

I believe, by the Church of England and the English Nonconformists, after considerable purgation by both of their outstanding blemishes and defects. By degrees I hope all other Churches will join this great Catholic Union: those whose errors are fewest, first; those that, like the Roman Church, are most in error, last. The process of reunion will probably be hindered rather than hastened by premature attempts at external manifestations such as exchange of pulpits and the like. Meanwhile, in all personal and social relations let Christians of every denomination and of all the Churches cultivate the freest and most friendly intercourse. Let them study their differences and study also their harmonies. Let them cling with a great loyalty to their past history, yet let not their past history be a clog on the wheels of their future development. Above all, let them pray for each other in the Holy Ghost, that He would guide them into all the truth and fill them with most holy love. Then in God's own time will the Church of the future look forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and, in its warfare against falsehood and sin, terrible as an army with banners.



The Problem of Home Reunion.

BY PROFESSOR J. VERNON BARTLET, D.D.

IT may be useful to preface this contribution to the above problem—the contribution of one not a member of the chief Christian communion involved—by quoting some sentences from what may be regarded as the primary recent utterance on the subject. In his sermon on “The Vision of Unity,” addressed to the Bishops assembled for the Lambeth Conference of 1908, the Dean of Westminster referred to the preceding Congress as having shown “an unexampled *recognition of the work of the Divine Spirit* in the communions which are separated from us, an unexampled desire *to learn what they have to teach us*, an unexampled readiness to inquire how union

might be accomplished *on conditions honourable to both sides.*" He then went on to assume that the maintenance of "the historic episcopate," as existing in the Anglican communion, was in some sense—even if "locally adapted in the methods of its administration"—a *conditio sine qua non* to the union he had in mind. The whole question, then, resolves itself practically into this: How seriously are Anglicans prepared to take the calls for *modification* in the forms of *their* "historic episcopate" demanded by adequate "recognition of the work of the Divine Spirit" in and through the forms of organization under which other historic communions in Great Britain have done the work of God side by side with themselves? How far do they really allow that they have something of value, something proper to the full idea of the organization of *Church life*, "the fellowship of saints," to learn from the Divine-human experience of such communions?

Those who accept the general results of the late Dr. Hort, in his lectures on the primitive Christian *Ecclesia*, should have no hesitation in answering these questions in so full a sense as to meet the other types of communion really halfway—which is all they ask, and what many in them ardently desire.¹ The Dean of Westminster himself is largely a disciple of Dr. Hort's on this subject, as in his general attitude. He feels, indeed, that "an ordered ministry, guarded by the solemn imposition of hands," is essential to a reunited communion. But here, I believe, there will be no real difficulty, if only it be understood that it is *order*, and not transmitted *grace*, that is the essential thing agreed upon; and if the hands laid on include, as was the case in the early Church, those of presbyters also, as more clearly and adequately representing the whole local Church in this sacred act. That the Dean would not demur to such a *concordat* seems implied by his adding that the terms for

¹ I must here express my dissent from the Dean's suggestion that these communions "are well contented to be separate from us." That is an outside judgment, and rests on little but the fact that "they have made no movement towards a corporate reunion." Why? Because they thought it hopeless for the time.

securing "an ordered ministry" could be adjusted, "with a recognition on the one side of a *charismatic* ministry [*i.e.*, one in which Divine empowering grace is manifest apart from ordination], which God has plainly used and blessed, and a fuller recognition on the other side of the permanent value of an episcopacy which has long since ceased to be a prelacy." These granted, he looks forward to the possibility of "temporary agreement which might ultimately issue in a common ministry, regular in the historic sense, though admitting of separate organizations and exempt jurisdictions."

As this last phase of the matter seems to commend itself in various Anglican circles, represented both by Chancellor Lias and Revs. T. A. Lacey and A. W. Robinson, I feel bound to say that it does not commend itself to me as a happy or practicable idea, nor do I believe it would to Nonconformists generally. We would far rather do the thing thoroughly and handsomely, in the large, magnanimous spirit of our common Lord, once the difficulties of conscience were removed. We do not love "separate organizations"; they seem to us necessary evils, obscuring the fact and lessening the degree of underlying unity of spirit among disciples of Christ (to use Canon Henson's true and fundamental description of Christians), and we would not keep them up a day longer than conscience and New Testament principles seem to demand.

Where, then, do conscience and New Testament principles come in and hinder our accepting existing episcopacy? Dr. A. W. Robinson urges that we should both "try to understand the positions of those from whom we have differed" and "seek to define our own." I would fain do this myself and help others to do the like, the more so that Dr. Robinson's paper, fine as it is in temper and tone, seems rather to obscure than to define the situation. For he brushes aside questions like "the right interpretation of the early consecrations at Alexandria," the most embarrassing case—in the Bishop of Salisbury's judgment a fatal case—for that theory of exclusive "Apostolic succession" through episcopal hands in which all non-Anglicans and many

Anglicans alike see the very principle of disunion¹ between communions else in accord, and makes his appeal to the practical test that episcopacy works best. "The old way is the true way of efficiency and peace." But what if there was an older way, a more original type of episcopate, one which, in its greater congruity with the total "meaning of Christ's Gospel both for the individual and for the community" (which Dr. Robinson rightly makes the criterion of organization), is more justly entitled to the title "historic," or at least "classic," than the particular form inherited by modern from medieval England? There, as Canon Henson rightly insists, lies the root of the matter. Nor do historical students generally admit that the present diocesan or monarchical type of episcopate goes back, as even Dr. Stock and Chancellor Lias assert, to the second century. This is not a matter, as Dr. Stock suggests, of "minute controversy as to the exact date from which episcopacy prevailed in the early Church, and as to its exact character." It is a matter of broad principles; and as long as learned Anglicans felt sure of their footing in the sub-Apostolic age, none were more eager to appeal to it. But since "all admit that in the post-Apostolic age there was no complete or settled organization" (Dr. Stock); since it has become no longer "plain," but more than dubious, "that from the time of the Apostles" the three orders of Bishops, presbyters, and deacons, *as meant in the Ordinal*, have existed generally in the Church—since then, many Anglicans, whether of Dr. Robinson's school or of what may be called the "legitimet" school, of which Dr. Stock's language too much savours, fall back on the appeal to spiritual expediency or prescription in discussions on reunion, without formally admitting that the old historical claim cannot be maintained, or at least proved. If Bishop Wordsworth's admission in his "Ministry of Grace" that down to the beginning of the third century, and

¹ Similarly, he fails to see that when "a famous Nonconformist of the last generation admitted to a friend that he had sometimes wished that our Lord had been pleased to dispense with the need for Sacraments," he probably had in mind—as most would in so saying—the divisive effect of the exclusive or sacerdotal theory as to their administration.

even later, ordination to the episcopal office (rather than order) might be at the hands of presbyters only, is well-grounded, then it is a fact of cardinal significance for the controversy as to the essential nature of the later type of "historic episcopate," according to which such a method would be held invalid. It is idle and not quite candid to obscure this issue, the one on which the claim of Presbyterianism at least¹ to an unbroken succession of order really depends.

Surely, too, the time is past when the type of episcopate which begins to appear in certain regions (only) early in the second century, the type implied in the Ignatian epistles—together with a certain added element of ideal emphasis due to Ignatius himself—can be claimed for modern episcopacy over against either Presbyterianism or Congregationalism. As the chief local pastor of a city church and no more, an Asian Bishop at that date answered really to no single existing type of pastorate. Were a Congregational Church, as may be the case in some townships in New England, to embrace under its pastor, elders and deacons, the whole of the local Christians, there we should have the nearest modern parallel to the Ignatian Bishop. But while no ecclesiastical polity in Britain to-day answers in all respects to this type—the nearest approximation in the Anglican Church being the rector of a moderate-sized town—of all types of modern episcopate or pastorate the Anglican Bishop affords perhaps the slightest resemblance to the Ignatian, *when we consider the relations between Bishop and flock* characteristic of the latter. These relations were personal and immediate; those of the modern Bishop are impersonal, and for the most part only indirect. Then, as regards the direct control in matters of discipline and of appointment to Church office exercised by an early church, along with its presbyters, over its Bishop's action, all this has vanished from the "historic episcopate" which is put forward as the basis of reunion. That is to say,

¹ In point of fact, it also in large measure carries with it the question of the formal regularity of the Congregational ministry, although Congregationalism does not attach the same importance to formal ordination by a minister's peers, as distinct from a Church's commission, however conferred.

the body of the local Church has been stripped of duties and prerogatives inherent to the very idea of an *ecclesia* as pictured in St. Paul's Epistles (see Hort's "Christian Ecclesia," *passim*, esp. p. 229), and as reflected in the ecclesiastical literature of the first three centuries and more. Such is not an organization answering to "the meaning of Christ's Gospel both for the individual and for the community." It means the spiritual pupilage of the bulk of Christ's disciples, and something very like certain fellow-disciples being called "Master" in the sense deprecated by the Master Himself.

These are matters of conscience to many Christians to-day, and they involve others. Accordingly, as a practical system, in which autocratic power is vested in the Bishop and in those he institutes over the various local churches (a method at present aggravated by patronage), and pupilage is the appointed lot of the body of Church members, the existing "historic episcopate" of the Anglican Church cannot claim full *spiritual* continuity with the "historic episcopate" of the early Church, the ante-Nicene Church as a whole; nor should it be insisted upon as the basis of Church reunion in an age when spiritual maturity is more general among Church members than in any period since the sub-Apostolic period. In so saying, I think I have with me not only Canon Henson, but also Chancellor Lias, who regards "historic episcopate" as a *genus*, of which the diocesan bishop, no less than "the presbyter-bishops of the Pastoral Epistles or St. Clement of Rome," and the "monarchical bishop of St. Ignatius and St. Cyprian," is but one species. He remarks also that "we ought not to depart from its original germ," which was, as he goes on to describe it, very different from the mediæval and modern diocesan type. Hence he concludes that retaining the "historic episcopate" means for him only "that, in some form or other, the office of oversight" shall still belong to it. Nor do I gather that Dr. Stock in the last resort—to judge from the more generous note on which he ends—would insist on more than this. Indeed, it is hard to see how consistent Evangelicals can resist Canon Henson's closing appeal

on this head, especially when he urges: "At least let them resist the notion that the *basis* of union in a spiritual society must be acceptance of a specific form of ecclesiastical order. Let them ask in all seriousness whether, if that basis must be postulated, they as Evangelicals have any logical or religious *raison d'être* left." On these lines I do not see why a concordat between Episcopalians and others may not be practicable, which should have as its chief executive ministry a modified episcopate even of the diocesan type.

So far our argument has tended to show that serious modifications in the administration of "the historic episcopate," as it exists in modern Anglicanism, are needful to any fruitful scheme of home reunion; and that such modifications are needful in order to adjust it more fully alike to the ideal of Church fellowship contemplated by the New Testament, to the practice of the Church for some two or three centuries (*i.e.*, when her membership was sincerest and purest), and to the growing experience of Church life at large, since the various modern communions took shape. I proceed now to indicate to what sort of Church polity this would lead, and why it seems to me possible of realization. Stated broadly, it would mean the replacement of the personal government of diocesan and parson by constitutional government, based on the co-operation both of clergy and laity in the Christian commonwealth, as an essentially self-governing body under its immediate Head, Christ. This corresponds to the idea of the Church as the most vital of organisms, one in which all members are active rather than passive, and so responsible for the well-being of the whole. The path to such a balanced constitution is already largely prepared by the experience of the three great types of polity to which all are really reducible—the Episcopal, Presbyterian (of which Methodism affords the native English form), and Congregational. Each of these, in its separate or exaggerated working out of one or two great and abiding principles, furnishes object-lessons both of the strength and weakness of its own

principle uncomplemented by others. Thus we have—once we recognize God's hand in all these polities—ample materials for advancing to a higher synthesis, if only we will dwell in a candid and comprehensive spirit on the strong points rather than the weak in the several systems. Nay, more: the process of synthesis has not only begun; it has already gone much farther than is generally realized, particularly as between Presbyterianism and Congregationalism, which are most free to modify their forms as they learned from each other. Thus Presbyterianism has in various lands found means to give ever larger powers of self-government (especially in the choice of ministers) to the local congregation, subject always to the theoretic veto of the larger units of its corporate life; and Congregationalism has similarly learned to admit a growing element of collective action, deliberative and co-operative, into the life of its federated churches, without surrendering the ultimate autonomy of the local unit. In practice the difference between these systems, especially in America, where the development has been freest from external causes of friction, is surprisingly small. Finally, the Methodist Episcopal Church in America has shown that the principle of diocesan episcopacy may, however inadequately in the eyes of Episcopalians, be grafted into a system fundamentally Presbyterian and connexional in nature.

When we remember these things, as well as the proposals for a "reduced" or more constitutional type of episcopacy which emerged repeatedly in the seventeenth century in conferences between Episcopalians and Presbyterians, we need not despair of reaching a truly balanced synthesis of the principles of personal leadership and oversight, of collective deliberative control exercised through Church assemblies composed both of clergy and laity, and of habitual autonomy on the part of the local Church as a body, for which the three historic polities stand—all within one constitutional system. I fully agree with Dr. Robinson that, if we are to insure harmony and stability in such a system, we must be content to move more slowly than we could wish, in order to accustom our people at large, both in

feeling and practice, to so new an order of things. The great requisites now and all along, in addition to a deep spirit of unity which will not shrink from any sacrifice, save of that which seems to belong to the soul of the Gospel rather than to its ecclesiastical embodiment, appear to me to be two: First, that Episcopalians in particular (as starting with the greater sense of prerogative) shall take the two other historic types seriously, as embodying principles integral to a full-orbed Church life, and owned of God in history as really, though not necessarily as amply, as that for which they themselves stand; and next, that diocesan episcopacy, in whatever form adopted into the uniting system, need be accepted by all only as a valuable element in the *bene esse* of the Church, and not as of its *esse* in any sense exclusive of other types of ministry under which non-episcopal Churches have in the past lived with the tokens of God's Spirit among them. For these reasons among others I heartily adopt Dr. Robinson's words, when he says that the reuniting Church

"will have to be a bigger thing than most of those who desire it imagine. No settlement can be lasting which does not find ample room for the fullest and freest expression of every positive conviction on the part of all who are to be included by it. Those who return to us must return with the full assurance that they will be giving their witness and safe-guarding what is dear to them more completely by doing so than by continuing to protest from outside. The platform must be spacious enough to hold us all. No nicely calculated reduction to an incontestable minimum will serve as a basis of agreement. The reunion of the future will be obtained, not through compromises, but by comprehension. Unity is waiting until we have re-learned the old lesson, 'All things are yours.'"

No doubt Dr. Robinson and I have in mind partly different things as calling, and rightly calling, for comprehension in a united Church of England. And I feel sure that in his own mind he pictures too narrow and exclusive a basis when he uses the phrase "return to us" (which I regret to see is also Dr. Stock's mode of thought), and refers to "the historic episcopate" obviously in a form practically unmodified by the recognition of other elements in Church government; that is, he dreams of re-absorption of all into Episcopalianism rather than reunion of all—Episcopalians, Methodists, Presbyterians,

and Congregationalists—on a basis higher and broader than any existing one. But none the less his “form of words,” and the idea behind the words, is “sound”; and I trust that he will grow in sympathy and conviction up into the fulness of it. Towards this result the movement for “Church Reform,” not only at home, but also amid the freer and less conservative atmosphere abroad, is surely helping to prepare the minds and imaginations of not a few Anglican Churchmen.

Hitherto I have spoken only of comprehension as regards the principles of Church polity at present represented by separate communions. But the like applies to doctrine. Indeed, it was to this that St. Paul applied his great formula, “All things are yours”—all types of Christian teachers, on the simple basis, “Ye are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.” To agree to differ on things *proved by the experience of Christian fruitage*, not by a *priori* theory, to be non-essential, in the mutual brotherly confidence of “discipleship” to the one Master and Redeemer—that, as Canon Henson has suggested, is the condition of a comprehensive Church of Christ on the general lines laid down in the large-hearted passage quoted above. Meantime “Let brotherly love continue” and grow to its outward fruit of unity. Various means of expressing it in the present distress may commend themselves to various types of Anglicans.



The Story of High Church Agitation for an Ecclesiastical Court of Final Appeal.

BY THE REV. CANON HENRY LEWIS, M.A.

II.

SIX years later Archbishop Tait, in sheer weariness of the continued strife, publicly invited High Churchmen to state in definite terms what they really wanted. He promised that the fullest consideration should be given by the Bishops to their representations.