestes fuerit, esse subjectos; ita episcopi noverint se magis consuetudine quam dispositionis Dominici veritate, Presbyteris esse majores, et non in commune debere Ecclesie regere.”]

2 Bishops he meaneth by restraint; for episcopal power was always in the Church institution by Christ himself, the apostles being in government bishops at large; as no man will deny;—having received from Christ himself that episcopal authority. For which cause Cyprian hath said of them: “Meminisse...”.

In what Sense St. Jerome might reckon Episcopacy

BOOK VII.
Ch. v. 8.

them greater than the rest, and that with common advice
they ought to govern the Church."

To clear the sense of these words therefore, as we have
done already the former: laws which the Church from the
beginning universally hath observed were some delivered by
Christ himself, with a charge to keep them to the world's
end, as the law of baptizing and administering the holy
eucharist; some brought in afterwards by the apostles, yet
not without the special direction of the Holy Ghost, as
occasions did arise. Of this sort are the apostolical orders
and laws whereby deacons, widows, virgins, were first ap-
pointed in the Church. * [This answer to St. Jerome seemeth
dangerous; I have qualified it as I may by addition of
some words of restraint: yet I satisfy not myself, in my
judgment it would be altered.] "Now whereas Jerome doth
"term the government of bishops by restraint an apostolical
"tradition, acknowledging thereby the same to have been of
"the apostles' own institution, it may be demanded how these
"two will stand together; namely, tha: the apostles by divine
"instinct should be, as Jerome confesseth, the authors of that
"regiment; and yet the custom of the Church be accounted
"(for so by Jerome it may seem to be in this place accounted)
"the chiefest prop that upholdeth the same. To this we
"answer, That forasmuch as the whole body of the Church
"hath power to alter, with general consent and upon necessary
"occasions, even the positive laws of the apostles, if there be
"no command to the contrary, and it manifestly appears to her,
"that change of times have clearly taken away the very reasons
"of God's first institution; as by sundry examples may be
"most clearly proved: what laws the universal Church might

* [A new paragraph begins here in Gauden's ed.]

"Dominus elegit: diaconos autem
post ascensum Domini in celos
apostoli sibi constituuerunt episco-
patus sui et ecclesie ministros."
Lib. iii. Ep. 9. [al. Ep. 3. c. 2.]
1 [It is obvious that this sentence is
an insertion by mistake into the
text of a note on the rough draft of
the work, either by Hooker or by
some friend (most probably the
latter): according to the remark of
Dr. Mac Crie, Life of Melville, vol. i.
p. 462. The following sentences, down
to "perpetual continuance thereof," are by Gauden printed
in Italics, probably because he found
them underscored in Hooker's MS.
But the sense, it is apprehended,
will be more exactly given by omit-
ting the Italics, (which were prob-
ably an insertion of the critic,) and
reading the whole as one paragraph
with the exception of the supposed
marginal note.]

a Church Custom rather than a Divine Order.

BOOK VII.
Ch. v. 8.

"change, and doth not, if they have long continued without
"any alteration, it seemeth that St. Jerome ascriveth the con-
"tinuance of such positive laws, though instituted by God
"himself, to the judgment of the Church. For they which
"might abrogate a law and do not, are properly said to uphold,
"to establish it, and to give it being. The regiment therefore
"whereof Jerome speaketh being positive, and consequently
"not absolutely necessary, but of a changeable nature, because
"there is no divine voice which in express words forbiddeth it
"to be changed; he might imagine both that it came by the
"apostles by very divine appointment at the first, and not-
"withstanding be, after a sort, said to stand in force, rather by
"the custom of the Church, choosing to continue in it, than by
"the necessary constraint of any commandment from the word,
"requiring perpetual continuance thereof." So that St. Jerome's
admonition is reasonable, sensible, and plain, being contrived
to this effect: The ruling superiority of one bishop over many
presbyters in each church, is an order descended from Christ
to the Apostles, who were themselves bishops at large, and
from the Apostles to those whom they in their steads ap-
pointed bishops over particular countries and cities; and even
from those ancient times, universally established, thus many
years it hath continued throughout the world; for which
cause presbyters must not grudge to continue subject unto
their bishops, unless they will proudly oppose themselves
against that which God himself ordained by his apostles,
and the whole Church of Christ approveth and judgeth most
convenient. On the other side bishops, albeit they may
avouch with conformity of truth that their authority hath
thus descended even from the very apostles themselves, yet
the absolute and everlasting continuance of it they cannot
say that any commandment of the Lord doth enjoin; and
therefore must acknowledge that the Church hath power by
universal consent upon urgent cause to take it away, if
thereunto be constrained through the proud, tyrannical,
and unreasoning dealings of her bishops, whose regiment
she hath thus long delighted in, because she hath found it
good and requisite to be so governed. Wherefore lest bishops
forget themselves, as if none on earth had authority to touch
their states, let them continually bear in mind, that it is
BOOK VII. rather the force of custom, whereby the Church having so long found it good to continue under the regimen of her virtuous bishops, doth still uphold, maintain, and honour them in that respect, than that any such true and heavenly law can be shewed, by the evidence whereof it may of a truth appear that the Lord himself hath appointed presbyters for ever to be under the regimen of bishops, in what sort soever they behave themselves. Let this consideration be a bridle unto them, let it teach them not to disdain the advice of their presbyters, but to use their authority with so much the greater humility and moderation, as a sword which the Church hath power to take from them. In all this there is no let why St. Jerome might not think the authors of episcopal regimen to have been the very blessed apostles themselves, directed therein by the special motion of the Holy Ghost, which the ancients all before and besides him and himself also elsewhere being known to hold, we are not without better evidence than this to think him in judgment divided both from himself and from them."

[9.] Another argument that the regimen of churches by one Bishop over many presbyters hath been always held apostolical, may be this. We find that throughout all those cities where the apostles did plant Christianity, the history of times hath noted succession of pastors in the seat of one, not of many (there being in every such Church evermore many pastors), and the first one in every rank of succession we find to have been, if not some Apostle, yet some Apostle’s disciple. By Epiphanius the bishops of Jerusalem are reckoned down from James to Hilarion then Bishop. Of them which boasted that they held the same things which they received of such as lived with the apostles themselves, Tertullian speaketh after this sort: "Let them therefore shew the beginnings of their churches, let them recite their bishops one by one, each in such sort succeeding other, that the first bishop of them have had for his author and predecessor some Apostle, or at least some apostolical person who persevered with the apostles. For so apostolical churches are wont to bring forth the evidence of their estates. So doth the Church of Smyrna, having Polycarp whom John did consecrate." Catalogues of bishops in a number of other churches, *(bishops, and succeeding one another) from the very apostles’ times, are by Eusebius and Socrates collected; whereby it appeareth so clear, as nothing in the world more, that under them and by their appointment this order began, which maketh many presbyters subject unto the regimen of some one bishop. For as in Rome while the civil ordering of the commonwealth was jointly and equally in the hands of two consuls, historical records concerning them did evermore mention them both, and note which two as colleagues succeeded from time to time; so there is no doubt but ecclesiastical antiquity had done the very like, had not one pastor’s place and calling been always so eminent above the rest in the same church.

[10.] And what need we to seek far for proofs that the apostles, who began this order of regimen of bishops, did it not but by divine instinct, when without such direction things of far less weight and moment they attempted not? Paul and Barnabas did not open their mouths to the Gentiles, till the Spirit had said, “Separate me Paul and Barnabas for the work whereunto I have sent them.” The eunuch by Philip was neither baptized nor instructed before the angel of God was sent to give him notice that so it pleased the Most High. In Asia, Paul and the rest were silent, because the Spirit forbade them to speak. When they intended to have seen Bithynia they stayed their journey, the Spirit not giving them leave to go. Before Timothy was employed in those episcopal affairs of the Church, about which the Apostle St. Paul used him, the Holy Ghost gave special charge for his ordination, and prophetical intelligence
Bishops above Priests in Power of Order.

VI. "A Bishop," saith St. Augustine, "is a Presbyter's "superior:" but the question is now, wherein that superiority did consist. The Bishop's preeminence we therefore was twofold. First he excelled in latitude of the power of order, secondly in that kind of power which belongeth unto jurisdiction. Priests in the law had authority and power to do greater things than Levites, the high-priest greater than inferior priests might do; therefore Levites were beneath priests, and priests inferior to the high-priest, by reason of the very degree of dignity, and of worthiness in the nature of those functions which they did execute, and not only for that the one had power to command and control the other. In like sort presbyters having a weightier and a worthier charge than deacons had, the deacon was in this sort the presbyter's inferior; and where we say that a bishop was likewise ever accounted a presbyter's superior, even according unto his very power of order, we must of necessity declare what principal duties belonging unto that kind of power a bishop might perform, and not a presbyter.

[2.] The custom of the primitive Church in consecrating holy virgins and widows unto the service of God and his Church, is a thing not obscure, but easy to be known, both by that which St. Paul himself concerning them hath, and by the latter consonant evidence of other men's writings. Now a part of the preeminence which bishops had in their power of order, was that by them only such were consecrated.

[3.] Again, the power of ordaining both deacons and presbyters, the power to give the power of order unto others, this also hath been always peculiar unto bishops. It hath not been heard of, that inferior presbyters were ever authorized to ordain. And concerning ordination, so great force and dignity it hath, that whereas presbyters, by such power as they have received for administration of the sacraments, are able only to beget children unto God; bishops having power to ordain, do by virtue thereof create fathers to the people of God, as Epiphanius fitly disputeth. There are which hold that between a bishop and a presbyter, touching power of order, there is no difference. The reason of which conceit is, for that they see presbyters no less than bishops authorized to offer up the prayers of the Church, to preach the gospel, to baptize, to administer the holy Eucharist; but they considered not withal as they should, that the presbyter's authority to do these things is derived from the bishop which doth ordain him thereunto, so that even in those things which are common unto both, yet the power of the one is as it were a certain light borrowed from the others' lamp. The apostles being bishops at large, ordained every where presbyters. Titus and Timothy having received episcopal power, as apostolic ambassadors or legates, the one in Greece, the other in Ephesus, they both did by virtue thereof likewise ordain throughout all churches deacons and presbyters within the circuits allotted unto them. As for bishops by restraints, their power this way incomunicable unto presbyters which of the ancients do not acknowledge?

1 1 Cor. vii. 25; 1 Tim. v. 9.
2 Tertull. de vel. Virg. [c. 9.
3 Sermo alibi virginen in viduatu
4 ab annis nonum viginti colo
5 Epiphan. lib. iii. Hier. v. 75. [c. 4.
6 Acts xiv. 23.
7 Tit. i. 5.
8 Tit. i. 5.