

The Church Guardian

UPHOLDS THE DOCTRINES AND RUBRICS OF THE PRAYER BOOK.

"Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity."—Eph. vi., 24.
"Earnestly contend for the Faith which was once delivered unto the saints."—Judo 3.

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A PROTEST

ADDRESSED BY A MEMBER OF THE
CHURCH CONGRESS, HELD
AT BIRMINGHAM,
TO THE

RIGHT REV. LORD BISHOP OF WORCESTER,
PRESIDENT OF THE CONGRESS.

ST. JOHN'S HOSPITAL,
LICHFIELD,
October 23rd, 1893. }

MY LORD BISHOP,—

As a member of the Congress held under your Lordship's Presidency, and as one who was present at the meeting on Thursday morning, the 5th inst., on the subject of "The Church of England in relation to other Bodies of Christians," I feel it my duty, however painful, to enter my humble, but very earnest and solemn, protest, against the advantage you took of your position as Chairman of that Meeting to make an assertion which, as you must have known, would give the greatest pain to numbers of those then present, expressing not only your own opinion that Episcopacy was not necessary for a Church, or for the valid administration of the Sacraments, but also that "*the Church of England has nowhere said that Episcopacy*" (or as you put it when you repeated the statement, "*the three orders*") "*is necessary to the existence of a Church.*"

Respect for the position your Lordship occupied as Chairman and President of the Congress, and for your Office as Bishop of the Diocese in which we were assembled, restrained the expression of indignant protest that there would have been from very many, if such words had been uttered by anyone else; and, as your Lordship spoke at the conclusion of the meeting, it was impossible for anyone, though there were many, as I need not say, fully competent to do so, then and there to reply to your words, or to take up the challenge you gave: "I challenge any man to bring forward a passage from any author of the Church of England in which he has said so much as that," viz., that "the Church of England has said that Episcopacy is necessary to the existence of a Church."

I had sincerely hoped that some voice more able, more powerful, and more influential than mine—from some of those who were then on the platform, and could speak with some authority in our Church—would, before this, have uttered some formal protest against your Lordship's words being considered as, in any manner, the expression of the real teaching of our Church. As, however, no such voice has spoken, and as I know, perhaps better than many, how such words coming from a Bishop of our Church, even though only an individual, but eminent for his scholarship, will deeply grieve, pain, and discourage the hearts of numbers of our Church-people, Clergy and Laity, who in distant lands, amid difficulties that we little realize here at home, are earnestly contending "for the faith once delivered to the saints," and how they will stimulate, encour-

age, and cause to boast over our people, who are fewer in numbers, the various dissenting bodies, and confirm them in their opinions that their organizations are as good as the Church, if not better than it, I cannot any longer keep silence, even though I know that my voice is altogether insignificant and without influence.

My Lord, I believe that if what you then said is the true account of the position of the Church of England, she can no longer be—as her enemies are ever ready to taunt her with not being—a true Branch of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. And I, certainly for one, believing as I most firmly do that Christ only founded One Church, and not many separate bodies, should have to seek that Church elsewhere. For 1,400 years at least it was certainly universally believed that Bishops were necessary for the being of a Branch of the Church, and for the transmission of the powers of the Ministry. If our Church has at any time, or by any definite act, repudiated that belief, and acknowledged that a body of Christians without Episcopally ordained Ministers is a real and true Branch of the Church, she has separated herself from the ancient Church in a most vital matter.

But I am convinced, notwithstanding your Lordship's challenge, that she has not done so. Individual Bishops, even learned Bishops, may have spoken, and may still speak, rash things. In the great crisis of the Reformation there must have been a strong bias in favour of those who on many questions were on the same side in the controversy with Rome, and it must have been very difficult to know how rightly to deal with those, in other countries, who, through no fault of their own, were left to fight the battle of what was deemed essential truth, without their Bishops. But no rash judgments of individuals, even though prominent Bishops, can be placed against the official acts of the Church as a whole.

And those acts I firmly believe set forth as distinctly as words can possibly do, the continuous maintenance, through the Reformation and up to the present time, of the same belief in the necessity of the three Orders, for the validity of the Sacraments and for the continuance of the ministry, and therefore for the existence of the Church, that had been held by the Church of Christ from the beginning.

Whether the Church was right or not in this matter has been repeatedly discussed by the most able and learned writers, and is not now the question. Nor, if you will permit me to say so, has the permission of Baptism by laymen in extreme cases of necessity, to which your Lordship alluded, anything to do with the recognition of the authority of persons in separation from the Church to minister the Sacraments as Ministers.

All I contend is that our Church does, whether rightly or wrongly, most undoubtedly and plainly maintain the ancient belief as to the necessity for the three Orders for the existence of the Church.

In 1549, under Edward VI., the Ordinal was published with the Declarations at the beginning,—the first part of which your Lordship alluded to practically as we now have it. That Preface says:

"It is evident unto all men diligently reading the Holy Scripture and ancient Authors, that from the Apostles' time there have been three Orders of Ministers in Christ's Church."

So far your Lordship quoted, and added that you heartily admitted the statement. But why did not your Lordship continue the quotation? The words that follow express, as distinctly as words could do, that these Orders not only existed as a matter of history, but had been considered, and were to continue to be esteemed necessary.

"Which Offices were overmore hold in such reverend estimation that no man might presume to execute any of them, except he were first called, tried, examined, and known to have such qualities as are requisite for the same; and also by public Prayer, with imposition of Hands, were approved and admitted thereto by lawful authority. And therefore, to the intent that these Orders may be continued and reverently used and esteemed in the Church of England, no man shall be accounted or taken to be a lawful Bishop, Priest or Deacon in the Church of England, or suffered to execute any of the said Functions, except he be called, tried, examined, and admitted thereto according to the Form hereafter following, or hath had formerly Episcopal Consecration or Ordination."

In the Rubric at the beginning it is also ordered that there shall be a Sermon or Exhortation "declaring . . . how necessary (not expedient merely) that Order (whether Deacon or Priest) is in the Church of Christ."

The Articles were published three years after, and the 24th (our present 23rd) says:

"It is not lawful (surely God's law is here meant) for any man to take upon him the office of public preaching or ministering the Sacraments in the Congregation before he is lawfully called, and sent to execute the same. And those we ought to judge lawfully called and sent who be chosen and called to this work by men who have public authority given unto them in (not by) the Congregation (Ecclesia) to call and send Ministers into the Lord's Vineyard."

When we read those words in connection with the Preface to the Ordinal published only three years before and coming probably from the same authors, though being very similar to the Article of 1538, it is impossible not to believe but that the expression "lawfully called and sent" was meant to refer to those and to those only who had received "*Episcopal Consecration or Ordination.*"

But to come down to our own time, I affirm that the One Hundred and Forty-Five Bishops of the Anglican Communion assembled at the Lambeth Conference, at which I had the privilege of being present, in 1888, re-asserted this same principle with no uncertain voice.

In the subject of the relation of our Church to the Scandinavian and other reformed Churches, the chief question enquired into was whether they had maintained the continuity of the ancient three-fold Ministry. With regard to Old Catholics and others, the Encyclical Letter said, "Nor again is it possible for members of the Anglican Communion to withhold their sympathies for those Continental movements towards Reformation which, under