

THE WESLEYAN.

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"WISDOM IS THE PRINCIPAL THING; THEREFORE GET WISDOM."

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Poetry.

THE ANGELS' CALL.

(By Mrs. Hemans.)

"Hark! they whisper' angels say,
Sister spirit, come away!"

Come to the land of peace!
Come where the tempter hath no finger sway;
The shadow passes from the soul away,
The sounds of weeping cease!

Fear hath no dwelling there!
Come to the mingling of repose and love,
Breathed by the silent spirit of the dove
Through the celestial air!

Come to the bright and blest,
And crown'd for ever—midst that shining band,
Gather'd to heaven's own wreath from every land,
Thy spirit shall find rest!

Thou hast been long alone:
Come to thy Mother—on the Sabbath shore,
The heart that rock'd thy childhood, back once more
Shall take its wonted care.

In silence wert thou left:
Come to thy Sisters—joyously again;
All the homo-voices, bleat in one sweet strain,
Shall greet their long-bereft!

Over thine orphan head
The storm has swept, as o'er a billow's bough
Come to thy Father—'tis his hand now,
Thy tears have all been shed.

In thy divine abode
Change Gods no pathway, memory no dark trace,
And O! bright victory—death by love no place:
Come, spirit, to thy God!

THE CHRISTIAN PASTOR.

Give me the priest these graces shall possess:—
Of an ambassador, the first address;
A father's tenderness, a shepherd's care;
A leader's courage, which the cross can bear;
A ruler's awe; a watchman's wakeful eye;
A pilot's skill, the helm in storms to ply;
A fisher's patience, and a labourer's toil,
A guide's dexterity to disembroid;
A prophet's inspiration from above,
A teacher's knowledge, and a Saviour's love.

Bishop Ken.

THE VALIDITY OF THE WESLEYAN MINISTRATIONS, AND THE CHURCH CHARACTER WHICH THE WESLEYAN SOCIETIES HAVE ASSUMED.

The boldest objection ever made against the Wesleyan body, and, indeed, against all classes of Christians who are not Episcopalians, is, that they have among themselves no valid administration, either of divine truth, or of the sacraments; that they are, in fact, out of the pale of God's Church, and have no scriptural warrant to expect any spiritual blessing in the religious services which they frequent. Nay, those very services, it is declared, are in themselves sinful, and as offensive to God as was the worship of the ancient Samaritans, which consisted of a profane admixture of holy and idolatrous rites. The Clergy of the established Church, it is peremptorily affirmed, are the only true Ministers of Christ in this land; and their ministrations are the only channels through which God has pledged himself by covenant to convey his grace to men. The ground of this claim in behalf of the Clergy is, that they have received their appointment to the sacred office from Bishops, as a distinct order, and in a direct line of succession from the Apostles of the Lord. Almighty God, it is said, has ordained three distinct orders of Ministers in his Church, Bishops, Priests and Deacons; no ordination of any man to the Christian ministry is valid, unless it be performed by a Bishop; and it is only by the preaching of the men who are thus ordained, and especially by the sacraments which they dispense, that the benefits of Christ's mediation are applied in the actual salvation of men. Such

is the claim which is urged by many modern writers, with the most absolute confidence, as if it were liable to no exception.

If this claim be just, it is not too much to say, that millions of the honest and most useful men that ever lived have been in fatal error; that a large proportion of those "which are fallen asleep in Christ" are perished; and that, not through unbelief, or any other form of intentional wickedness, but inadvertency. Let the appeal then be made to the only rule and standard of truth, the inspired word of God. "Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation; so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation."

We find, on examination, that the doctrine of the "apostolic succession," as it is usually called, (that is, of an uninterrupted succession of Bishops, as a distinct and peculiar order, from the apostolic times to the present day,) rests upon a series of assumptions, which no man can prove, and that, in its practical bearings, it contradicts some of the plainest declarations of Holy Writ. Momentous as are the consequences which are made to depend upon this doctrine, it is a mere figment of Papi Rome, which her Priesthood has employed to overawe the simple, and of which learned men have sometimes made themselves the willing dupes.

1. The divine right of Episcopacy, as a distinct order, has never yet been proved. All that has appeared on that side of the argument is, at most, elaborate deduction, so far as holy Scripture is concerned; what is alleged as proof is not direct and explicit. On the other hand, it is undeniable, that, in the New Testament, the terms Elder, (or Presbyter,) and Bishop, are indifferently applied to the same persons. Take the following examples:—"And from Miletus he" (Paul) "sent to Ephesus, and called the Elders" (*tous presbuterous*, the Presbyters) "of the Church." (Acts xx. 17.) In his address to these men he said, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers," (*episcopous*, Bishops,) "to feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." (Verse 28.) Here we have Episcopacy, and that by divine right; for the men were made Bishops by "the Holy Ghost." But were they Bishops of Ministers? This is not said; but it is distinctly asserted that they were Bishops of the people. "The flock," "the Church of God," were their charge. Had each of them a diocese? Neither is this in the record; but the contrary is implied; for they were all summoned from "Ephesus," as belonging to "the Church" there. These primitive Bishops were familiarly known as Presbyters, and are called expressly by that name in the inspired narrative.

Language precisely similar is used by St. Peter, who thus speaks in the name of his Lord to his fellow-labourers in the Gospel: "The Elders" (*presbuterous*, Presbyters) "which are among you I exhort, who am also an Elder," (*sunpresbuteros*, co-Presbyter,) "and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed; feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof," (*episcopountes*, acting as Bishops,) "not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock." (1 Peter v. 1-3.) Here again Presbyters are exhorted to fulfil their Episcopal duties; and the objects of their charge are described to be not Ministers, but "the flock of God." If Presbyters and Bishops had really belonged to orders

essentially distinct, and had the same been made to hinge upon that distinction, as many zealous modern teachers do, we could have expected that the Holy Spirit would have conjoined them together. St. Peter did the separated Apostles affect titles of dignity, that he even calls himself a fellow- Presbyter, placing himself on a level with the humblest of his brethren.

Exactly the same view of the Episcopal office is given by St. Paul, when writing to Titus on the subject of ministerial qualifications. "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain Elders," *presbuterous*, Presbyters "in every city, as I had appointed thee, if any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children, not accused of riot, or unruly. For a Bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God." (Titus i. 5-7.) The Apostle here unquestionably assumes the equality of Presbyters and Bishops, or, rather, the identity of their office and work. A Presbyter must have certain qualifications, because his office, which is that of a Bishop, absolutely requires them. This is St. Paul's argument. And these Presbyter Bishops were not each of them to be placed over other Ministers through a wide extent of country. They were to be ordained "in every city" throughout the island.

In his Epistle to the Philippians, the Apostle makes no mention of the Presbyters by that name, but addresses "the saints, . . . with the Bishops and Deacons." (Phil. i. 1.) Hence Mr. Wesley's note on this verse: "The former," the Bishops, "properly took care of the internal state, the latter," the Deacons, "of the external affairs of the Church." (1 Tim. iii. 2-5.) Although these were not wholly to be confined to the one, neither those to the other. The word Bishops here includes all the Presbyters at Philippi, as well as the ruling Presbyters, the names Bishop and Presbyter, or Elder, being promiscuously used in the first ages.

There is no passage in the New Testament that teaches a contrary doctrine. The attempt to find Bishops, in the modern sense of the word, in the twelve Apostles, and Presbyters in the seventy disciples, is a hopeless task. The Apostles were the divinely-appointed witnesses of our Saviour's resurrection. They were also inspired men; and, as such, were endued with miraculous powers. Their word was Christian law, and will be till the end of time. Even the Clergy of the Pusey school deny to their own Bishops these sacred and high prerogatives. They do not hesitate to controvert the solemn and official Charges of their Dioceses. Whereas the decision of an Apostle was never contradicted, except by a heretic or an unbeliever. It is not in practice, but only in theory and in controversy, that Bishops are regarded as sustaining the apostolic office.

Some writers have imagined that they found Bishops, as a distinct order, in the angels of the seven Churches of Asia mentioned in the Revelation of St. John; but in the attempt at proof they have undeniably failed. If it be even granted that those "angels" were individual men, the representatives of their respective Churches, including the entire pastorate, it does not follow that they were any more than first Ministers among equals, placed first, not by a distinct ordination, as belonging to a superior order, but by general consent, on account of their age, or the peculiarity of their endowments. That they were raised above their brother Pastors by a third ordination, and that they possessed the exclusive right to ordain others to the ministry, there is not the slightest evidence. Here the very semblance of argument ceases. All is assumption and conjecture.

It has been asserted that Timothy and Titus were Bishops, superior in order to Presbyters, and that each of them had a

distinct diocese, but assertion is not proof. St. Paul left Timothy at Ephesus, and Titus at Crete, that they might regulate the affairs of the Churches in those places; but no intimation is given that they were intended to remain there. Titus, as we have seen, was to ordain Presbyters, having the qualifications of Bishops; but in the instructions which were given to Timothy, no mention is made of the ordination of Presbyters, but only of Bishops and Deacons. A strong intimation, that Presbyters and Bishops were one order; so that in appointing Bishops, Timothy would appoint Presbyters, who would at once teach and govern the people. Timothy and Titus are themselves never called Bishops; perhaps because they had no distinct pastoral charge. It would seem that they were itinerant evangelists, employed under the direction of St. Paul. That Timothy did not continue permanently to reside in Ephesus, is certain; for during St. Paul's last imprisonment in Rome, he says to him, "Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me;" and, "Come before winter." (2 Tim. iv. 9-21.)

Do we then object to the Episcopal form of government, as antisciptural and unlawful? Not at all. It is connected with several advantages, and is one among other forms of Church order, upon which the divine blessing has manifestly rested, when exercised by spiritual men, and for spiritual purposes. The principle of superintendence over Ministers, and of subordination among them, is recognised in holy Scripture, and is liable in itself to no just exception. The same principle is exemplified in the whole of the Wesleyan discipline, so far as the ministry is concerned. What we object to, the assumption, that Episcopacy, as a distinct order, was expressly instituted by God; that it is therefore universally binding upon the Church, that it is essential to the valid exercise of the Christian ministry, and that, in fact, the salvation of mankind is made to depend upon it; which must be the case, if those Churches that have not such an Episcopacy have neither the sacraments nor any of the other ordinances of Christ. In those lofty and repulsive views Mr. Wesley was trained; and he tenaciously acted upon them in early life; but when he "became a man" in knowledge and experience, he adopted other principles more just and Catholic. "Yet," said he, "I still believe the Episcopal form of Church government to be scriptural and apostolical: I mean, well agreeing with the practice and writings of the Apostles. But that it is prescribed in Scripture, I do not believe. This opinion, which I once zealously espoused, I have been heartily ashamed of ever since I read Bishop Stillingfleet's 'Irenicum.' I think he has unanswerably proved that neither Christ nor his Apostles prescribe any particular form of Church government; and that the plea of divine right for diocesan Episcopacy was never heard of in the primitive Church." He therefore declared, that, although he had only been ordained as a Presbyter, he had as much right to ordain others, as he had to administer the sacraments.

If this is a just view of the subject, then the doctrine against which we contend is left without support. If it could even be demonstrated that Bishops, as a distinct and peculiar order, essentially superior to Presbyters, have existed in the Church from the earliest ages, unless it can be also shown that they were appointed as such by the Apostles of our Lord, there is manifestly no proof of an "apostolical succession" of this kind. The Apostles cannot be honestly connected with matters in which they had no concern. If they really did appoint Bishops, of the order in question, let the record of such appointment be produced. The "doctrines and command-