

**AN INQUIRY INTO THE  
ORGANIZATION AND GOVERNMENT  
OF THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH:  
PARTICULARLY WITH REFERENCE TO  
THE CLAIMS OF EPISCOPACY**

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An inquiry into the organization and government of the apostolic church: particularly with reference to the claims of episcopacy by Albert Barnes

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**ALBERT BARNES**

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## ADVERTISEMENT TO THIS EDITION.

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THIS volume is designed to be a *Manual* that may be put into the hands of those who are led to inquire into the organization of the Christian church. It is not intended to be controversial, or of such a character as to provoke reply; and it is hoped that it will not be construed as an *attack* on the Episcopal Church. It is submitted to the public because it is believed that there is no book on this subject that is precisely what is needed, in regard to size and character, to put into the hands of those in the churches who are interested in this inquiry. There are many persons who are interested in the inquiry who have not the time or the means to examine it very extensively. Most of the works, also, which have been written on this subject, instead of confining the investigation to the Bible, are mainly occupied with an examination

of the antiquities of the church, and the customs and sentiments of the "Fathers." The claims of Episcopacy, also, are often urged with great zeal, and pressed, sometimes in such a manner as to create embarrassment, on those who have been trained in non-episcopal churches; and there is no convenient "manual" accessible to which they can at once be referred as showing precisely how this matter stands in the New Testament.

The argument here presented is wholly *scriptural*. The characteristic of the volume is, that it is an appeal to the Bible, as the *only* authority in the case, and as a *sufficient* authority to settle the question. It is presumed that in a revelation given to mankind, God has made it possible to ascertain what was the original organization of the church, and that the evidence thus furnished is such that it can be understood and appreciated by the mass of mankind. It is assumed in this argument that nothing but the testimony of the Bible on the subject can be binding on the conscience, and that the whole matter must be, and may safely be, left there. It is not intended to be conceded, however, that the argument from history and from the "Fathers" would be in favour of Episcopacy, but



that point is not referred to; for, whatever may be the truth in regard to that, it can have no authority in determining what was the constitution of the church as established by the Saviour.

The foundation of the argument here presented was embodied in two reviews of the tract entitled "Episcopacy Tested by Scripture," by the Right Rev. Dr. H. U. Onderdonk, Bishop of the Diocese of Pennsylvania. Those reviews were first published in the Quarterly Christian Spectator, of New Haven, in 1834 and 1835, and subsequently in a small volume, without material alteration. They were afterward mostly rewritten, and were cast into the form of a consecutive argument; and in this form they were again published in this country in 1843, and were soon after republished in London.

The work has again been revised for the present edition, with the design, mainly, of removing from it its controversial aspect, and making it, as its title indicates, "An Inquiry into the Organization and Government of the Apostolic Church." It has been necessary, of course, to examine with freedom the arguments in favour of Episcopacy, so far as they are derived from the Scriptures;

and for this purpose, the reference to the tract of Dr. Onderdonk is, in some places, retained. This has been done the more freely because the tract has been published by the "Protestant Episcopal Tract Society,"\* and because it would be impossible to find, in the writings in defence of Episcopacy, a more full, candid, and able reference to the proof from Scripture texts relied on by Episcopalians, than is to be found in this tract of Dr. Onderdonk. An examination of the reasons there assigned for Episcopacy is, therefore, an examination of the reasons on which the Episcopal argument rests; and the tract has been referred to in the edition of this work now published, in the same manner as other Episcopal authorities.

This work has but one claim to public attention. It is that of being an examination of all that can be found in the New Testament that bears on the organization of the church. Much is gained in the inquiry into the organization and government of the church, if the investigation can be confined wholly to the Scriptures. There all who are not Episcopalians are willing to leave the

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\* Printed at the Protestant Episcopal Press, 1835.

inquiry; and by that authority alone the question must be ultimately determined. It is perilous for Episcopacy to make its appeal solely to the Bible, and much is gained in the argument when there is a willingness to leave the question there.

This work, which is now again submitted to the public, contains nothing, it is believed, which can pain the feelings of any friend of Episcopacy, or which can be construed into a want of respect for the Episcopal Church. For the favourable regards of the public, few men have more occasion for gratitude than I have; and now, after so many years have passed away since the argument was first penned, whatever may be the value of my opinion, early or matured, on this subject, I desire that this work should go forth in this permanent form as expressing my conviction—the result of all my study of the Bible—in regard to the organization and government of the apostolic church.

ALBERT BARNES.

PHILADELPHIA, Aug. 21, 1855.