

The Problem of Home Reunion.

BY THE REV. CHANCELLOR LIAS, M.A.

IN responding to the request of the Editor of the CHURCHMAN, that I would say a few words on the question of Home Reunion, I may at least claim to have given some little consideration to the subject. I was one of those unfortunate persons who took part in the once celebrated "Grindelwald Conferences," at the time generally represented to Churchmen as a sort of ecclesiastical picnic, at which kindly though benighted or visionary individuals appeared, but which no sensible person would be likely to take seriously. I learned a great deal at those Conferences, nevertheless. I learned that the best, and not the least influential, men among the Nonconformists had a very kindly feeling for the Church in those days, and that, had their approaches to us been received in the spirit in which they were made, the question of federation between Churchmen and Dissenters would very soon have come "within the region of practical politics." Unfortunately, the overtures of Nonconformity then made were received by the authorities of the Church with coldness, and not infrequently with something very like contempt. Was it surprising if there was a strong revulsion of feeling among the leading Nonconformists; that the Free Church Federation, when formed, was actuated by a hostile instead of a friendly spirit and that it has set itself to deprive the Church of those privileges behind which she so churlishly, and it may be added so unwisely, entrenched herself?

The wider horizon which the Pan-Anglican Congress extended before the eyes of our somewhat too insular, and possibly somewhat too self-satisfied, communion has, unless I am much mistaken, brought about a considerable change of opinion. The papers of Dr. Stock and Canon Henson are a welcome sign of that change. And I have reason to believe that this change of feeling extends to sections of

the Church to which neither of the above-named gentlemen belong.

Dr. Stock's paper views the question from a characteristically British standpoint. The genuine Briton does not, at the first blush, welcome new ideas, and his first impulse is to pile up the difficulties in the way of their adoption. This is a very useful function to fulfil. If we are not confronted with the difficulties at the outset, we are very likely to blunder into positions which may block the road for generations. I confess, nevertheless, that I cannot sympathize either with Dr. Stock or Canon Henson in the objection they take to the phrase "Home Reunion." Neither of them have provided us with a better—indeed, it would puzzle them to do so—and the reasons they give for their objections do not seem particularly convincing. Dr. Stock, indeed, tells us (p. 1), that union between religious bodies involves the adoption of formularies precisely identical. But as he abandons this contention two pages further on, it seems hardly necessary to spend much time in refuting it. Yet it may be well to remind the reader that though "union" means "oneness," it does not necessarily involve identity. There are various kinds of union, and the union for which we are pleading is not necessarily union of ceremonial or organization, but rather union of heart and spirit. Dr. Stock admits this himself. "Societies and Orders within the Church," he tells us (p. 4), "might have their own rules." And surely our Church, in her wise contention that "every country should use such ceremonies as they shall think best to the setting forth of God's honour and glory, and to the reducing the people to a most perfect and godly living," is not striking a blow against union. On the contrary, as a layman in the fifth century A.D. reminds us, the most diverse forms of ritual and of general administration were in existence in his time and neighbourhood, without the slightest prejudice thereby to the completest union of the Churches.¹

Another point in Dr. Stock's paper, as well as that of

¹ Socrates, "Eccl. Hist.," v. 22.

Canon Henson, to which exception may fairly be taken, is the certainty both of them express that the Diocesan Episcopate was of later introduction in the West than in the East. When we find that Eusebius, a most trustworthy historian, whose accuracy, whenever we are able to test it, is invariably confirmed, gives us the names of the Bishops of Rome in the first century, his statement is not disposed of by the fact that some authorities are found to have placed those names in a different order. We may be induced thereby to suspend our judgment on the point. But our modern habit of esteeming the existence of a difficulty equivalent to the disproof of the definite assertion of a careful historian who had means of information not open to us is hardly justifiable.

Canon Henson, if I may be permitted to say so, amuses me by the vigour and impartiality of his strokes. Our good friend the *Church Times* is the first to smart under his lash. And certainly its "Short Method with the Dissenters," which comes under Canon Henson's censure, is a very excellent example of the way in which our Nonconformist brethren ought *not* to be treated. Then the phrase "Historic Episcopate," though approved by the successive gatherings of the Anglican Episcopate, appears very much to displease him. The phrase "is unmeaning and unhelpful." What *does* it mean? Does it mean the "Presbyter-Bishop of the Pastoral Epistles or St. Clement of Rome," the "Monarchical Bishop of St. Ignatius and St. Cyprian?" and so on. We need not follow Canon Henson through the whole of his list. But why should not the phrase "Historic Episcopate" include them all? They all come under the *genus* Episcopate; and every one of them may have done good service in their season.

The phrase "Historic Episcopate" surely means the Episcopate regarded as the universal form of Church government from the second to the sixteenth century, and includes the liberty to modify it in detail so as to suit our modern conditions. It is, moreover, a mistake to identify the character of Episcopal office in the days of Ignatius with its character in those of

Cyprian, or to exaggerate the monarchical character of the Episcopal office in the days of the latter, as is so frequently done by the opponents of Episcopacy. If Cyprian's Episcopacy was monarchical, it was at least constitutionally so. One assumption may, perhaps, be made here. In any and every modification of Episcopacy which may be thought desirable we ought not to depart from its original germ. What was that original germ? The Bishop in those early days, when the size and importance of the community over which he presided is borne in mind, could have been little more than what a Rural Dean is now—the lifelong chairman of the society. When the Apostles were alive, he was frequently nominated by them. After their departure, he was no doubt elected by the community; and, further, he was probably *set apart to his office* by it. We have no evidence of the consecration of a Bishop by the neighbouring Bishops till the beginning of the third century, though it seems to have become a well-established custom by that time. It is clear, however, that at first the neighbouring Bishops were only called in because of the frequent disputes about the validity or fairness of an election. Timothy and Titus, if Bishops at all (which some dispute), appear to have been appointed to their office by simple nomination on the part of an Apostle. Ignatius and Polycarp seem to have been appointed in much the same way. And Barnabas and Saul were “set apart” as missionary Bishops to the heathen, *not* by the Apostolic College, though it was in full existence and work at that time, but by sundry “prophets and teachers” then residing at Antioch. After the death of the Apostles, the Bishops would naturally be men of character and experience, calculated to be of immense use to the Churches of that age. The earnest exhortations of Ignatius to “do nothing without the Bishop” were obviously not intended to elevate him into a despot, but to urge younger and perhaps rasher men not to act without his opinion or advice.

From these small beginnings arose the various forms of the Episcopate to which Canon Henson refers. The one condition common to all, or almost all, of them was that to the Bishop

was assigned the oversight of the Church. And when we speak of retaining the "Historic Episcopate" we mean that, in some form or other, that office of oversight shall still be theirs. When Canon Henson goes on to refer to the past history of the Church, and endeavours to show that the Episcopate has been a source of division, he surely can hardly mean that the divisions to which he calls attention were *caused* by the Episcopal office; for then they would have ceased with the abolition of that office. Yet we know that nothing tended so much to promote the Roman reaction in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as the mutual jealousies of the non-Episcopal Lutheran, Calvinist, and Arminian. The inference, clearly, is that the existence of the above-mentioned divisions was not due to the Episcopal office, but to the "corruption of nature," which, as we are told, "doth remain, yea, even in them that are regenerate." Nor can we trace any of that "petulance" and "confusion of thought" discovered by Canon Henson in the sentence in which Dr. Stock blames those who seem to find "a double dose of original sin" in the office of the Bishop. They seem rather to exist in the mind of his assailant, and to be due to the fact that Dr. Stock does not think so badly of Episcopacy as an institution as his antagonist—for the present, at least—fancies he ought to do. Dr. Stock seems to me to be perfectly right in his belief that, whatever evils may have become inherent in Episcopacy during the course of ages, there are none so ingrained in the office itself as to justify the Church of England in abandoning so venerable, and for many ages so universal, an Order. It may be necessary to remind Canon Henson that the retention of the office by ourselves does not involve the excommunication of non-Episcopal bodies. That here in England there is too great a distance between the Bishop and his clergy; that the Bishops are at present too "few and far between" to have any particular hold upon the laity, may be a good reason for reform: it is none for revolution. The problem before us is to retain an ancient and most useful office, and to be, at the same time, in the most friendly relations with those who do not possess it.

I cannot believe this problem to be insoluble, if approached with tact and discretion.

Canon Henson appears to think that the harshness towards Nonconformists displayed at the Restoration was the fault of the clergy. A reference to the proceedings of Parliament and Convocation at the time will show that the divines of that day were overruled by the Cavaliers, who bitterly resented the treatment they had received at the hands of the victorious Roundheads. I fear that Canon Henson's new creed will be a long time in supplanting the ancient Catholic Creeds recited in the services of the Anglican Church, and I am very doubtful whether it will be palatable to the majority of Nonconformists. But it is impossible not to relish his timely fling at the "zone of toleration," which is carefully outlined so as to include those who for three-quarters of a century have been encroaching on the doctrine and discipline of the Church as by law established for the last 350 years, and to exclude everybody else, and most of all those who have been most anxious to see that doctrine and discipline maintained.

But to return to the problem of our relations with Nonconformists. Dr. Stock deserves our thanks for pointing out so clearly that separation itself is undesirable, if not blameable. Yet I think it must be allowed that there are circumstances which would justify it. When a Church lays down unlawful terms of communion as binding on her followers, no honest man can possibly remain in her. Whether the Church of England has done this or not is a question which cannot be argued in this paper. My own impression, I own, is that our Church in the time of Elizabeth stood for breadth and toleration, the Nonconformists for narrowness and intolerance. But there were faults on both sides, and duty bids Churchmen and Nonconformists alike to say: "Brothers, we have erred; let us do all we can now to repair our error."

Dr. Stock has certainly done well to call our attention to the difficulties in our way. But those difficulties are certainly not sufficiently formidable to justify us in doing nothing. To

approach Nonconformist ministers with a demand that as a condition precedent to all negotiation they should all consent to accept Episcopal ordination would be an insult. But if, believing that it is God's will that His people should be one, we endeavour, in a spirit of obedience and faith, to remove the hindrances which keep them apart, we may depend upon it that the way will open out to us as we proceed. When I first passed through the Straits of Messina, now so famous throughout the world in consequence of the terrific earthquake which has desolated that region, I thought our vessel was making straight for the shore. But by degrees a small opening presented itself, which gradually widened, until we had entered the Gulf of Reggio, and were free to direct our course anywhere we pleased. So in the present case. The way has been opened to us by the disappearance of the extreme forms of Calvinism on the one side, and the less rigid views on the necessity of the Episcopate which are beginning to prevail on the other. We might therefore begin by friendly conferences, in which we discussed the interpretation of Scripture, and its bearing on questions doctrinal and practical.¹ Our next step should be to encourage our flocks to take the Holy Communion together, and to cultivate personal intimacies which, as between Churchman and Dissenter, are at present by no means common. Next, definite Reunion Conferences might be held, in which terms of reconciliation might be formally discussed. *Not till then* would I introduce the question of interchange of pulpits, and the reception of Holy Communion together by ministers of religion and their flocks. To take these latter steps prematurely would retard the progress of reunion, for which the ground ought carefully to be prepared beforehand. Then we should be ready to consider a scheme of federation, in which the various religious bodies should take their place, as religious societies or

¹ Since the above words were written I find that a movement for this end has already been commenced at Hampstead. Dr. Horton's fling at "Bishops and Archbishops" is certainly to be lamented; yet, on the other hand, it must be confessed that so far "Bishops and Archbishops" have not done much in the direction required. It may be hoped that, if such gatherings be persevered in, the long-standing bitterness may gradually disappear.

Orders, within the pale of the one reunited Church. I cannot, I fear, with Dr. Stock, include in my dream of the future our abandonment of the privilege of Establishment. By taking this step we should lose the hold the Church of England now has on men—and I have known many such—who say to the various denominations, “Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian,” but feel themselves prevented by what they consider to be narrow dogmatic definitions from attaching themselves to any particular religious body. On the other hand, we might remove from ourselves the reproach of Erastianism by obtaining from the State a reasonable measure of self-government for the Church, with a Parliamentary veto to prevent legislation of which the people at large would disapprove. Such, in outline at least, is my dream, and I see nothing but prejudice and faint-heartedness on our parts which can hinder it from being realized. But bearing in mind the touching prayer of our Lord, recorded by St. John as having been uttered just before His death, I think the cause of home reunion, to say nothing of reunion on a larger scale, is one to which a man might well be ready to devote his life.



The Evidential Value of the Temptation.

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THE student of Christian evidences may find, it seems to us, more material for his use in the record of the Temptation than the treatises on that subject commonly point out to him. The narrative, independently of the actual words used in the first Temptation, “If Thou *art* the Son of God” (Ἐὶ υἱὸς εἶ τοῦ Θεοῦ,¹ which does not express a doubt, but a claim on the part of the Person addressed), bears directly both on the question of the character and the nature of Jesus Christ.

1. *As to the Character of Christ.*—The modern interpretation, which makes the temptations in each case to be addressed

¹ R.V., St. Matt. iv. 3.