

THE PRESBYTERIAN QUARTERLY.

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I. THEOLOGY THE SCIENCE OF RELIGION.¹

THERE are some things relating to the supply of ministers of the gospel about which the leading Christian denominations are substantially agreed. It would be strange if any serious difference existed as to the first and great question of the source of the supply. It is written, "When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. . . . And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." Ministers are gifts to the church from her triumphant and ascended Lord. As the first verse cited from the Epistle to the Ephesians is a quotation from the sixty-eighth Psalm, the import of the statement of the apostle is that God has never left the church to its own resources in the matter of providing ministers, but has reserved to himself, under every dispensation, the prerogative of furnishing them. This divine arrangement keeps the church dependent on God in a matter upon which her very existence, as well as her growth and prosperity, depends; but it is a wise and gracious one, in that it secures with infallible certainty to the church, in answer to her prayers, an adequate supply of the right kind of ministers, and at the same time enables them to speak as the ambassadors of Christ. The second feature of the divine plan relates to the agency given to the church in the word

¹ Delivered as an inaugural address in Columbia Seminary, May, 1896.

IV. A PERVERSION OF HISTORY.

THE month of May, 1660, witnessed an occurrence in England that flames on the pages of history as a beacon to all succeeding generations. The people at large had grown weary and discontented under the administration of Cromwell, notwithstanding the internal peace and public glory of the protectorate. This discontent was produced by the sternness of puritanical restraint upon the irreligious classes of the population. A great majority were pining for their lost enjoyments in public amusements and private vices. Gaiety, frivolity, balls, routs, theatres, and pageants were more popular than sermons and fast-days, with the other solemnities and proprieties of Puritan society. It is also undeniable that Cromwell had been unpopular as a ruler, because his authority had not been clothed in legal forms and primitive ceremonies. He was an arbitrary and untitled sovereign, who reigned, by virtue of military success, under the plea of necessity. His term had been one of the most prosperous and illustrious ever known in the annals of England, and both public and private virtue received encouragement at his hands.

The death of Oliver and the incompetency of Richard Cromwell gave opportunity for the overthrow of Puritanism by the restoration of the Stuarts. The reaction was tremendous. The bulk of the nation rushed headlong into the wanton arms of Charles II., entirely heedless of conditions, and with a spontaneous servility unexampled. The triumph of carnality over spirituality was never more complete. John Bull began to dance with a glee never manifested before, and welcomed his master to London with demonstrations of joy which no national victory could have occasioned.

This was a plain case of popular suicide from insane impulse, as twenty-five years of sad experience demonstrated. The returning despot was far from being arbitrary like Cromwell. He was incapable of anything so robust. A life of licentious self-indulgence was his supreme aim, and he was willing enough to purchase

it by according equal license to other people. Unfortunately, the other people nearest the throne desired license to repay the hated Puritans for all their interference with themselves in Cromwell's time. The king easily yielded to pressure. A more heartless, unscrupulous, perfidious creature never occupied his position. He was ready to sanction any infamy. He perjured himself to the Scots. He indulged the bigots of his court in the delights of bloody persecution. He betrayed the honor of his country, and sold her possessions to supply his wants and pay for his pleasures. Under his libertine example, society plunged into a corruption that defied all decency. Under his unscrupulous sway, an imperious hierarchy reopened the persecuting violence which Cromwell had suppressed by a milder system of his own. In both England and Scotland the blood of dissenters began to flow, much of which, in the sight of God, was far more sacred than that of Charles I.

It was at the accession of the unworthy son of the so-called martyr-king, in 1660, that this impious, unprincipled, dissolute, and treacherous "Head of the Church" turned it over into the hands of a hierarchy of prelates who, like himself, had been long banished, and now returned, resolved to make the most of their success. A distinguished bishop of the American Protestant Episcopal Church has recently reverted to that event for the purpose of promoting Christian union between his own and the Presbyterian denomination. (See letter of Bishop Coxe to Dr. Roberts.) He there asks if his Presbyterian brethren have forgotten the concessions which they (the Presbyterians of the United States, in the year 1895) had made in 1660 to the "Head of the English Church" in favor of prelacy. Were we to admit our own loss of memory in the premises, we might fairly stop to inquire of the right reverend brother if *he* has forgotten the facts of the same date that implicate his own denomination, with equal significance, in the violent proceedings of that day for the suppression of dissent. We would suggest to Bishop Coxe that, if a handful of downtrodden Presbyterians in London obsequiously surrendered to Charles II. the main point of the controversy, and thereby bound *us* in the United States in 1895 to repeat the

same, he can have no right to object if we regard his own church as bound to the principles maintained by the head and hierarchy of the establishment in 1660; for, beyond a question, a precedent of two or more centuries ago, imposed by a mere handful of ministers acting on their own personal responsibility, and reaching down to us here in a free country, cannot control the millions of living Presbyterians, whilst the Episcopalians amongst us are entirely free from such control, enacted, not by a mere committee of volunteers, but by the sovereign power of the church! The claims on one side ought to be as strong as the alleged concessions on the other. This would commit Bishop Coxé to the principles of Laud.

But we have no idea of admitting what this brother coolly assumes. We cannot *forget* a thing we have never known. Nothing could be more preposterous than the idea he has adopted, that a few alarmed ministers in London, making an address to such a king, could, on their own motion, bind all future generations of their brethren to a full surrender of the main issue. These men could not represent all the English, Scottish, Dutch, French, and Swiss Presbyterians of their time. They did not, in fact, represent any body. If their own views found full utterance, it was as much as the circumstances allowed. It requires little imagination to conceive of their constraint. The attempt of the bishop to dislodge many millions of Presbyterians from the positions they have held in all countries of Protestant Christendom from the beginning of the Reformation, by reminding them that they themselves, as represented by a committee at Whitehall in 1660, had been handed over to the prelatical ranks in the presence of the king, impresses us as one of the most singular specimens of ecclesiastical diplomacy ever recorded.

The inquiry may be at once urged, why this surrender was not accepted. How did it come to pass that only one of the company, Dr. Reynolds, found welcome and preferment awaiting him? The others, including the saintly Baxter, died in non-conformity, in spite of the humiliating surrender they had made, according to Bishop Coxé.

But this assumption is too absurd to occupy further attention.

It is absolutely worthless, unless there was something said in the conference that would justify it. The Christian public ought to know that the issue between Presbyterians and Episcopalians has always had reference to the *powers* of the episcopate, and not to a mere term. We have ever maintained that the true historic bishop was pastor of a congregation or parish. Such an *episcopate* has been our claim from the beginning. The intimation of Bishop Coxe, that *we* conceded in 1660 the same thing that *he* contends for in 1895, conveys an impression that is thoroughly misleading. No matter what Baxter and his associates may have said on that occasion to express their desire of peace, they certainly did not concede the "historic episcopate" now offered by the Anglican Church as a basis of union. Not a syllable was uttered by them that can be so construed. Their subsequent lives contradict it. The hierarchy of England would have offered them an ovation and the king have given them fat benefices in the church.

It follows that unless we have totally misconceived the "historic episcopate," we Presbyterians of this age did not, in any sense whatever, accept that dogma in 1660. The two views of episcopacy—the Presbyterian and the Anglican—are as distinct as language can make them. The former is parochial, the latter is not only diocesan, but regal in its authority. Between the two alternatives lies the field of *expediency*, in which human invention has constructed several schemes of government by way of compromise. These schemes are based upon the assumption that the organization of the church was purposely left to the judgment of the people, to be regulated according to circumstances. The Independents and Methodists have acted upon these premises, and built up different systems for themselves. The conference of 1660 may have resulted in concessions of this character. The English Presbyterians were by no means harmonious amongst themselves. They were few and weak, and almost extinct under the grinding of the two millstones of churchism and independency. The great bulk of the denomination was to be found in Scotland and the Low Countries, where Presbyterian establishments had long existed in a fully organized form. The conferences of 1660 were confined

to the little remnant in and about London, who were consulting only for a *modus vivendi*, on the part of that remnant under the Stuarts. They *appear* to have agreed to submit to a modified episcopacy, adopted for expediency and not on divine authority. We understand them as surrendering an absolute parity of the ministers, and intimating that superintending officers over them, as a practical system, might be provided for without admitting the abuses of prelacy. They went as far as a disheartened party possibly could to conciliate the conquerors. But we deny most positively that even *they* conceded the divine right of diocesan bishops as now claimed by Bishop Coxe and his associates. This brother ought to have produced the documentary proof of his statement, which is not and cannot be true, without involving those eminent men in a most dishonorable transaction. The whole amount of it was that in their view the church is a free commonwealth, which may, at its discretion, choose its external organic forms in different lands, and remodel them at pleasure. But whatever interpretation we may put upon their language, we are sure that it could not have meant "the historic episcopate" now urged upon ourselves as a basis of union.

The latter dogma is no mere episcopacy, but undeniably an episcopacy which a sound Protestant must necessarily reject. It is, by its own statement, one of four indispensable articles of the Christian faith. It stands on a level with the Bible and the sacraments. It is a principle without which organized Christianity cannot exist. It is the direct opposite of a free Christian commonwealth, authorized to assume any organic form it may prefer. The dogma of the historic episcopate does not recognize any autonomy in the Christian church, but places its sovereignty in a divinely-determined order of bishops independent of the people.

English Presbyterianism was never anything positive enough to do what Bishop Coxe imagined it did in 1660. The *Westminster Confession* was adopted too late to acquire an ascendancy in the public mind. The moderate party in the Long Parliament, which had affiliated with the Scots on political grounds, was crushed between the Royalists and the Independents under Cromwell, and reduced to a small unorganized body, incapable of main-

taining its influence against overwhelming odds. On the one hand was the king's party burning with resentment; and, on the other, the army flushed with victory, and bent upon radical measures. Between the two, the Presbyterians of England went down, and found it impossible to introduce either a limited constitutional monarchy, or a church allied to those of Scotland, Holland and Geneva. The sequel is well known. Moderation and compromise were an utter failure. The radical extremes enjoyed a temporary triumph, followed after the death of their leader by inaction, despotism, and high church supremacy.

Bishop Coxe would have us believe that we Presbyterians of another age and country, then and there, through our chosen representatives surrendered the ecclesiastical principle for which we had been contending, and adopted the "historic episcopate" so much prized by Laud and Clarendon.

That nothing of the kind took place is not only plain from the circumstances we have pointed out, but from the nature of the issue that divided the parties. That issue was not concerning the words "bishop" and "episcopacy." The necessity of *oversight* and *overseers* in the church was not in question. Presbyterians, as well as "churchmen," held that some such function belonged to the organism. The "churchman" contended that the people and clergy within certain definite bounds were divinely subjected to an ecclesiastic clothed with a several authority derived from a line of predecessors of his own rank. The distinctive position of this party is that all ecclesiastical administration is invalid where this succession is wanting. They could not deny that the pastors of apostolic churches were bishops. The Bible expressly affirms it. They could not deny that a quorum of such bishops would be as competent to supervise a diocese as one. A Presbytery could be a diocesan ruler as well as a prelate. The thing they desired was, that any orders that did not originate in the Roman Catholic Church were valid.

The present position of the Anglican Church, in regard to union, is the same. The Presbyterians might appoint one of their parochial bishops to supervise a district. This would be "diocesan episcopacy," but not at all acceptable to the Anglican party.

But the good brother states that *we* adopted in 1660 the *sine qua non* which *they* are now propounding. He strangely overlooks the glaring fact that the historic form of episcopacy, as it came through Rome, and not from the Bible, was one of "three orders" in unbroken succession.

The effort thus made to give the readers of his letter the impression that the spirit of union manifested by the bishops in their four-sided ultimatum was not appreciated in Presbyterian quarters at its true value, is made on an inexplicable misconception of the mutual attitude of the parties. The Presbyterian denomination is not chargeable with a want of the spirit of unity, and in 1660 the London ministers who addressed Charles II. urged it upon the churchmen of their day. They even went further in concessions than any of us would now approve, as Bishop Coxe testifies; but the opposite party, then as now, obstructed all such advances with intolerable conditions. The true statement is that, from the reign of Charles I. to this hour, high church exclusiveness has prevailed in the Anglican denomination, and unity has been sacrificed continually on the altar of priestly assumption.

At the beginning of the Reformation the question of valid orders was not regarded as a fundamental one. The English Protestants held close fraternal relations with the Lutherans and Calvinists of the continent. Ministers whose ordination was non-episcopal were frequently inducted into livings of the established church. But the spirit of priestly pretension was augmented more and more under the Stuarts, as those despots were forced to struggle against the rising liberty of their subjects. "No bishop, no king," became the rallying cry of prerogative in the secular and ecclesiastical spheres. From that day the Anglican Church maintained its isolated position of separation from other Protestants, in spite of the growth of free principles. The spiritual prerogative is now insisted upon as if the Stuarts still held sway in London, and a modern Laud still occupied the archiepiscopal throne of Canterbury. Our cotemporaries of that persuasion resemble the Bourbons as much as ever, "learning nothing, and forgetting nothing."

Bishop Coxe is distrustful of the Presbyterian memory, and reminds us that we have long ago given up the issue that divides us. But having been born of Presbyterian parentage, he is possibly subject to hereditary forgetfulness, and did not recall, when he wrote his letter, the serious fact that his own denomination has resolved to live or die by "the historic episcopate" of the Church of Rome. This is our interpretation of the terms of union propounded by the English and American bishops. It is one of four most sacred and indispensable articles. Presumably the denial of any one of these four fundamentals would be heretical. No man would be esteemed a member of the church catholic who should refuse those numbered one, two, and three, and we are not authorized to make number *four* an exception.

But what is "the historic episcopate"? It is unquestionably an order of ministers superior in rank and authority to the scriptural bishops of apostolic times. Whether successors of the twelve or not, these historic bishops were a *divine institution*, as sacred and obligatory, according to theory, as the statements of the apostles' creed. Thus we have a demand upon our faith as imperative as a command of Christ, that we shall accept, as a fundamental of our religion, this order of bishops, distinct from that of the New Testament, and never once named in it. The stipulation is not, as Bishop Coxe seems to represent, a mere recognition of *bishops*, but a recognition that the bishops so familiar to all Scripture readers were *not* the officers to whom the government of the church was divinely committed. We are required to admit that this official designation, used by the inspired apostles, was, by the same apostles, afterwards superseded and abandoned!

It is evident that we who presume to hesitate when this test of our orthodoxy is applied are considered outside heretics, whose obstinate unbelief is unaccountable. But our chief inquiry for the present is, how far Bishop Coxe is justifiable in suggesting that the Presbyterians are inconsistent in declining such liberal advances. This is clearly what he delicately intimates. But the words upon which he relies are insufficient for his purpose. We are indeed committed to an episcopate. We do accept "bishops."

But our terms and his are not the same. Jonathan, the son of Saul, used "artillery," and Paul and his travelling companions used "carriages," but the former knew nothing of gunpowder, and the latter lifted their conveyances to their shoulders. Diplomacy becomes a very awkward and unsatisfactory work when an uncertain language is employed.

The responsibility for the distractions and divisions of the professed followers of Christ is truly great. The healing process cannot be promoted by recrimination. It is unjust to lay the chief burthen upon the wrong party. The Bishop does not consciously intend this, but such is the tendency of his suggestions. History is altogether against his conception that Presbyterianism is a sore-headed, unreasonable separation of English Christians from their lawful rulers. Along with Lutheranism, it occupied common ground from the days of the Reformation in Europe, of independence towards the hierarchy of Rome. Neither Luther, nor Zwingli, nor Calvin, was troubled by the danger of losing connection with the apostles! The Reformers in all those countries considered themselves at liberty to assume an organic existence, outside of the Church of Rome, by warrant of Jesus Christ, their Lord. In England alone was the idea retained of an unbroken succession from Peter and his associates. And, even in England, it was not held by all churchmen at first. It was the Stuarts, and not the Tudors, who fostered this insular conceit. The high church party were the real dissenters, because on this matter of three necessary orders they dissented from the great body of Protestants to which they belonged. The earlier Reformers, like Cranmer, were in cordial sympathy, and took earnest counsel, with those of the continent, as brethren engaged in a common cause. Charles II. found their successors transformed into a party bitterly hostile to both Lutheranism and Calvinism.

The responsibility for the present divided condition of Protestantism rests chiefly upon those who obstruct all efforts at reconciliation and harmony. The Presbyterians are not of this class. We have our faults, and have not done our full duty in efforts to promote unity; but our attitude from the beginning has been unwaveringly in favor of a fraternal understanding among all

true Christians. Questions of external order have not been allowed to assume an importance equal to matters of saving faith, and our views of a visible church have generally been coterminous with our conceptions of fundamental spiritual truth.

It would be easy for us, were it of any avail, to meet Bishop Coxé with a counter-proposition. We *have* an episcopate, not only historic, but scriptural, that provides for the *oversight* of districts as well as for local interests in the church. To a certain extent, the *moderator* for a year has charge of these interests. If, then, an episcopal basis of union is required, why not substitute the Presbyterian polity in the programme, and stipulate for “a *scriptural episcopate*”? We are not curious to know, because we can easily surmise, what might have been the result if the Lambeth proposition for union, thus amended in its fourth article, had been adopted by a General Assembly and presented to the Triennial Convention. It would then have devolved on a Presbyterian correspondent to remind his recalcitrant brethren on the other side that the English Reformers, at a much earlier date than 1660, had not appeared altogether averse to the *Presbyterian* episcopate.

A little squabble created by words used in different senses is unworthy of so solemn a question. If permitted, we prefer most decidedly to apply to it a more spiritual test. Our impression is that the kingdom of Jesus Christ is essentially unique, and seated in the recesses of the human soul. Its visibility is like that of its divine Founder. We are not permitted to know how he looked, and we have every reason to believe that his appearance was not described in the Gospels for a wise purpose. *Inspired omissions are profoundly significant.* The silence of the firmament on a clear night is more eloquent than any form of words. The evangelists were restrained by the Spirit of God from any intimation of our Lord’s external form and visage, that our thoughts might dwell chiefly upon his work and character. We know that he was like other men, sin excepted; but that is all. It is very much the same with the visible church. We know that it is a society of human beings associated for worship and for work, but little else is directly recorded. There is no *description* of its polity or

worship in the New Testament. Certain features of its presentation are incidentally revealed, and we thus learn a little about its external manifestation. As the Spirit might have caused a portraiture of our Lord to be preserved, so he might have prescribed for the church a definite service and form of government; but he did not. The inference is plain that such instructions were not advisable. The positive and the negative in the Bible are both designed.

But the incidental information in the Scriptures is an authorized guide, as far as it is understood. In this way we may learn valuable truth on many practical questions. The fact of a parochial episcopacy instituted by the apostles is fully established. The fact that synods and councils were invested with authority over the church at large is also undeniable. But on most questions of polity and ritual profound silence prevails. This silence seems to us *a loud proclamation* that these matters are of inferior importance compared with the fundamentals of the faith. If the "historic episcopate" is not found explicitly laid down as a thing to be necessarily observed, it is unwarrantably included as one of the four stipulations for union. If the episcopal throne is not too high to be approached by an unpretentious Presbyterian, we must urge upon those brethren the incongruity of erecting four pillars for the basis of agreement, three of which are authoritative dictates of the Lord Almighty as to the truth contained in them, whilst the fourth is not found at all in his word, and does not carry with it a particle of divine warrant. All Protestant and Catholic Christendom accepts the three. A comparatively small minority of Protestants admits the fourth. Its advocates are confined to England and this continent, and to only a part of the denomination. But the great objection, after all, is its ceremonial character. The three provisions are spiritual, and pertain to the scheme of salvation. The fourth is not only of human institution, but relates entirely to the external form of the church.

Now, the spiritual and the formal cannot be of equal weight under the gospel. The New Testament is full of spiritual doctrine and precept, but void of everything like a system of rules for administration. It contains no organic law. The fourth arti-

cle is, therefore, out of all harmony with the preceding three, and virtually commits all who accept "the historic episcopate" to that Romish system of *performances* which destroys spiritual religion so effectually. If "the kingdom of God is within us," it is designed to differ from temporal kingdoms in the absence of display and magnificence, of pomp, and ceremony, and of ornament and etiquette. Both Christ and his apostles have left us an example of plainness and simplicity in the exhibition of Christianity before the world, of which the Roman Catholic hierarchy is a studied and disgusting contrast. And this latter is the episcopate which the Anglican bishops introduce into the basis of union as an article of faith as necessary as the Trinity, the incarnation, or the atonement!

There is, of course, a secular advantage that Romanism and Anglicanism enjoy in surpassing other forms of Christianity in ceremonial display and architectural grandeur and beauty. We would respond to the advances of our brethren of the latter class by urging them *to unite with us dissenters* in renouncing this temporal consideration and the worldly approbation and favor to which it appeals. It costs much self-denial to give up so much that gratifies our fallen nature. The more spiritual class of Christians will be willing to bear this cross of humiliation in imitation of their Lord. Spiritual peerage and heraldry may well be laid at his feet, who left us his example that we might walk in his steps.

The three orders of Rome have been for ages associated with ecclesiastical pretension and ambition. The promotion of these vanities is contrary to the spirit of Christianity. Our Lord took much pains to warn his disciples against them. It is unreasonable to assume that, by his intention, an aristocratic principle was impressed upon the organism of his church for all time, leading his servants to surround themselves with the insignia of rank and power. Human nature seeks delight in such distinctions, but the heavenly mind finds them foreign and distasteful. We would, therefore, appeal to our brethren who propose union, in behalf of apostolic simplicity in the polity of the church. We would beg to be excused from subscribing to a tenet which we cannot trace in our Bibles, and which appears to us and to the large majority of Protestants

inconsistent with the lowly, unworldly spirit of the gospel. We take our stand on the proposition that kingly government *jure divino* has never been imposed upon the church any more than upon the state. Had it been, it would be easily recognized as *law* in the word of God. But in that case human intelligence would remain forever baffled by its unaccountable character. Why so much responsible power should be placed in three successive and immutable ranks of the clergy, as if the wisdom of God doted upon a *threefold domination*, will continue to trouble the ordinary brain, without hope of solution. The same divine wisdom disapproved of such a polity in the state, and permitted it among the chosen people only under protest. In a free republican country like ours it is a strange dogma, necessarily distasteful to the true patriot, that the Christian church cannot validly subsist in any other than a threefold form of a hierarchy in which rank is emphasized. Giving to the highest rank its prelatie signification, we may safely say that Americans ought to reverse the motto of the Stuart dynasty, and to inscribe upon their banners the apposite legend, NO KING, NO BISHOP!

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