

## The Church of England and Episcopacy.<sup>1</sup>

A REPLY TO CANON A. J. MASON.

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THERE has been a loud call lately for a restatement of the High Anglican position on the Christian Ministry. A shrewd observer must have noticed that Apostolical Succession has fallen upon very bad times. Only a few months ago the Rev. A. E. J. Rawlinson stated in "Foundations" that, "with regard . . . to the sense, if any, in which what is called Apostolical Succession may legitimately be asserted as a literal fact of history, the evidence is almost, if not quite, non-existent." It is scarcely possible to exaggerate the significance of these words, coming as they do from one who was then a tutor of Keble College. It is as if one in the immediate entourage of the Sultan of Turkey were to express doubts as to the existence of Mahomet, or a member of the Papal College suspicion as to the Episcopate of St. Peter. Doubt as to the very fundamental essential of High Anglicanism has invaded the college founded for the express purpose of fostering and preserving those views! This is but one of many indications that the need is great for believers in the High Anglican view of the ministry to present their case forcibly in the light of present-day historical criticism.

To English Churchmen, one of the most impressive branches of the evidence naturally is, what is the position for which our own Church stands? It is to this question that Canon Mason has applied himself in a book which is a monument of industry and painstaking care. We shall have occasion to examine his book candidly, and we hope without bias; but we should like to say at once that we believe it would not be possible to marshal the evidence with which it deals more favourably to High

<sup>1</sup> "The Church of England and Episcopacy," by Canon A. J. Mason. Published by the Cambridge University Press.

Anglicanism than it has been done by Canon Mason. We are acquainted with several volumes which have dealt with this evidence, but we know none so exhaustive as this. If it is possible to fasten Apostolic Succession on the Church of England, Canon Mason has done it; and if he has failed, we are quite confident no one else has a chance of success.

The book was written in view of the conference of Bishops held last July in connection with the situation which has arisen over the Kikuyu controversy.

We have read the book, and are confident that the case has been put in the strongest way by an author who is as conspicuous for his scholarship as for the respect and affection with which he is regarded in the Church; but we have put it down still utterly unconvinced and entirely unrepentant. We have not found adequate evidence to make us waver in the conviction that our Church's attitude, as expressed in its formularies and by the actions and words practically of all its great divines, was one of brotherly regard and Christian courtesy towards non-Episcopal Churches. We shall express this even more forcibly by-and-by.

The book is almost entirely filled with a series of quotations from the writings of leading Anglican divines from the Reformation to modern times. In our judgment a book planned on this line is unsatisfactory. This is no fault of Canon Mason's. We believe that he has wished to give the evidence fairly, although he confesses in the Preface that he does not profess to be impartial; but a catena of quotations from various authors is in itself an exceedingly unsatisfactory thing. For one reason, because serious omissions are inevitable, and, in the second place, because a naked quotation, apart from its historical context, is often gravely misleading.

To illustrate our first point we will take but two cases. Canon Mason gives a number of extracts from Whitgift's writings in which the Archbishop makes extreme claims for the Episcopate; *e.g.*, in writing to Beza, who had criticized Episcopacy sharply, Whitgift says "that the Bishops were appointed

as successors to the Apostles." Fortified by parallel passages, it looks as if in Whitgift we have a very uncompromising Episcopalian. But when we put side by side with them the following quotations, we get a vastly different light thrown upon his views: "That any one kind of government is so necessary that without it the Church cannot be saved, or that it may not be altered into some other kind, thought to be more expedient, I utterly deny." And again: "I deny that the Scriptures do set down any one certain form and kind of government of the Church, to be perpetual for all times, persons, and places, without alteration."<sup>1</sup> These passages have been overlooked by Canon Mason, and he has therefore given us, unintentionally no doubt, a wrong view of Whitgift's opinions.

Or, again, several times Jewel is referred to as a stiff upholder of Episcopacy as an integral part of the faith. Extracts from Jewel's works in which he defended our position against the Romanists are quoted, extracts which are fairly strong.<sup>2</sup> But we are not given the passage from the "Defence of the Apology" in which Jewel declares that if all the Bishops of the English Church were cut off, it would be no vital matter, she would not have recourse to Rome for a new succession—which reminds us of a well-known High Anglican who, in lecturing upon the Diocletian persecution, remarked that at one time Diocletian had all the Bishops of the Church in his clutches, and, had he known it, by cutting off their heads he could have severed the Church from the channels of Divine grace. Happily, however, the Emperor did not hold High Anglican views upon the ministry!

This phenomenon we could illustrate in many cases. It proves that the giving of strings of quotations is a radically unsound plan.

The second reason why we dislike the scheme of this book is because it takes no count of the circumstances under which

<sup>1</sup> Whitgift's "Defence of the Answer," ed. 1574, pp. 81, 84.

<sup>2</sup> We remember reading much stronger opinions expressed by a member of the Church Association (!) when defending our Episcopate against a Roman onslaught.

the works quoted were written. For instance, Hooker, Whitgift, Cooper, and others, must be read in the light of the conditions under which they wrote, and with a constant recollection of the position they were attacking. Under their particular circumstances, they would have shown themselves to be singularly incompetent to fulfil their task if they had not been able to put the case for Episcopacy strongly against people like Cartwright and "Martin Marprelate." There is little, if anything, they say which those of us who hold liberal views upon the ministry to-day would not agree to, especially under similar circumstances. Their adversaries were bitter and narrow men, who saw in Bishops the "mark of the beast" and the Woman of Babylon, who maintained that our Church had barely taken the first step to Reformation, who used vile and coarse abuse of every Bishop. When we remember this, we get the right perspective in which to view the words of our defenders, and the same applies, with some necessary qualification, to the works of Caroline and post-Restoration writers.

They were required to defend our system against malicious opponents, and it is significant to note their temperate language; to estimate their position accurately we ought to emphasize every tolerant expression, and, if anything, minimize their insistence upon Episcopacy. They would be eager to state their case as forcibly as possible, and would concede as little as ever they truthfully could. Consequently, when we find them in the midst of a bitterly hostile atmosphere admitting that necessity justified a non-Episcopal ministry, which practically every one of them did, it is a fact of the greatest import.

So much in criticism of the general plan of the book. Now we will come to a more detailed examination.

Canon Mason remarks, on p. 482: "We have considered to some extent the formularies in which the collective mind of the Church has been expressed." Now, we must plainly ask, with becoming respect, can any author claim to have examined our formularies to *any* extent when he passes over the Articles of Religion without mention? Canon Mason bases his estimate

of Cranmer's opinions upon the Episcopate upon the Preface to the Ordinal and a footnote quotation. The former, Dr. W. H. Frere has admitted, "may certainly be pressed too far in the High Church direction"; space forbids us to examine it at length, but we maintain that the Articles generally express, not only the views of the Archbishop, but also of the Church of England as a body. Their witness, therefore, is primary and fundamental.

Why, in giving the notes of the Church, does Article XIX. studiously avoid all reference to Episcopacy? Why, in Article XXIII., instead of using the one word "Bishops," is this circumlocution employed: "those we ought to judge lawfully called and sent, which be chosen and called to this work by men who have public authority given unto them in the Congregation, to call and send Ministers into the Lord's vineyard"?

Bishop Gibson of Gloucester, with reluctance, we fear, has told us why. It is because the Articles go no farther than to state that "Episcopacy . . . is an allowable form of Church government, and" leave "the question open whether it is the only one."<sup>1</sup> It would need far weightier evidence than is forthcoming from every quarter to neutralize the witness of the Articles. But why has Canon Mason ignored them?

Again, he passes over quite without mention, or in the most cursory way, all the pre-Elizabethan transactions. The fact that in the compilation of the Prayer-Book the Continental Churches were consulted, and their advice often acted upon, has apparently no significance for him. The fact that refugees from England at the time of the Marian persecution communicated freely with Continental non-Episcopalians is unmentioned, as also is the fact that, when the exiles from the Continent fled to England, they were given churches to worship in, and minister their sacraments to the present day in those churches. Bishop Gore once said that the Church of England would be rent asunder the day non-Episcopalians ministered at Anglican altars.

<sup>1</sup> "The Thirty-Nine Articles," p. 744.

This practice began in Elizabeth's reign, and is going on now in the Dutch Church in Austin Friars! A Huguenot congregation worships to-day in the crypt of Canon Mason's own cathedral.

No doubt he may fairly urge that the plan of his book precludes him from mentioning these things, full of significance though they are. If so, it is a confession of a serious defect in the scheme of the book. These things witness in the clearest fashion that our Church was aware of no disability which affected the status of the Continental Reformed Churches: they were sister Churches. A cursory glance at the "Zurich Letters" (which Canon Mason has overlooked) proves the jealousy with which our Church maintained its doctrinal identity with the non-Episcopalians of Europe. On February 7, 1562, for instance, Jewel wrote to Peter Martyr pointing out that the English Church did not "differ from your doctrine by a nail's breadth." Jewel was too good a theologian to overlook the difference in Church government, so, clearly, he regarded it as a mere non-essential.

The root question to ask is this: Did the Reformation, Elizabethan, and Carolinè divines regard the foreign Protestant bodies as Churches or not? If they did so regard them, then the obvious and inevitable conclusion is that they did not consider Episcopacy as essential to the existence of a Church. We maintain that the evidence mentioned proves that they not only admitted freely and fully the status of the Continental Churches, but acknowledged their equality with the Church of England. The farthest the old High Churchmen generally would go was to regard the Continental Churches as not so perfectly organized or so fully blessed as their own Church. A High Churchman like Andrewes could write that a man "must be stone-blind that sees not Churches standing without" Episcopacy; and a stanch Laudian like Bramhall was of opinion that "there is great latitude left to particular Churches in the constitution of their ecclesiastical regiment."

The part we like least in the book is the Appendix, in which

Canon Mason deals with the question whether or not non-Episcopalians were admitted to benefices with cure of souls from 1559 to 1662. The whole section has a distinct tone of special pleading about it. Much of the evidence for this interesting fact is, naturally, the testimony of contemporary divines and laymen. Why should Canon Mason speak contemptuously of this evidence as "certain stock quotations"? Surely such men as Bishop Joseph Hall, Bishop Cosin, Lord Clarendon, Bishop Burnet, and Bishop Fleetwood, are respectable enough authorities? In this section Canon Mason largely relies upon the Rev. E. Denny's pamphlet upon this subject. We are familiar with this work, and would remark that its author was *careful to omit the evidence* of Hall, Fleetwood, and Clarendon; that he speaks slightly of Cosin's evidence, and apparently was unacquainted with the "stock quotation" from Burnet, as he attempts to make him an advocate of the position he would fain substantiate.

We do not like the way Canon Mason deals with these "stock quotations." Much against our inclination, we feel that he is conscious that their evidence is very damaging, and must be explained, or shall we not say, plainly, explained away? Burnet is disposed of by the simple remark: "Burnet is probably dependent upon Clarendon." There is not the slightest evidence given for this statement, highly improbable though it is, for we can imagine no two men with an outlook on life so different from one another as Burnet and Clarendon. Fleetwood's evidence is demolished in a similar off-hand way. Cosin, so often advanced as a very paladin of High Anglicanism, is dismissed as a special pleader. Again: "It is possible that Hall may have been mistaken about the facts." Still, Canon Mason admits that there were a "few instances," "probably," of non-Episcopalians occupying benefices, with cure of souls, in our Church in those days. We can, however, claim Keble's support for a much larger estimate: "Nearly up to the time when Hooker wrote, numbers had been admitted to the ministry of the Church of England, with no better than Presbyterian ordina-

tion.”<sup>1</sup> The same authority differs from Canon Mason regarding the famous statute 13 Eliz., cap. 12. The latter says that this law, which appears to sanction the ministry of any ordained person, however ordained, on subscription to the Articles, applied only to those in Roman Orders, and that Travers did not appeal to it as affecting his case. Keble is not of this opinion. We will, however, give Travers' own words, and leave the reader to judge who is right :

“I have heard of those that are learned in the laws of this land, that by express statute to that purpose, anno 13 of Her Majesty's reign, upon subscription to the Articles agreed upon, anno 1562, that they who pretend to have been ordered by another order than that which is now established, are of like capacity to enjoy any place of ministry within the land, as they which have been ordered according to that which is now by law in this established. Which comprehending manifestly all, even such as were made priests according to the Church of Rome, it must needs be, that the law of a Christian land professing the Gospel should be as favourable for a minister of the Word as for a Popish priest . . . which if it be understood so, and practised in others, why should the change of the person alter the right which the law giveth to all others ?”<sup>2</sup>

We admit that the meaning of the Act is a disputed question, but there is little doubt it was commonly appealed to by non-Episcopalians, and none whatever that Travers did so.

There are a number of other detailed points which call for criticism, but space forbids, and the above must serve as samples. But before we come to the main question, one last word must be said. Canon Mason says (p. 21) that it would be absurd to maintain that our Church looked upon the question of ecclesiastical polity as one of indifference, or even of minor importance. We are not afraid of hard words, and, at the risk of being called “absurd,” it is just this which we do maintain. We admit that,

<sup>1</sup> Keble's Preface to Hooker, p. lxxvi.

<sup>2</sup> Travers' “Supplication to the Council” in Hooker's Works, ed. 1820, vol. iii., pp. 380, 381.



in combating blind bigots and narrow-minded vilifiers of Bishops, our divines carried their case for Episcopacy very far, but they never went so far as to make this an essential mark of a Church. We remember that these Presbyterian bodies were regarded in the most tender way by our Church; that Edwardian, Elizabethan, and Caroline divines did not scruple to communicate freely with them; that their advice was asked, and often taken, in drawing up our Liturgy; that men ordained by them held benefices with cure of souls in our Church; that many of our divines made the boast that our Church was in doctrinal agreement with theirs; that nowhere in the Prayer-Book is there any statement of the necessity, or even of the *desirability*, of Episcopacy for *every* Church. And remembering these things, we are not afraid of being called absurd.

We admit that many of these old divines spoke of non-Episcopal Orders as irregular; so do we liberal and evangelical Churchmen to-day. We admit that they spoke of a Divine Right of Episcopacy, and, in the same sense as, at any rate, the vast majority of them used the term, we would assent to it to-day, though we would use a provocative expression of this kind with great caution and qualification. We believe in the guidance of the Church by the Divine Spirit, and we have no difficulty in regarding the process by which Episcopacy grew up and spread as Divinely ordered, and the system itself as possessing a Divine Right, but not necessarily an exclusive Divine Right. We have no uneasiness whatever as to the desirability of Episcopacy. We rejoice to know our Church possesses it; we value and love it for its own sake, and we have not, nor ever had, any intention of dispensing with it, or even "tampering" with it. But we steadily refuse to base our adherence to it upon grounds wholly fictitious. This brings us to our final remark.

Canon Mason says (p. 449): "Enough has been said to show that a belief in the Divine institution of Episcopacy was no invention of the Oxford Movement, and no medieval theory dug out of the forgotten past."

Well, we have read Canon Mason's book with care, and the most favourable comment we can make is that he has not reconciled the Tractarian conception of the ministry with the formularies of our Church and the writings of its great divines, and much less has he established any legitimate connection between it and them.

We venture to suggest that the original Tractarian view of Episcopacy finds as little support in our old divines as it would from High Anglican authorities to-day. In 1869, A. W. Haddan, a prominent Tractarian, published a learned historical work on "Apostolical Succession in the Church of England." We will give his amiable definition of the doctrine; on p. 14 of this book he writes:

"It means, in a few words, without Bishops no Presbyters, without Bishops and Presbyters no legitimate certainty of Sacraments, without Sacraments no certain union with the mystical Body of Christ—viz., with His Church—without this no certain union with Christ, and without that union no salvation."

We maintain that this perfectly horrible doctrine would have been repudiated by our old divines with the same loathing that we ourselves—and we are sure every High Churchmen to-day—would display. Possibly hints of such an appalling view might be found in the vulgar pamphleteers of old time, but we find no trace of such a thing in any respectable Father of our Church. Bishop Gore, extreme though his views on the ministry are, does not hesitate to say that such extravagance seems to him "to approach to blasphemy against the Holy Ghost."<sup>1</sup> He speaks of the non-Episcopal bodies in this passage, and sometimes in other places, as "Christian Churches."

There are, happily, not a few indications that High Churchmen to-day are cutting themselves loose from the extremes of the old Tractarian view. What scholarly High Churchman to-day would, for instance, agree with J. M. Neale's couplet?—

"His twelve Apostles first He made His Ministers of Grace,  
And they their hands on others laid to fill in turn their place."

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<sup>1</sup> "Orders and Unity," p. 184.

Is there not a general disposition among them to regard the Episcopate as an evolution, as the result of a slow process rather than the outcome of a specific Divine or Apostolic enactment?

Canon Mason (p. 453) is speaking for the vast proportion of scholarly High Anglicans when, commenting upon Hatch's contention that the Episcopate was a development, he says: "There is nothing derogatory to the Church in this teaching. It is compatible with the loftiest conceptions of the Christian ministry." But we suggest that the leaders of the Oxford Movement would have angrily repudiated such a view, and that Archdeacon Wirgman is a much truer representative of these views when he says, also commenting upon Hatch, "When an author asserts that the Church and its ministry 'is Divine as the Solar System is Divine,' it logically follows that the Head of the Church is Divine as Buddha is Divine, and that the Catholic Faith in the Incarnate Christ is 'a fond thing vainly invented,'" and then passes on to stigmatize evolution of the Episcopate as "heretical."<sup>1</sup>

We do not wish to attempt to fasten upon High Anglicans to-day the *damnosa hereditas* of the Tractarians. We believe that a loving allegiance to Episcopacy as essential to a perfectly ordered Church can find a sure basis in Scripture, history, and past and present experience of its utility. But when an attempt is made to prove that union with Christ apart from membership of an Episcopal Church is precarious, that the Sacraments of non-Episcopalians are no Sacraments and their Churches no Churches—when, we say, an attempt is made to fasten this view upon our own dear Church, we will repudiate it with scorn, as absolutely and entirely baseless.

It would have cleared the ground a good deal if Canon Mason had told us what exactly we are to understand when he speaks of a Divine Right of Episcopacy and of the validity of Sacraments. We believe we are not alone when we say that we feel that there is a general haziness about these terms even

<sup>1</sup> Wirgman, "Constitutional Authority of Bishops," ed. 1904, pp. 3, 5.

in the minds of High Anglicans. Canon Knox Little apparently regards Bishops as an intolerable nuisance, and the only thing that reconciles him to their existence is that they are a Divine institution. "Bishops," he candidly remarks, "are either a Divine institution or they are an expensive luxury. *Expensive* not only in £ s. d., but in much more. If they are not a Divine necessity, their existence is not merely a sin—nay, one may say it is a crime. . . . If Bishops are not a Divine necessity—let it be remembered and repeated—they ought not to exist. They are not, *obviously*, for the *bene esse* of the Church."<sup>1</sup> Of course, we do not know what Canon Knox Little has suffered at Episcopal hands, but this strange language is evidence that he regards Episcopacy as the outcome of some specific Divine or Apostolic command.

We, on the other hand, are not only unacquainted with any evidence for such a definite ordinance, but even if there were no Divine sanction for it of the most attenuated kind (though we are quite sure there is), we should still adhere to the institution for its intrinsic value; for even on the low basis of £ s. d. we regard it as more than justifying its existence.

What, too, does "validity" mean as applied to Sacraments and Orders? We are often forbidden by High Anglicans—Dr. W. H. Frere, for instance—to use it as equivalent to "operative" or "effective"; and Mr. Rawlinson has repudiated, in language no stronger than we should use, its merely forensic meaning.

We repeat that Canon Mason's book is the best we have read upon this phase of the subject—the most comprehensive and exhaustive; but we have put it down with the feeling only stronger than ever in our minds, that the Tractarian view of Episcopacy is contrary to the formularies and genius of our Church, and that its advocates have, so far at any rate, failed to prove their case from our past history; and that from this particular branch of the evidence, as from the entire evidence on the question of the ministry as a whole, they have yet to produce an apologia which will be convincing in the light of Scripture, history, and present-day experience.

<sup>1</sup> "Conflict of Ideals," p. 105.