

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

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

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



Buy me a coffee

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



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

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

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php

highly inexpedient that anyone should decide it without very mature consideration. The present writer will set an example in this respect by withholding his own provisional conclusions.

But inasmuch as the only thing that could possibly induce us to make these sacrifices would be the prospect of a permanent settlement, it must be confessed that the way in which the Report has been received by the ritualists seems at first sight such as to make it unnecessary to bestow any further consideration on the matter. If it is to be a mere instalment, if there is to be no peace, not even a truce, but only a shifting of the battlefield; then we shall say, and we shall claim the sanction and approval of such men as the Dean of Windsor in saying, that we prefer to remain as we are. We must, therefore, take guarantees of permanency.

A LAYMAN.

Review.

Apostolic Succession. The Teaching of the Church of England on the Alleged Necessity of Episcopal Ordination, in Unbroken Succession from the Apostles, to the Valid Ministration of the Word and Sacraments. By the Rev. JOSEPH BARDSLEY, D.D., Vicar of Bradford and Rural Dean. Hatchards. Pp. 21.

This is a pamphlet of no ordinary value. The substance of it was read at the Lay and Clerical Conference held at Southport, May 30th, 1883. The work contains, in a short compass, so much important historical matter, and so clearly reasoned, that it may well be strongly recommended to the laity and clergy generally for their careful perusal.

The work is especially seasonable, as the subject on which it treats is engaging the serious attention of some eminently learned and influential men, Presbyterians as well as Episcopalians.

The following extract from Dr. Bardsley's able argument will exhibit the value of his work :

Mr. Perceval, in a letter to Dr. Arnold, says that "the *first* of the points which the Tractators agreed to put forth was, the doctrine of Apostolic Succession as a rule of practice; i.e. (1) That the participation of the body and blood of Christ is essential to the maintenance of Christian life and hope in each individual. (2) That it is conveyed to individual Christians only by the hands of the successors of the Apostles and their delegates. (3) That the successors of the Apostles are those who are descended in a direct line from them by the imposition of hands, and that the delegates of these are the respective Presbyters whom each has commissioned. . . ." In one of the "Tracts for the Times" we are told that any person who presumes, without such a commission, to minister "in holy things, is all the while treading in the footsteps of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram." Palmer, in his "Treatise on the Church," declares that "the Presbyterians in Scotland separated themselves from the Church; that their rejection of the authority and communion of the existing successors of the Apostles in Scotland mark them as schismatics;

and all the temporal enactments and powers of the whole world would not cure this fault, nor render them a portion of the Church of Christ." In Froude's "Remains" we read that "the attempt to substitute any other form of ordination for the Episcopal, or to seek communion with Christ through any non-Episcopal association, is to be regarded, not as a schism merely, but as an impossibility."

Dr. Bardsley then proceeds to prove that the Reformers held the very opposite views to those embodied in the passages above cited; and that the compilers of our Articles, Liturgy, and Homilies gave no countenance to these doctrines, but taught the reverse. . . . Scarcely any of the Reformers did more than claim for Episcopacy that it had *Apostolic sanction*; but few, if even one, maintained that it was founded upon any positive command or precept of the New Testament. They believed Episcopacy to be the best form of Church government; but they never dreamt that it was essential to the being of a true Church, much less that without it there could be no sacraments or salvation. . . . "They maintained that it could be justified by *Apostolic precedent*, but could not be enforced as required by *Divine command*. That this was the view they held is capable of the clearest proof." The Reformers who lived in the times of King Edward VI., and of Elizabeth, acknowledged the non-Episcopal Churches of the Continent as sister Churches.

Archbishop Whitgift states, in a work written at the request of Archbishop Parker, and which Strype describes as "one of the Public Books of the Church of England:"—"We see manifestly that, in sundry points, the government of the Church used in the Apostles' time is, and hath been of necessity, altered. . . . Whereby it is plain, that any one certain form or kind of external government, perpetually to be observed, is nowhere in the Scripture prescribed to the Church. . . . This is the opinion of the best writers, neither do I know any learned man of a contrary judgment." Such was the language of the chosen defender of the Church's form of government against its Puritan assailant.

Dr. Bardsley proceeds to inquire what the Thirty-nine Articles teach on this subject. In the nineteenth, "Of the Church," and in the twenty-third, "Of Ministering in the Congregation," Episcopacy is not so much as mentioned, though in one we have a definition of the Church, and in the other a declaration touching the authority by which ministers are sent into the Lord's vineyard. Whilst it is impossible to account for this omission on the theory that the compilers of these Articles believed in the necessity of Episcopacy to the being of a true Church, it is easy to account for it when we remember that those who penned them, though believing the Episcopalian form of Church government to be the best, did not deem it indispensable. Bishop Burnet, on the Thirty-nine Articles, considers that the general words in which this part of the twenty-third Article is framed, seem to have been designed not to exclude the foreign Protestant Churches; and Bishop Tomline, on the same Article, writes: "The Scriptures do not prescribe any definite form of Church government." And further, Dr. John Hey, Norrisian Professor at Cambridge at the end of the last century, declares "that this twenty-third Article seems to leave the manner of giving the power of ordaining quite free; it seems as if every religious society might, consistently with this Article, appoint officers, with power of ordination, by election, representation, or lot; and therefore the right to ordain did not depend upon any uninterrupted succession."

For many years after the Reformation, Presbyterian ministers were admitted into our Church, and authorized to preach and administer the sacraments *without re-ordination*. Bishop Hall observes:

I know those, more than one, that by virtue only of that ordination which they

have brought with them from other Reformed Churches, have enjoyed spiritual promotions and livings without any exception against the lawfulness of their calling.

Having referred to Bishop Hall's statement as to a matter of fact, Dr. Bardsley cites his well-known remarks on the general subject under consideration :

Blessed be God, there is no difference in any *essential* matter betwixt the Church of England and her sisters of the Reformation. . . . The only difference is in the form of outward administration ; wherein also we are so far agreed as that we all profess this form not to be essential to the being of a Church, though much importing the well, or better being of it, according to our several apprehension thereof. But withal nothing hinders but that we may come yet closer to one another, if both may resolve to meet in that primitive government (whereby it is met we should both be regulated), universally agreed upon by all antiquity ; wherein all things were ordered and translated by the consent of the Presbytery, moderated by one constant President thereof. . . . If the name of a Bishop displease, let them call their man a Moderator, a President, a Superintendent, an Observer ; only for the fixedness or change of their person let the ancient and universal practice of God's Church be thought worthy to overshadow. And if in this one point (*wherein the distance is so narrow*) we could condescend to each other, all other circumstances and appearances of varying practices or opinions might without any difficulty be accorded. *But if there must be a difference of judgment in those matters of outward policy, why should not our hearts be still one? Why should such a diversity be of power to endanger the dissolving the bond of brotherhood? May we have the grace but to follow the Truth in love, we shall in these several tracts overtake her happily in the end ; and find her embracing of peace and crowning us with blessedness.*

This testimony from the pen of Bishop Hall is the more valuable, as he wrote at great length on the Divine right of Episcopacy. The argument of Dr. Bardsley is further strengthened by his reference to the canonical recognition of the Church of Scotland by the Church of England. In the fifty-fifth Canon we have these words : " Before all sermons, lectures, and homilies, the preachers and ministers . . . shall pray for Christ's Holy Catholic Church ; that is, for the whole congregation of Christian people dispersed throughout the whole world, and especially for the Churches of England, Scotland, and Ireland." I think it can be made manifest that by the Church of Scotland, says Dr. Bardsley, is here meant the Presbyterian Church of that country. The Presbyterian Church had been authoritatively acknowledged as the Church of that country in 1195 and 1597. Episcopacy was not reintroduced till 1610 ; for what Church, therefore, can we be taught to pray, but for that Church which was the recognised Church of the country at that time ? These facts prove that Macaulay states the simple truth in the following words : " In the year 1603 the Convocation solemnly recognised the Church of Scotland, a Church in which Episcopal control and Episcopal ordination were then unknown, as a branch of the Holy Catholic Church of Christ."

Though it is not easy always to determine the exact time when erroneous tenets are first broached in a Christian community, this may be done with tolerable accuracy in the case before us ; and Dr. Bardsley's account of Laud's sermon on the subject is well worth quoting. He says : " When Laud presented himself at Oxford, to answer in the Divinity Schools, with a view to obtain his degree of B.D., in 1604, ' he maintained there could be no true Church without Diocesan Bishops,' for which Dr. Holland, then Regius Professor of Divinity, ' openly reprehended him in the Schools for a seditious person, who would unchurch

the Reformed Protestant Churches beyond seas, and now sow division between us and them, who were brethren, by this *novel Popish position.*' Such are the words of Prynne in his 'Life of Laud.' Heylin, in his 'Life of Laud,' says that 'he was shrewdly rattled by Dr. Holland as one that did endeavour to cast a bone of discord betwixt the Church of England and the Reformed Churches beyond the seas.' Hallam says, that Laud was 'reproved by the University of Oxford in 1604, for maintaining in his exercise for Bachelor of Divinity, that there could be no true Church without Bishops.'" Coming down a century later, we find Archbishop Tenison, in 1707, declaring that "he thought the narrow notions of all Churches have been their ruin; and that he believed the Church of Scotland to be as true a Protestant Church as the Church of England, though he could not say it was as perfect." But it is unnecessary," adds Dr. Bardsley, "to adduce single authorities, however eminent they may be, when we remember that we have had, in effect, the sanction of the whole bench of Bishops for several generations in connection with the venerable Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts":

"This Society was established some thirty or forty years after the Restoration, and it sent out and supported for a long time ministers not possessing Episcopal ordination. . . . The deliberate acts of an institution such as the Propagation Society, which numbers our Bishops amongst its Vice-Presidents and supporters, cannot fail, one would think, to exercise an influence in determining what our orthodox divines have thought on the subject under consideration. I submit that if there be one question in the whole range of theological controversy capable of clearer proof than another, it is that the Church of England has given no countenance, since the times of the Reformation, to the unscriptural dogma of Apostolic succession, as that dogma is defined and held by a party within our Church. I believe also that there is no error that is fraught with more mischief; for, when carried out to its logical consequences, it gives over to the uncovenanted mercies of God millions of Christians in our own country alone, who love their Bible and adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things, and to whom the whole nation is most deeply indebted for the vast services which they have rendered to the cause of true religion. . . . We shall do well to cultivate the spirit which animated the 'High Church' prelate, Archbishop Sancroft, when he enjoined the Bishops and Clergy of his day, 'that they warmly and most affectionately exhort our brethren the Protestant Dissenters to join with us in daily fervent prayer to the God of Peace, for the universal blessed union of all Reformed Churches, both at home and abroad, against our common enemies; that all they who do confess the holy Name of our dear Lord, and do agree in the truth of His Holy Word, may also meet in one holy communion, and live in perfect unity and godly love.'"

With these truly Christian sentiments of Archbishop Sancroft, Dr. Bardsley concludes his very able argument. Our copious extracts from his pamphlet will show its special value, as containing in such short compass so much historical information on a subject of deepest importance at the present time. The work deserves a very wide circulation, and cannot be too strongly commended.

Soon after the Tracts appeared on the subject of Apostolic Succession, a powerful sermon was preached at the Archdeacon's Visitation at Hastings, May, 19, 1835, by Julius Charles Hare, the Learned Rector of Herstmonceux, and formerly Fellow and Tutor of Trinity College, Cambridge. The following extract will be not an uninteresting supplement to Dr. Bardsley's argument. The sermon was on Matt. xxviii, 20,

“Lo! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world,” and entitled “Christ’s promise, the strength of the Church.”

“Here” (says Mr. Hare), “I cannot but make mention of a notion which has been brought forward somewhat prominently by certain very amiable and pious men in our days—namely, that our Lord’s promise in the text was not made to the collective body of His Church, to that body of which He is the Head, the blessed communion of all faithful people, in all nations, and through all ages—but that it was confined to the Apostles exclusively, as the supposed representatives of the Episcopal body, and that none are embraced in it, none must flatter themselves they have the slightest share in it, except the same Episcopal body unto the end of the world. To some of you, perchance, my brethren, such an assertion may come with the sound of a novelty, and, in that case, I would fain hope of a most startling and offensive one. You would join with me, I would fain hope, in the earnest desire to purge our Church from all remains of that Judaizing Romish superstition, which would wrap up the free spirit of the Gospel in the swathing-bands of forms and ceremonies, and would tether it to a name. That amiable and pious men should have taken up such a notion, which leads straightway to the most revolting conclusions—according to which the chief part of Protestant Christendom is cast out at once by a sweeping interdict from the pale of Christ’s Church, nay, is recklessly declared to stand on a level with the heathen, and to be left to the uncovenanted mercies of God—that amiable and pious men should not shrink with awe from such a notion, that they should take it up under anything less than the clearest, most compulsory, most irresistible demonstration—that they should not look carefully and anxiously round for some mode of escaping from such appalling conclusions—might be deemed unaccountable, if we did not remember how prone we all are to convert every object of our peculiar interest and affection, even the objects of our purest worship, into idols. This is the last wall of the citadel in which the selfishness of man takes refuge and barricades itself; and it can hardly be thrown down altogether so long as we continue here below. Our form of government must be the only good form of government, not because it is a good one, but because it is ours. Our Church must be the only Church, not because it is founded on truth—few examine its foundations, still fewer examine the foundations of other Churches with patience and candour, and honesty and a righteous self-distrust. No; our Church is ours, and therefore it is the only true one. We still cannot bear to think that the veil of the temple should have been rent; we still cannot bear that the Gentiles should have a free approach to the Holy of Holies; we cannot bear that our neighbours should come to it by any other road than ours. Lovers of the Bible too easily degenerate into bibliolaters, lovers of the Church into ecclesiolaters. Everywhere the carnal mind attaches itself to the letter, the form, the dregs, instead of the free living spirit. More especially is a delusion of this sort likely to fascinate the noblest souls, when the object of their love appears to be feeble or in danger. . . .”

“This is not the place for me to speak concerning the Apostolical institution of Episcopacy; nor would the time allow me to set forth the reasons by which we are induced to retain that institution, or which seem to render it indispensable to the perfect development of the idea of the Church. There are too many important matters awaiting me, more immediately connected with the subject of this sermon. I can only express my regret that, where such strong arguments in favour of Episcopacy may be drawn from the history and idea of the Church, many

“ of its advocates, not content with proving that it is the best form of Church-government, have resolved to make out that it is the only one, and have tried to rest it upon Scriptural grounds, which, in fact, only weakens their case. For I cannot discover the shadow of a word in the Gospels to countenance the interpretation referred to. Feeble and flimsy as are the Scriptural arguments on which the Romanists maintain the inalienable primacy of St. Peter, they are far more specious and plausible than those derived from the same source, on the strength of which it has been attempted to establish the absolute necessity of Episcopacy to the existence of a Christian Church. I am aware the interpretation I am controverting has been maintained by some very eminent divines in former times. But a greater weight of authority is against it. Our Reformers, and the still more highly gifted men whom God called up in Germany and France to awaken the Church out of her spiritual sleep, knew nothing of the absolute necessity contended for; although they, too, would gladly have retained the Episcopal order in their churches, if the course of events would have allowed of it. And need I remind you what is the argument of the noblest work our Church has produced, *the Ecclesiastical polity*? You know that, instead of arguing that Episcopacy is the only institution conformable to Scripture, the point that Hooker undertook to prove was, that Episcopacy was not contrary to Scripture, as it was declared to be by the Puritans. He contends that, while in matters of faith there must be unity, because the object of faith is one, in matters of polity and discipline there may be diversity; yet that every established form of ecclesiastical government is rightly to be esteemed ordained by God, even as every established form of civil government is ordained by God. On this foundation he raises his structure; and thus the arguments in favour of Episcopacy, from the history and idea of the Church, become all the stronger, being freed from the strengthless props by which they are usually surrounded. . . .”

“ Let us, my brethren, carefully beware of that most hurtful and narrow-minded of monopolies which would monopolize the grace of God. The way of life is narrow enough; let us not throw up any fresh mounds by its side to render it narrower still. Let us rejoice in the blessed assurance, *that they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south; and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God.* Let us rejoice that the salvation which Christ wrought for His people is not tied to any one form of Church-government or other, to anything that man can set up, or that man can pull down. Let us rejoice that in Christ Jesus neither Episcopacy availeth anything, nor anti-Episcopacy, but a new creature. Let us rejoice that the Gospel was to be preached to all nations, and that all nations were to be baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”

Whilst this sermon was in the press Mr. Hare had the offer from the Bishop of Chichester (Dr. Otter) of the Archdeaconry of Lewes. Mr. Hare, with his characteristic fidelity, immediately informed his Bishop of the passage about Episcopacy which he had just preached and was printing. The Bishop wrote most kindly in return: “Print as you propose, but you must nevertheless be my Archdeacon.” Archdeacon Hare that same day showed this letter to the writer of this review.

It is with very deep pleasure and good hopes for the future that we observe how this grave subject is now being considered in Scotland. The Bishop of St. Andrews (Bishop Charles Wordsworth, D.C.L.), in his recent Charge of Sept. 6, 1883, refers to “an excellent lecture delivered in Edinburgh only a few months ago by Dr. Cunningham, of Crieff, wherein he thus speaks”:

If the Episcopalian, under the guidance of Bishop Lightfoot and Mr. Hatch were to renounce his belief in the Divine right of Episcopacy, as the Presbyterian has long since abandoned his belief in the Divine right of Presbytery, it might be possible to devise a middle system. Who can tell what may be? Men's minds are gradually softening. Bishop Wordsworth, who has never despaired, but has clung to the hope of union with a noble persistency, has entitled his recent Charge 'Prospects of Reconciliation between Presbytery and Episcopacy,' and we pray such prospects may become brighter and brighter every day.

Bishop Wordsworth says :

For my own part, I can assure my distinguished friend, the writer of those kind and encouraging words, that I have never "urged the Divine right of Episcopacy;" have never even (so far as I can remember) used the expression, having long since learnt from Bishop Sanderson, one of the most trustworthy of the English divines, that it is an ambiguous and misleading one. What I have urged—urged more or less continually during the last twenty years—has been the Divine right of unity, visible unity; and I am quite content that we should seek it under the suggested guidance of Bishop Lightfoot, who, as we have seen, agrees with Bishop Sanderson in advocating Episcopacy as *ex Apostolica designatione*, rather than as of *Divine positive right*, or, in other words, as founded upon any express Divine precept.

The Bishop adds :

I cannot conclude this address without alluding to the gratification which I have felt, and which I am sure you will all share with me, in reading, only two days ago, the letter of Professor Milligan which appears in the *Catholic Presbyterian* of the present month. Under the title of "Church Union," its avowed object is to advocate a unity in Scotland which shall embrace our Episcopal Church; and coming from an ex-Moderator of the Established General Assembly, and one of the most learned and most influential of living Presbyterian divines, it is to be hoped that some of you may live to see the happy effects which, under God's blessing, it is calculated to produce. In the meantime, we may well be thankful that a spirit so truly Christian, and so truly Catholic, should have found expression, so able and so just, in a channel which cannot fail to convey its sentiments to leading members of the Presbyterian Churches, not only in Scotland, but throughout the world. More than this, I trust that a Scottish Church Union Committee will be formed of Presbyterians and Episcopals combined, mostly, if not exclusively, laymen, who will be at the pains to cause the letter to be reprinted, with Dr. Milligan's permission, and to be circulated widely among the middle and poorer classes.

The following passage from a letter which Bishop Wordsworth has just published, October 6th, 1883, will give additional weight to the argument of Dr. Bardsley's valuable pamphlet :

"For me," writes the Bishop, "during the last twenty years, at least, *the real question has been*, not the invalidity of Presbyterian orders, but the *sin and manifold evils of disunion* among fellow-Christians living in the *same land and under the same political constitution*; and it is to remedy, *or at least to alleviate* these, that I have 'devoted the energies' of a *great portion of my life*. And how have I endeavoured to do this? *By urging the course which both the past history of the Church and the present condition of Christendom—especially our own, i.e. the British part of it (taking the words in the widest sense)—combine to recommend as the most reasonable, and therefore the least unlikely to succeed—that is, the adoption of the threefold ministry; not because Presbyterian ordination is invalid, but because (to borrow the words uttered in Glasgow last year by the Bishop of Durham, Dr. Lightfoot)*

“ the three-fold ministry is the completeness of the Apostolic ordinance, and the historical backbone of the Church. And if you press me still further for my *opinion* about the validity of Presbyterian orders—though I must repeat that *this is not to my mind the main question*—I do not hesitate to say that, though, in the light of those words of Bishop Lightfoot, I cannot hold them to be *regular*, I hold them to be *valid* for great and manifold spiritual good ; or to express what I think in the language used by the late Bishop of Cape Town, and approved by his South African colleague, Dr. Cotterill, now Bishop of Edinburgh, in addressing the Presbyterian ministers of the Dutch Reformed Church : “ We do not dispute that your members receive through the Sacraments administered by you that which your Church leads them to expect they will receive ; nor do we doubt that the Holy Spirit works in the conversion of souls to God in and through your ministry. It would, in our judgment, be *sinful to doubt this*. Wherever there is godliness, there must be grace, and the Author of it.’ These words I also quoted with approval more than five years ago in an article ‘ On the Law of Christian Unity,’ in the *Nineteenth Century* (May, 1878).”

Short Notices.

Conditional Immortality Tested by Scripture. The substance of Addresses given at Clifton and Tunbridge Wells, 1882 and 1883. By Rev. R. B. GIRDLESTONE, M.A. Hamilton, Adams and Co.

This ably-written pamphlet of only twenty pages, large print, a real *multum in parvo*, will repay a very careful perusal ; it merits, indeed, serious study ; and in the case of readers not biased by publications which appeal to sentiment, it will generally, perhaps, be thoroughly accepted as conclusive. The pamphlet, as we have said, is strong and full ; it gives the result of patient thought and inquiry within a very small compass. But it is in the calmness of its tone, its critical candour, or fairness, as regards assertion and inference as well as reply, and the close connection of the whole argument with its title-page profession—*tested by Scripture*—that its persuasion has power.

If we quote two or three passages from some of its leading sections we shall show the author's method and excite the interest of our readers. To give such extracts as may make it seem unnecessary to purchase the pamphlet is by no means our intention. On the contrary, we desire to recommend the pamphlet, which, it may be said in passing, is cheap and may well be lent or given away, as well as bought.

First of all, having referred to the teaching of Scripture as to the believer's spiritual life, Mr. Girdlestone says :

Thus far there is a general agreement. There is “immortality” for the true Christian, and it is “conditional” on his being what he professes to be. Of any other immortality (excepting always that which God has by virtue of His own nature), Scripture knows nothing.

Secondly, on “The Judgment to Come :” it is appointed unto men once to die, but after that the *Judgment*. And we are led to this important conclusion :

In all the passages of the Bible which speak of men *dying, perishing, or being destroyed*, these words must be understood with reference to the physical or mundane side of their existence. They are not extinguished, obliterated, annihilated, when they die, perish, or are destroyed ; for they are all to be judged according to their works.