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to hear : to prophesy smooth things is to prophesy deceit. The question is not so much of the substance of the sermon as of its form. We ask for the encouragement which would come if we could know that our people had at least thought about what we had said, and considered it worth talking over with us. And we ask for some indications of what really interests and appeals to the varying types of mind with which we have to deal. It is for us to use those indications wisely, and by the light they give to learn more of the mysterious art of "persuasion." We ask for criticism, not that we may win more praise, but that we may do more good.



The Anglican Idea of a True Episcopate.

BY THE REV. M. LINTON SMITH, M.A.,

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THE question of episcopacy is a burning one at the present time, but heat is not always accompanied by light, and controversy is a slow and cumbrous method of arriving at the truth ; for that reason there is need for men to clear their minds upon such a question, and formulate a position which will bear the strictest investigation. Such an attempt is made in this paper, which lays no claim to originality, but simply endeavours to restate the reasonable assertions of the Anglican communion with regard to her ministry.

In the first place, a clear distinction must be drawn between the fact of the episcopate and the various theories which have been held with regard to it. Different theories may be held with regard to the nature of the office, but these theories are but explanations of an already existing fact ; that fact is the same under varying conditions, and whatever explanation we may find of its origin or nature should be applicable to the fact wherever found, and conversely the explanation must take in all the essential features of the fact if it is to be satisfactory.

I take it that we are dealing with the "historic Episcopate," a phrase which has sometimes been scoffed at as meaningless, but one which seems to me to be clear, definite, and convenient, expressing summarily the fact that the office has been and is held in regular and unbroken succession from its first appearance in the Christian society. To this office certain functions are definitely reserved by the practice of the society, and the office is generally exercised in a defined sphere, whether local or social. These three points are the essentials of the office of the Christian Bishop—historic continuity, definite functions, and, with certain unimportant reservations, definite sphere of action. It is important to distinguish between these and the many modifications of the office due to the civil and social conditions in which the Church has existed. The accidental modifications may be for the time the more apparent. There is a marked and obvious contrast between, shall we say, Gregory, Bishop of Rome, with his world-wide interests and highly organized diocese, and David, Bishop of Menevia, with his remote See and loose tribal jurisdiction. But as Bishops of the Christian Church their office and functions were the same; they differ no more in that respect than the Bishop of London differs from the Bishop of Likoma, though the one lives in Fulham Palace and holds a seat in the House of Lords, and the other inhabits a mud-built thatched cottage, and may have to turn his hand to the navigation of a steam-launch on Lake Nyassa. And I think that this suggests, in passing, the importance of a distinction which may legitimately be drawn between episcopacy and prelacy. Prelacy has to do with the accidental prominence, social and civil, which came to be attached to the office of Bishop in the Middle Ages, especially in Western Europe. It is at least questionable whether that prominence has been of real service to the Church, and it is important to keep clear the distinction of social prominence from ecclesiastical jurisdiction, which was so completely obscured by facts at the period of the Reformation. A great deal of prejudice against episcopacy is

due, not to its essential nature, but to its accidental accompaniments.

We come now to the crucial point of origin, on which divide the two main currents of theory as to the nature of the office: Is it specifically revealed from above, according to an explicit command of the Lord to His Apostles, an ordinance of which they were the first exemplars, or has it been evolved from below, in the course of the society's development, by a series of steps which can in some measure be traced in the fragmentary records of primitive Christianity? Before I answer, let me enter a protest against any assumption that either of these theories is more or less inconsistent with the belief in the Divine origin of the office. Whether it be due to the explicit command of the Incarnate Son, or to the hidden guidance of God the Spirit, in either case it comes to us with the evident seal of the Divine approval. But this protest once made, the evidence seems to me to lead unmistakably to one conclusion—the conclusion of such scholars as Bishop Lightfoot and Dr. Hort—"the episcopate was formed, not out of the Apostolic order by localization, but out of the presbyteral by elevation; and the title, which originally was common to all, came at length to be appropriated to the chief among them" (Lightfoot, "Philippians," ed. vi., p. 196). "In the New Testament, the word *ἐπίσκοπος*, as applied to men, mainly, if not always, is *not* a title, but a description of the elder's function" (Hort, "Christian Ecclesia," p. 232).

The causes of this development are obscure: Bishop Lightfoot, while allowing that the "frailty of human pride and love of power" may have been at work, claims that "the pressing needs of the Church were mainly instrumental in bringing about" the growth of its influence, and he notes especially "the confusion of speculative opinion, the distracting effects of persecution, and the growing anarchy of social life," as demanding the development of a strong central authority.

Professor Ramsay ("The Church in the Roman Empire," pp. 361 *et seq.*) makes some illuminating suggestions as to an

important factor in the emergence of the *ἐπίσκοπος* from the college of presbyters. He points out that the man to whom any special function was delegated would naturally be described as the *ἐπίσκοπος* of that particular work; and he goes on to suggest that the presbyter who was put in charge of the external relations of the local Church would acquire prominence in the eyes of other Churches above his fellows, a prominence which would react on his position within his own community: the professor calls attention to the emphasis laid on hospitality in the Pastoral Epistles. His view is borne out by the words of Bishop Lightfoot, that in the first or Ignatian stage in the development of the office the importance of the Bishop lies in the fact that he is regarded as a centre of unity—*i.e.*, that his primary importance is not so much for the internal life of the local Church, as for its external relations with other societies. May I add a further suggestion in the same direction? The Turk has originated nothing, and the organization of the Turkish Empire at the present day is the degenerate descendant of that of the Byzantine rulers, itself a development from the Roman. Now the Turkish Government deals with the various religious communities in a town or district through specially elected delegates—"mukhtars"—who act as the go-betweens in all relations between their own community and the representatives of the Government. It is at least possible that some such practice obtained under the Roman Empire. The objection may be raised that the relations between Church and Empire were not such as to make this arrangement probable; but the first half of the second century, which saw the establishment of the episcopate as a universal order, was precisely the period during which there was an attempt to find a peaceful solution of the difficulties between them. On the part of the Empire there was the relaxation by Trajan and Hadrian of the sterner policy of the Flavii, while from the Church, encouraged to hope for more reasonable treatment, proceeded those writings which have won for the time the title of the "age of the apologists." It does not seem wholly improbable that the official who was charged by the local community with the

supervision of its external relations may have had to deal at such a period, not only with other Churches, but also with the Imperial authorities. So much for the conditions of life which favoured the development of episcopacy in its early stages. One or two other points seem worthy of notice before we pass on from the historical side of the question. We have agreed with the conclusion that the office is not a devolution of the Apostolate, but an evolution from the presbyterate; but if this conclusion be reached on historical grounds, it may on the same grounds be asserted that this evolution took place under Apostolic supervision and with Apostolic sanction. The clearest traces of the monarchical episcopate within the first century are found in the province of Asia, the place where, according to very weighty evidence, the last survivor of the Apostolate spent his old age. In the words of Bishop Lightfoot, "the institution of an episcopate must be placed as far back as the closing years of the first century, and . . . cannot, without violence to historical testimony, be dis severed from the name of St. John" (*op. cit.*, p. 234). The other point to which I wish to call attention is the testimony of the early Syrian Church of Edessa, the importance of which for our subject is due largely to the fact that it developed outside the Roman Empire, and apart from the main currents of Christian life. In it we have the startling fact (if Professor Burkitt's reconstruction of its early history be correct) of a Church which existed for the whole of the second century with no Scriptures but the Old Testament, and which did not officially recognize the four Gospels till the early years of the fifth century, the lack having been supplied by the Diatessaron of Tatian. But this Christian community, which existed so long without those writings which appear to us so essential, seems to have had from the first an episcopal organization, for the names of four, if not five, Bishops of the second century have come down to us. Another point, not without bearing upon the subject, is that at the end of this period the episcopal succession of the Church seems to have been regularized by Palut's acceptance of consecration at the hands of Serapion of Antioch,

a case paralleled in the history of our own Church by Chad's submission to Theodore of Tarsus (Bede, "Hist. Eccl.," iv., c. 2).

From the second century to the sixteenth there was practically no difference of opinion in the Christian world as to the organization of the Church; orthodox and heretic alike recognized the threefold ministry; but the Reformation wrought a great change in Western Europe. The reformed bodies as a whole abandoned episcopacy; the conservatism which, for good and ill, is one of the marked features of the office, rendered the order generally unfavourable to the reception of the new views: the accidents of civil power and social state which had accumulated round the office in the course of ages stood in marked contrast to the Apostolic simplicity of the early Church which the new-found New Testament revealed; the Prelate obscured the Bishop; while the scanty traces of the beginnings of the monarchical episcopate in its pages were not sufficient to convince men who desired a complete break with the past that they were taking a retrograde step in abandoning one of the historic orders of the Church's ministry. But I do not think that any stronger testimony to the practical value of the order can be found than the fact that an equivalent of the episcopate in some form or other was in many cases speedily re-established. The Scandinavian Church has an order of Bishops which possesses some claim to historic succession; in Denmark Bugenhagen's superintendents resumed the title of Bishop before the end of the sixteenth century; while in Prussia, though the title has not been resumed, the superintendent exercises functions which are practically episcopal. In the Reformed Churches, strictly so-called in contrast with the Lutheran, a more rigid Presbyterianism has prevailed.

Bishop Lightfoot distinguishes three stages in the development of the conception of the episcopal office, each of them connected with a great name: there is the Ignatian stage, when the Bishop is regarded as the centre of unity; the Irenæan stage, when he is regarded as the depositary of primitive truth; and the stage of Cyprian, in which he is regarded primarily as

the vicegerent of Christ, and the indispensable channel of Divine grace. I have frankly abandoned as unhistorical the devolution theory on which the last development is based, and if the office has been evolved by the Church under the guidance of the Spirit of God, it must always be open to her to revise her conclusions under the same guidance—that is to say, that the order must always justify its existence by the services which it renders to the society. But it seems to me that such justification can be found along the same lines as those which commended the office at its first development and expansion. It was, in the first place, a centre of unity; the bishops of the several local Churches were the representatives of those Churches to the rest of the body and to the outside world, and so the episcopate welded together in its first days the expanding Church. We are sometimes told now that one of the great hindrances to the reunion of at least English-speaking Christians is the insistence on the part of the Anglican Communion upon an episcopally ordained ministry, in making the historic episcopate the fourth factor in the Lambeth quadrilateral. We may leave out of sight the fact that the Christian Church extends beyond the limits of the Anglo-Saxon races; but are there no signs that, with the growth of the historic sense, and the desire for unity, the episcopate, with its unbroken line of descent and its proved services to the Church, may become the rallying-point round which will gather the broken fragments of the Body of Christ? It may be needful to clear the office of much of its civil eminence, to free it from its connection with exaggerated theories of its mechanical necessity to the life of the Church; but I for one have hopes that in the days to come that which now for a while divides may once again be the centre of attraction in the Christian Church.

In the second place, is there any plainer lesson of history than this, that, with all its faults, episcopacy has been a safeguard of the Divine revelation? It has, indeed, often allowed that truth to be obscured by accretions—such accretions as it was the work of the Reformation to remove; but no Church, as far as I am

aware, with the regular episcopate, has ever suffered from that detrition of the deposit of truth from which the reformed non-episcopal bodies have suffered. Whether you take the declension of English Presbyterianism during the eighteenth century into open Unitarianism, or the development of the down-grade theology in that most dogmatic of all sects, the Baptists, or of the New Theology of the present day, or, again, the tendencies of modern theological thought in Germany or Switzerland, the same phenomena of the wearing away of the fundamental truths of the Christian revelation reveal themselves: in this matter we shall be agreed as to the applicability of the words of Hooker in a parallel case, that "it is better to err by excess than by defect."

At the outset of my paper I used the truism that an explanation or theory must take into account all the facts; the same holds good of our estimates. The divided condition of Anglo-Saxon Christianity is a fact which presses heavily upon us; it was under pressure from a like fact, the corruption of the Western Church, that the reformers of the sixteenth century made their breach with the past by the abandonment of the historic order. It is not easy to see that the Reformed Churches have benefited by their abandonment; it would not be hard to point out weaknesses that have resulted from that step. Sacerdotal pretensions and their corollary in the exaggerated claims as to the organic necessity of this order to the life of the Christian society may raise in hasty minds a prejudice against the office in itself; but our Church corrects this in the sober appeal to history which she makes in the preface to her ordinal: "It is evident unto all men diligently reading the Holy Scripture and ancient authors that from the Apostles' time there have been these orders of ministers in Christ's Church—Bishops, Priests, and Deacons"—a claim which cannot be denied "without violence to historical testimony." Ardent reformers of abuses, and men for whom God's patient working is too slow, may cry out against the obvious conservatism of the office, and the caution, verging on timidity, which its holders

have often shown towards new movements, a tendency which has sometimes resulted in serious divisions. But the experience of the divided bodies themselves has emphasized, as nothing else could have done, the inestimable services which episcopacy has rendered to the causes of unity and truth.

If I have not misinterpreted the Anglican idea of the order, it does not involve the un-churching of those national Christian societies which have discarded the office or broken with its historic continuity ; we do not dispute their right so to decide, however we may question the wisdom of their decision ; it does not involve the validity of their orders, nor of the orders of those bodies who live side by side with us in separation ; but in the latter case it denies their regularity ; it leaves room for the full recognition of God's working in and through them, though it declares unhesitatingly their unfaithfulness to the ideal of Christian unity.

Such an idea of the office as this, which tries to cover all the facts, which stands with confident appeal to the triple judgment of Scripture, of history, and of experience, is, I believe, in the long run likely to bring men back to that outward and visible unity which is unquestionably involved in the belief in the Lord, not merely as the Saviour of individuals, but as the founder of One Society in which the saved should work out their own salvation.



Restricted Horizons : A Plea for Breadth.

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THERE are very few men who are really alike in this world, even though they be brothers. Superficially there may be resemblances, but, when you get below the surface, divergencies begin to crop out in a surprising fashion. There are differences of disposition, of mental texture of angle, of