

Is the Anglican Establishment a Church of God?

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The question is as to its *distinctive* doctrines and practices, *as an ecclesiastical body*, not as to what Anglicans hold in common with other Christians. Still less is it a question whether there be real members and ministers of Christ in that body: none but the ignorant, or the bitterly prejudiced, would deny it. The mere assumption of the name — Church of God — is no proof; if it were, the pettiest sect might produce the same pretensions. Doubtless, separation from a Church of God is false ground; but, on the other hand, no institution ought to be owned as a Church, without plain scriptural proof that its claims are well founded.

1. — Now, the grand and characteristic feature of the Church of England (so called) is, that the sovereign of the country is *ex officio* its supreme governor or head. This makes the Anglican system to be the church of the country. Where is the warrant for it in Scripture? They may refer to Saul doing this — David, Solomon, Hezekiah, or Josiah, doing that. But what is all this to the purpose? They were kings of *Israel*, whose polity, civil and religious, was divinely ordered as no other nation was, is, or shall be. Our inquiry has to do with *the Church of God*, on which the New Testament casts as distinct a light as the Old Testament does on Israel. According to the Acts and Epistles, Henry the Eighth could not have been received as a *member* of God's Church, yet he took the place of *head* in the Church of England. In the Church of God, our sovereign lady the Queen could not rule in the humblest way; in the Church of England she has the chief power. The conduct of bishops is amenable to her judgment as a last resort. Even upon the grave question, whether a given doctrine, held or rejected, unfits a man for induction, she decides through a few lawyers, who form the judicial body of the Privy Council; for, all estates, ecclesiastical or civil, are under her government, as the chief. Such is the doctrine of Art. XXXVII. Is it scriptural or unscriptural? May we not add, (remembering 1 Tim. 2: 11). Is it not anti-scriptural? If men say, Times are changed; the answer is, Alas! they are, but God's Word is unchanged and unchangeable. It would be more candid to confess that the institution is unsustainable by Scripture, in *the fundamental point of the royal supremacy in ecclesiastical matters* — an innovation never heard of before the Reformation.

2. — Again as to the three orders of Clergy, no such distinction appears in Scripture. It is certain that the terms bishop and elder (or presbyter) were originally used as synonyms, and indiscriminately applied to the same persons. (See Acts 20: 17, 28; Phil. 1: 1; 1 Tim. 3; Titus 1; 1 Peter 5: 1, 2.) Next, it is certain from Scripture that none did appoint to the charge of elder or bishop save apostles, or their delegates. Hence, in order to claim a valid ordaining power, people were driven to the idea of apostolic succession: if that be false, as most evangelical men allow, their ordination has no scriptural nor divine authority whatever. But even when there were apostles, and apostolically appointed elders, etc., *there were whole classes of ministers, acting both within the church and towards the world, who never needed any human authorization.* (Compare Acts 8: 1-4; Acts 11: 20; Acts 18: 24-28; Rom. 12; 1 Cor. 3, 12, 14, 16; Eph. 4, Phil. 1: 14; Col. 2: 19; 1 Thess. 5: 12, 13; Heb. 13: 7, 17, 24; 1 Peter 4: 9, 10; James 3: 1.) Now, this scriptural principle is flatly contradicted and excluded by Art. XXIII., which teaches that "those we ought to judge lawfully called and sent, which be chosen and called to this work BY MEN *who have publick authority given unto them in the Congregation*, to call and send Ministers into the Lord's vineyard." How different is all this from Scripture! There I find our Lord telling *His disciples* to pray the Lord of the harvest that *He will send forth labourers* (Matt. 9). It is the *householder* that hires them (Matt. 20); and again, it is the *Lord* which called his own servants and

delivered unto them his goods. (Matt. 25) And with this agrees the doctrine of the Epistles, as may be seen in Rom. 10: 15; Eph. 4: 7, 8, 11-16; Col. 4: 17. That is, the Scriptures and the Articles are at open war on this point. The former makes the *Lord's* mission to be the essential thing, the latter makes it indispensable to be called by *men*. When and how was this public authority given? by whom, and to whom? I admit that you can find it in the Fathers, but not in Scripture, which, on the contrary, shuts out what the Church of England treats as the only lawful call, at least since the Act of Conf. 1662.

3. — Lastly, I would direct attention to the Services for Baptism, the Catechism, and the Order of Confirmation; they do plainly teach regeneration in and by the baptismal rite.

There are three Baptismal Services, all of which exclude any other doctrine. (1.) In the "Ministration of Public Baptism of Infants" the language alike of exhortation and prayer, *before* the ordinance, supposes the unbaptized infant to be unregenerate. The petition then was, that the babe might be baptized with water and the Holy Ghost, born again, and received into Christ's Holy Church. *After* the ordinance, thanks are given that it has pleased God to regenerate the infant with His Holy Spirit, etc. Beyond a doubt, to an unprejudiced mind, the rite of baptism is regarded as the instrument.

(2) The phraseology is, if possible, more defined in the "Ministration of Private Baptism." It is, "Seeing now, beloved brethren, that this child is *by baptism regenerate*, and grafted," etc. Again, "I certify you that in this case all is well done, and according unto due order, concerning the baptism of this child; who being born in original sin, and in the wrath of God, *is now, by the laver of regeneration in baptism*, received into the number of the children of God, and heirs of everlasting life." (3.) The "Ministration of Baptism to such as are of riper years" proves how consistent these services are in this heretical dogma. For while these adults are regarded *as believers* previous to their baptism (and therefore the god-parents do not promise on their behalf) they are regarded in the exhortation as *not yet having remission of their sins*. Therefore the prayer runs thus: "Give Thy Holy Spirit to these persons, that they may be born again, and be made heirs of everlasting salvation;" and so throughout the service, which is essentially similar, of course, to those for infants. They are certainly considered to be unregenerate up to the moment of the rite. The case of such as are of riper years, therefore, heightens the confusion, aggravates the evil, and proves incontestably that the services attribute regeneration to the sacrament. When they are baptized, and not before, the word is, "Seeing now, dearly beloved brethren, that these persons are regenerate," etc.

Next, the words of the Catechism are equally precise, for, in the answer to the second question, the child is to say that his godfathers and godmothers gave him his name in his baptism; *wherein* he was made a member of Christ, etc. And though he is taught that repentance and faith were required of persons to be baptized, the latter is to believe the *promises of God made to them in that sacrament*. Such faith, I need hardly say, is worthless, because it rests on a foundation of sand. It is the church, so called, not God, which has made promises in a sacrament. Lastly, the Order of Confirmation seals this deplorable system of false doctrine and delusive ordinance. For after the misguided young have taken upon themselves the Sinai-like vows, which their god-parents had at first promised for them, the bishop says, "Let us pray. Almighty and ever-living God, who *hast vouchsafed to regenerate* these thy servants by water and the Holy Ghost, and *hast given them* forgiveness of all their sins, strengthen them," etc. Thus far, all is harmonious error.

Membership with the Church of England rests on this sacramental foundation. And violent indeed are the efforts of godly Churchmen to evade the plain language of the Book of Common Prayer. In it the whole baptized population are regarded, according to the Romish model, as the Church. No wonder that men, surrounded by such a state of things, ask, "What is the world?" All are treated, in virtue of

baptism, as born again, as therein made members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. No godly man can hinder this. It is the regular course and aim of Anglicanism,* not an abuse; so much so, that if a minister or a member were in these points to act scripturally, he must act schismatically. In other words, the actings of the Spirit Himself would be condemned as schismatical, if judged by the Services and Articles, the Rubrics and Canons of that system — a most solemn consideration for those who are upholding or in any way sanctioning it! *No system can be of God, where the ways of a formalist might be canonically right, and those of the Holy Ghost must be canonically wrong*; and this, notwithstanding many excellent persons there, is exactly true of the English Establishment. It is in vain to say, "I do not believe in baptismal regeneration:" the important point is, *What says the English Church?* And this must be determined by the literal and grammatical sense of the formularies. In these all the members are supposed to acquiesce; if they do not, they have no business there — they ought to leave.

*Hence, says the Rubric, appended to the order of the Communion, "And note that *every parishioner* shall communicate at the least three times in the year, of which Easter to be one." The curate has power to refuse no moral worldly man, but only an open and notorious evil liver or one guilty of known wrong. The gathering together of God's children (*i.e.* the Church of God) is not and cannot be contemplated there. Therefore it is that the celebrated Hooker, who will not be accused of bearing false or incompetent testimony, does not scruple to say (Eccles. Pol. book viii, vol. iii, p. 290, ed. Oxford, 1793,) "There is not any man of the Church of England but the same man is also a member of the commonwealth, nor any member of the commonwealth which is not also of the Church of England." Could this be said of a Church *of God*, according to His Word?

Thus, whether you look at the headship, the ministry, or the membership of the Anglican body, the system, *as such*, is thoroughly and hopelessly without Scripture, and opposed to it. Dear brethren in Christ, ought we not to obey God rather than men? And what is the difficulty? Nothing but unbelief. Let us then have done with "*my church*" and "*your church*," and retrace our steps to the ground which we ought never to have left — the ground of *the Church OF GOD*. This is not schism, but separation from evil, which is God's principle of unity; as man's principle is the mingling of light and darkness, of the world and the Church — in a word, BABYLON. To stand aloof from what is holy and true is a sin; to separate from what is unholy and untrue is a Christian duty. If the national body be unscriptural, to renounce all connection with it (not with the Christians in it) is a matter of simple obedience to God. "Cease to do evil: learn to do well."