

T H E S I S .

THE ORIGIN, GOVERNMENT AND DOCTRINES OF THE LEADING
PROTESTANT CHURCHES IN ENGLAND AND THE UNITED STATES.

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OUTLINE.

The Origin, Government and Doctrines of the Leading Protestant Churches
in England and the United States.

I. Introduction.

- (a) Definition of the word Protestants.
- (b) Reformation in Germany and England.

II.. Church of England.

III.. Episcopal Church of America.

IV. Presbyterian Church.

V. Methodist Episcopal Church.

VI. Congregational Church.

VII. Baptist Churches.

- (1) Baptist Church.
- (2) Christian or Campbellite Church.

THE ORIGIN, GOVERNMENT AND DOCTRINES OF THE LEADING
PROTESTANT CHURCHES OF ENGLAND AND THE UNITED STATES.

Protestants is a term applied to the adherents of Luther, from their protesting against the decree passed by the Catholic States at the second Diet of Spices in 1529.

Martin Luther was an Augustinian monk and a professor in the University of Wittenburg. In 1517 he attacked the sale of indulgences and wrote out a series of ninety-five statements in regard to them. These, he posted on the Church door, and invited anyone interested in the matter to enter into a discussion with him on the subject. This, he believed, was very ill understood. In posting these theses, as they were called, Luther didn't intend to attack the Church, and had no expectation of creating a sensation. The theses were in Latin and addressed only to scholars. It turned out, however, that every one, high and low, learned and unlearned, was ready to discuss the perplexing theme of the nature of indulgences. These theses were promptly translated into German, printed, and scattered throughout the land.

The Protestants opposed the Roman Church chiefly because it first, raises tradition to the level of the Scriptures as a source of doctrine, second, it denies justification by faith alone, and third, it makes the Pope the spiritual ruler of the entire Christian Church.

The leader of the Protestant movement in Switzerland was Ulrich Zwingli. The Zwinglians differed from the Lutherans on the doctrine of the Lord's Supper. The former considered it a memorial feast intended to call vividly to mind the Saviour's death. The latter held that while transubstantiation is to be denied, Christ is actually received in the sacrament. This division of

opinion weakened the Protestant power.

At the time of Luther's reformation in Germany, we find in England a few Lollards who were the followers of Wickliffe, who took the first practical step toward a separation from the Church of Rome. His translation of the Scriptures and his successful efforts in introducing it among the people, together with the writing of many tracts, and his own teachings produced a profound and wide spread dissatisfaction with the doctrines of the Church of Rome. The reformation in England had two distinct sources. First, was the moral and religious feeling which was enlisted in favor of the Protestants. Second, was the quasi political opposition to the foreign rule of the papacy which was reinforced by the difficulties encouraged by Henry VIII, in attempting to procure a divorce from Catherine of Aragon. The reluctance of Clement VII to comply with the king's petition moved Henry to declare himself the head of the Church of England. He married Anne Boleyn in 1532, without papal permission. This was followed by the Supremacy Act, which put an end to the papal authority in England. In 1536 followed the act of abolishing the Monasteries and confiscating their property. But the movement this far was in appearance one of purely political character, and the Church remained unchanged in the spirit of its services and in the form of its government, except in being freed from all allegiance to the Court of Rome. Henry VIII was never a Protestant in the religious sense of that term. Under his successor, Edward VI, the reformation was carried forward to a point which Henry had never desired or anticipated. All images were ordered to be removed from the Churches; prayers were no longer appointed to be offered for the dead; auricular confessions and transubstantiation were declared to be unscriptural; the clergy were permitted to marry; and a series of articles, forty-two in number, was drawn up, which was subsequently, modified to thirty-nine, constitute

the doctrinal basis of the Church of England and the Protestant Episcopal Church of America at the present day.

Throughout this entire period, the work of reform was largely indebted to Thomas Cramner, who may almost be regarded as the religious founder of the Episcopal Church.

The people of England were, however, far from being united in the work of the reformation, for under Queen Mary, a vigorous but unsuccessful attempt was made to bring England back to submission to the Papal See. The persecution conducted under her sanction has given her the name of "Bloody Mary." The heroism of these martyrs greatly strengthened the Protestant movement. Mary was succeeded by Elizabeth, whose coronation was almost immediately followed by the repeal of all the laws passed for the restoration of Papacy. The English service was again brought into use; some alterations were made in the Prayer Book and the forty-two articles were reduced to thirty-nine, and finally perfected in their present form.

Elizabeth, though resolute against submitting to the papal supremacy, was not so averse to all the tenets abjured by the Protestants, and loved also a more splendid worship than had prevailed in her brother's reign. But her great struggle with the reformers was about images, and particularly the crucifix. Another subject of dispute between the old and the new religion, upon which her majesty could not be brought to adopt the Protestant side of the question, was the marriage of the clergy. So great was her aversion that she would never consent to repeal the statute of her sister's reign against it.

The more earnest reformers in England were called Puritans. This name was first given, probably in derision, about the middle of the sixteenth century, to all who claimed to hold exclusively to "the pure Word of God," as the only standard of faith. These Puritans were rigorously persecuted by Elizabeth, and this very persecution at once intensified their convictions and or-

ganized them into a party, whose avowed fundamental principles were an entire separation from the Church of Rome and from everything which was historically connected with it, and an acceptance of the Bible as the sole authority in the order and discipline of the Church, as well as in the doctrinal standards. Many of these Puritans emigrated to America, where they became the founders of the New England states.

The reign of Queen Elizabeth may be regarded as the close of the formative period in the history of the Episcopal Church, which has neither materially changed its faith nor its form of government since that time. In the seventeenth century there commenced a large emigration to America. From this emigration, many scattered Episcopal Churches sprang up at various points, but they were nominally under the supervision of the bishop at London.

In the form of government there is, of course, some difference between the Church of England and the Protestant Episcopal Church of America. The constitution of the Church of England has been defined as that "of an authorized and paid establishment which is not allowed to persecute those who dissent from it." The king is nominally the supreme head, but practically the management of the church is in the hierarchy of archbishop and bishops, subject to the authority of the king and Parliament. The United Church of England and Ireland is divided into four provinces; two English, Canterbury and York; two Irish, Armagh and Dublin. These are under four mutually independent archbishops. These are chosen by the crown from among the bishops, who are also nominated by the sovereign. The archbishop and bishop alone have the power to ordain clergymen. Candidates for the ministry are usually college or university graduates. Approved candidates take the oath of supremacy, sign a declaration that they will conform to the liturgy and subscribe three articles,- the first affirming the supremacy of the sovereign in the church, the second as-

serting that the book of common prayer contains nothing contrary to the Word of God, and that the ordinary person will use the form of said book, and the third that they hold all "the thirty-nine Articles." The church, being established by law, is supported indirectly by the state. That is, the state endowed the church with property and with the revenues received from this property, the church supports itself. The only ecclesiastical assembly of the church of England is the Convocatum, whose powers are, however, little more than nominal. All cases of discipline, since they involve civil rights, are tried before ecclesiastical courts.

In America this organization is modified to adapt the church to the conditions of a Republic, in which a church establishment is unknown. The whole country is divided ecclesiastically into dioceses, each state constituting ordinarily one diocese. At the head of each diocese stands a bishop. Each diocese has its own Diocesan Convention, composed of the pastors of the several churches and three lay delegates from each. This body attends to all the affairs of the dioceses. It elects the bishop and chooses a standing committee to act as his council, and has power to present him for trial, if need be. Every three years a general convention assembles, consisting of two houses, an upper, or House of Bishops, and a lower, or House of Lay and Clerical Deputies. Each local church is governed in spiritual matters by priests or presbyters, while its temporal affairs are intrusted to the vestry and church wardens.

In faith, both the Protestant Episcopal Church of America and the Church of England hold to a common standard, namely, the thirty-nine articles, but the former omits while the latter retains the Athanasian Creed (a creed which derives its name from the fact that its composition is attributed to Athanasius. The first part of the creed contains a detailed exposition of the Trinity, the second part the doctrine of the incarnation. My the middle of the

tenth century it was adopted at Rome and all over the west. In Britain it was probably in use as early as 800.) as an authorized symbol. The thirty-nine articles embody the declaration of belief in the doctrine of the Trinity, and salvation through Jesus Christ, alone; the sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures as a ground of faith, and its superiority to ecclesiastical authority condemns the Romanish doctrine of works of supererogation, purgatory, worship of saints and relics, transubstantiation and the celibacy of the clergy; defines the Church of Christ as a "congregation of faithful men in the which the pure Word of God is preached, and the sacraments be duly administered according to Christ's ordinance in all these things that of necessity are requisite to the same." This definition has led to endless and unsettled disputes. The tenets on the subject of original sin, free-will and predestination leave the controversy between Arminians and Calvinists unsettled. But practically the majority of Episcopalians are probably Arminians in their sympathy. The Arminians hold the creed that predestination is only conditional; that Christ died for all men, but that none except believers are really saved by his death; that men must be borne again of God in Christ through the Holy Spirit; that without the grace of God, men can neither think, will nor do anything good; yet that grace does not act in men in an irresistible way; that believers are able, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to victoriously resist sin.

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

The organization of the Episcopal church in England did not satisfy the more earnest and pronounced reformers. From the beginning of Elizabeth's reign, if not earlier, there had been non-conformants who held that some form of the constitutional model which Calvin (He may be regarded as the founder of Presbyterianism, in the sense that he was the first to organize the Reformed Church on a Presbyterian model) had set up in Geneva, and which Knox

enlarged for Scotland, was the best for England, too. In 1572, a Presbytry, the first in England, was set up at Wandsworth in Surrey, by ministers of London and its neighborhood, separating from the Church of England. Other Presbyteries were soon formed, notwithstanding the extreme hostility of Queen Elizabeth.

The English Presbyterianism thus asserting itself and spreading, found its ablest leader in the famous Thomas Cartwright (1530-1603). Of course, such an anomaly if a Presbyterian organization of ministers existing without the body of the prelate system established by law, could not be tolerated, and it was in a measure strangled out. But the recollection of Cartwright and Presbyterian principles remained in the English mind through the reigns of James and Charles and characterized the main mass of the more effective and representative Puritans of those reigns. The term Presbyterians is derived from the Greek word Presbyteros, meaning elder. The Presbyterians claim that their form of church government is "founded on and agreeable to the Word of God," and some among them hold that it was divinely instituted and that its origin is to be traced back to the Old Testament. According to the belief of those who embrace the Presbyterian form of government, there should be, in the churches, two classes of officers - elders and deacons. The former are divided again in two classes - the clergy and ruling elders. There is usually but one of the former to each church; of the latter there are from two to eight or ten or even more. With the teaching elders or ministers, they constitute a Session to whose care is intrusted the general government of the local church. The Presbytry is composed of the teaching elders of the churches of a given geographical district, together with one of the ruling elders elected for that purpose by the session from each church. Superior in authority to the Presbytry, is the synod, which is composed of the teaching elder from each church of a larger district than that represented by the Presbytry. Still above the Sy-

nod is the General Assembly. This embraces representatives both lay and clerical from every Presbytry, and is the supreme authority in all ecclesiastical matters.

The Presbyterians are, for the most part, Calvinistic (a doctrine associated with Calvin. Predestination and Irresistible Grace are the keynote of Calvinism.) in doctrine. They generally accept the Westminster Assembly's Confession of faith (This assembly was a celebrated assembly of divines, appointed by the Long Parliament for settling the doctrines, liturgy and government of the Church of England. It met in 1643. It consists of thirty-three chapters, is thoroughly Calvinistic in its teachings. Beginning with the canon of Scripture, it surveys the entire field of theology, deals also with the relations of the state to the church, the constitution of the church itself, and concludes with the topics of death, the resurrection, and the last judgment) as their symbol of belief, and every clergyman in the Presbyterian Church of the United States is required to declare his personal belief in it as an embodiment of the truths taught by the scriptures. They do not agree, however, in their interpretation of that standard, and are divided into strict Calvinists and moderate Calvinists, or Old and New Schools.

The first Presbyterian congregations in the United States were organized in Maryland, a little before the close of the seventeenth century, the oldest, that of Snow Hill, dating about 1690, and the first Presbytery in Philadelphia in 1705. A synod consisting of four Presbyterians was constituted in 1716. In 1758 the American Presbyterian churches were united in one, and in 1789 a general assembly was instituted. The increase of the church was rapid. In 1834 a controversy sprang up in the church. The division was one of sentiment between the more progressive and the more conservative members. The one party wished to bear a decided testimony against slavery; the other thought

that their duty did not require any action of the church on this subject. The one party wished to unite with other Christian churches in Christian work, through voluntary societies; the other believed that such work could be more effectively and economically conducted by their denomination through boards under their control. The result was a separation in 1838, into two bodies, the Old and New Schools, both retaining, however, the same official title, the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America and both adhering to the Westminster Confession of Faith as their symbol of doctrine. Later the Old church was rent by the slavery question into two bodies, the Church North and the Church South. After thirty years of separation, a reunion was effected in 1869.

Many emigrants from Scotland settled in America, organizing here their own Presbyterian denomination which exists here as a separate ecclesiastical body.

METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

Another important church is the Methodist, a name that is given to a large body of Christians, followers of John Wesley. The denomination dates from the beginning of the eighteenth century. It exists in several distinct church organizations, the most important of which are those known in England as the Wesleyan Methodist or sometimes as the Methodist Old Connection, and that known in this country as the Methodist Episcopal Church.

John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, was born in Lincolnshire, England, in 1703, his father being rector of that parish. He was destined by his father for the church, and studied at Oxford. He here exhibited that earnestness of religious spirit which characterized his whole future life. He associated with his brother Charles and George Whitfield. They received from their assiduity and methodical habits the nickname of Methodists which, originally

applied in derision, has been accepted and made an honorable title in the history of the Christian Church. The reason that the Methodist Church was named Methodist Episcopal, is probably due to the fact that it was, at first, a branch of the Episcopal Church of England. In 1735, John Wesley and his brother Charles came to Georgia to undertake missionary work in the colony just founded by Governor Oglethrope. Here, he was distinguished by his High Church principles. He attended regularly the meetings of the Moravians, with whose religious earnestness and spirit of self sacrifice he heartily sympathized. In 1738 he returned to England where he associated more and more with the Moravians, and attributes his conversion, which he dates as May, 1738, to the influence of their meetings. He commenced preaching in the open fields and was gradually separated from the established church and also from the Moravians, on points of doctrine. In 1774, Wesley and his helpers met in London in their first conference. Only six persons were present, five of whom were clergy of the Established Church. But the germ of the future organization of the Methodist Church was here planted. The work was arranged systematically, the country was divided into circuits, each with its own superintendent. Provisions were made for an annual meeting of conference and for the regular support of the clergy. In 1784 he secured a legal organization of the conference. In the same year he ordained Dr. Coke, as Superintendent of the Methodist Society, which had grown up in America.

In the United States, the first conference was held in Philadelphia, in July 1773, but the proper organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church of America was in 1784. In the year 1847 the Methodist Episcopal Church of America was separated on the slavery question and still exists in two independent bodies, as the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church South.

Wesley maintains the Armanian theology. The great body of the Methodist

embraces, in this respect, the theological opinions of Mr. Wesley, although there are some that are termed Calvinistic Methodists. In the fundamental points, such as the divinity of Jesus Christ, his atoning sacrifice for sin, the inspiration authentically of the scriptures, the future life as a state of rewards and punishments, the Methodists hold views in no wise differing from those held in common by all Evangelical Protestants (who are Protestants that regard as the fundamental doctrine of the Gospel, the Trinity, the fallen condition of man, Christ's atonement for sin, salvation by faith and not by works). So far as their views are peculiar to themselves, they are thus embodied by John Wesley: "The justification whereof our articles and homilies speak, means present forgiveness, pardon of sins, and of grace, which we have received. But these I can not as yet term good works, because they do not spring from faith and the love of God." "By salvation, I mean not barely deliverance from hell or going to heaven, but a present deliverance from sin, a restoration of the soul to its primitive health, its original purity after the image of God, in righteousness and true holiness, in justice, mercy and truth. This implies all holy and heavenly teners and, by consequence, all holiness of conversation. Faith is the sole condition of this salvation. Without faith, we cannot thus be saved, for we cannot rightly serve God unless we love him, and we cannot love him unless we know him, neither can we know him unless by faith. Faith, in general, is a divine, supernatural evidence or conviction of things not seen, that is, of things past, future of spiritual. Justifying faith implies not only a divine evidence or conviction that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, but a sure trust and confidence that Christ died for my sins, and that he loved me and gave himself for me, and the moment a penitent sinner believes this, God pardons and absolves him, and as soon as his pardon or justification is witnessed to him by the Holy Ghost, he is saved.

He loves God and all mankind; he has the mind that was in Christ, and power to walk as He also walked. From that time (unless he makes shipwreck of the faith) salvation gradually increases in his soul. The Author of faith and salvation is God alone. He is the sole Author of every good work. There is no more of power than of merit in man, but as the merit is in the Son of God, in what he has done and suffered for us, so all power is in the Spirit of God, and therefore every man, in order to believe unto salvation, must receive the Holy Ghost."

In England, the Wesleyan Methodists use more or less of the English liturgy. In America they do not differ in form from those of other non-liturgical churches, except in being more free.

Wesley divided the Methodist societies into classes, each class containing about a dozen of persons, under the supervision of a class leader. Still larger associations are the Districts composed of from ten to twenty circuits. The highest ecclesiastical court is the conference. It meets annually in one of the principal cities of England.

The organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church of America, is patterned on that of the Wesleyan Methodist of England. The president of the district is known as the presiding elder.

In addition to the Methodist Episcopal Church North and South, there are the African M. E. Church, The Evangelical Methodist-association, the Methodist Protestant Church and the Methodist (Wesleyan) Connection of America.

CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH. Congregationalists is the name of a denomination of the Christian Church. Strictly speaking, Congregationalism is the name of a Church polity. All who maintain that polity or method of Church government are, therefore, Congregationalists, and in this sense the term includes Unitarians, Baptists, Campbellites or Christians, and others.

The name assumed by the same body of Christians in England is Independents. It is claimed for Congregationalism, as for all forms of church government, by their respective adherents, that it is formed upon the apostolical pattern. But as a denomination, the Congregationalists may be said to have taken their use in the period of the English Reformation. Miltron is claimed as "the modern discoverer of Congregational dissent," but the founder of the Congregational Church is Robert Brown. He lived in the sixteenth century, maintained the absolute independence of the local church, denied all priestly or ministerial authority, and insisted on the entire separation of church and state. His followers were called Brownists. Persecuted in England, Brown fled with his followers to Holland, where he founded a church.

From the Brownist churches, which grew up in England and Holland, came the emigration of Puritan Congregationalists to New England, where Congregationalism has spread through the United States.

The creed of the majority of the orthodox Congregationalists is that of a moderate Calvinism, although some of the churches are Arminian. One of the principles of Congregationalism is the right of private judgment in interpreting the sacred Scriptures. This was taken from Luther. But the fundamental principle may be said to be, namely, that any company of persons, believing themselves to be, and publicly confessing to be Christians, associated by voluntary compact on Gospel principles for Christian work and worship, constitute a true church. The Congregationalists hold that Christ came upon earth, not to establish one divine and authoritative church, but to set forth certain great truths, and put in operation certain great spiritual forces, by his life and death. And that he left his followers to organize in individual and local associations, to carry on the work which he left them to do, and that every such organization is absolutely independent of each other. No other body has any right to control it. Every such church has the right

to determine its own creed, to elect and dispose its own officers, to determine the condition of membership in its own body, and to discipline those within its membership who do not walk conformably with its rules.

In the government of the individual church, the same radical principle of individual liberty is carried out. Every member of the church has equal essential rights, powers and principles with each other.

BAPTIST CHURCH. Baptists is the name of that Christian denomination which maintains that baptism can be administered only upon a personal profession of Christian faith.

In the United States, the Baptist Church owes its origin to Roger Williams who, before his immersion, was an Episcopalian minister. They regard the ceremony of baptism as a token, not a means, of regeneration, - as a symbol, therefore, which should always follow, never precede conversion. They hold, accordingly, that repentance and faith are the prerequisites of baptism which, therefore, can be administered only to those who give evidence of possessing a Christian experience. In the other Protestant Churches, baptism is generally regarded as a symbol of purification, a rite of initiation into the visible Church, and a sign or seal for the purpose of more solemnly ratifying God's covenant of Grace with his chosen people. The Baptists will admit none to baptism but those who give evidence of possessing a Christian experience. They do not believe in infant baptism. They also hold that baptism can only be administered by immersion. The Baptists maintain that the Greek word "Baptizo" signifies to immerse, that the indications of the Scriptures all point to immersion as the method observed by the Apostolic Church; that figures relating to baptism indicate the same thing; that the command to baptise carries with it the command to baptise in the manner in which the apostles baptized; and that any departure from this method is in

so far a departure from the law of God.

A large proportions of Baptist denominations, considering that only immersion is baptism, also hold that only those who have been immersed have a right to come to the Lord's table. This doctrine is popularly known as close communion, and those who hold it are often called close communionists, or close communion Baptists. Except in their peculiar views regarding Baptism, the regular Baptists do not differ from other evangelical denominations. Their general views have been defined by the New York State Baptist Convention and is as follows:- A regular Baptist Church is one "which is congregational in polity, Calvinistic in substance of doctrine, which maintains the immersion of believers is an initiatory rite of a visible church, and restricts the Lord's Supper as an ordinance of the Church to those who have been thus initiated into a body of baptized believers and become subject to their discipline.."

Many minor denominations have embraced, in a modified form, their principles, and taken their name. There are Free Will Baptists, who are Arminian in doctrine, and Open Communionists in practise, German Baptists, popularly known as Dunkers, General and Particular Baptists, a division which prevails in England, the former of whom hold Arminian, the latter Calvinistic views; Old School Baptists, sometimes called anti-Mission, and popularly known as Hard Shell Baptists, who are becoming extinct, Seventh Day Baptists, who keep the seventh day of the week, instead of the first.

THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH. The Christian or Campbellites should also be included in the list of leading Baptist denominations. Christians is a name assumed by the followers of Alexander Campbell, more commonly known from that circumstance, as Campbellites.

Alexander Campbell was born in Antrin County, Ireland, Sept. 12, 1778. His father was a clergyman of the Seceders. When Alexander was not quite nineteen years of age, his father emigrated to America. Alexander did not come over with his father, but completed his theological course at Glasgow, first. When finally he did join his father, it was with the expectation that his liberality would have to overcome bitter, but conscientious opposition of his father. But other influences had been, meanwhile, at work upon his father. He had been tried and disciplined for the ecclesiastical offense of inviting members of the Presbyterian Churches to sit at the same communion table with himself. Thus, when father and son met, they were both ready to unite in a common movement against the stringency of church creeds and the rigid separation which then existed between different evangelical churches. At first they had no thought of forming a new sect. They desired to work with and in the Presbyterian Church. But the Presbyterian Churches looked with suspicion and disfavor on both of the leaders and on their movement. And when they required, as the condition of Church membership, a direct immersion, the last bond which joined them together was severed. In 1815, the followers had increased to five or six congregations. They acted in ecclesiastical connection with the Baptists for a while; but their fundamental principle, no creed but the Bible, was never satisfactory to the Baptists as a class, and in 1827 a decree of excommunication was pronounced on all followers of Alexander Campbell, by a Virginia association. This was followed by similar action elsewhere, and the Campbellite Congregation organized separately.

It is difficult to define the creed of the Christian or Campbellite Churches except in the words of their founder. "Where the Scriptures speak, we speak; where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent." In general, the only terms of admission to the Christian Church are the acceptance of the Bible as a sufficient and infallible rule of faith and practise, and immer-

sion.

In consequence, both churches and individuals differ very much in faith, some being Unitarian in doctrine, while others hold fast the substantial views of the orthodox churches; and yet others carry the views of Alexander Campbell to an extreme which he would never have justified. For the most part, however, we believe they may be said to be substantially evangelical in sentiment, while in government they are practically Congregational.