

Validity.

THE terms "valid" and "invalid," "validity" and "invalidity" have become prominent in connection with Kikuyu, and perhaps there is no subject upon which it is more important to have clear views. Many writers use the term "validity" in reference to the ministry, and the question at once arises as to its meaning.

1. The Archbishop of Canterbury refers to the subject thus:—

"No student of the question of our relation to other parts of the Church of Christ will forget that in almost every utterance which the Church of England has made on the subject either corporately or by its representative men—emphasis is laid on the distinction between 'regular' and 'irregular' ordination, and this without any attempt to lay down limits as to the operation of the grace of God vouchsafed to those who minister His Gospel to the souls of men. I purposely avoid the word 'valid' and 'invalid,' as I have always found myself unable, without a feeling of intolerable presumption, to give to that phrase the meaning which in popular parlance it would seem to carry. The word 'invalid' has, except when applied to physical health, drifted far from the original force of the Latin adjective" (Kikuyu, p. 30).

These are significant words and express the true Anglican tradition. But others have not been so reluctant to use the terms, and it is this that necessitates a careful study of the whole subject. It is quite clear that the Archbishop's words have met with definite opposition.

2. The Bishop of Oxford in his *Diocesan Magazine* for September, 1915 (p. 135), refers thus to the Archbishop's words:—

"The Archbishop deprecates the words 'valid' and 'invalid' and prefers the words 'regular' and 'irregular.' This I cannot but feel is only a refusal to face the question. 'Valid' and 'invalid' expresses a different and more fundamental idea than 'regular' and 'irregular.' If there is a visible Church having authority to bind and loose in the administration of sacraments, it must say 'Sacraments administered under such and such conditions are not sacraments which we can recognize—they carry no longer with them the guarantee of the Church.' The Church has not said that baptisms celebrated by those who are not priests are not valid: it has not even said universally or in all cases that confirmations not administered by a bishop are invalid: it has not as a whole said that schism invalidates sacraments: but it has said that ordinations to holy orders not celebrated by a bishop are invalid and that eucharists not celebrated by an episcopally ordained priest are invalid."

This means that a certain form of ministry is needed for the guarantee of spiritual blessing, that "Eucharists not celebrated

by an episcopally ordained priest are invalid." Now is this position Anglican? Article VI lays down the principle that Scripture is sufficient, and that "whatsoever is not read therein nor may be proved thereby is not to be required of any man . . . salvation." Bishop Gore himself has admitted that Scripture is "the final testing ground of doctrine," and this view of the supremacy of Scripture for essential teaching is also recognized by Canon Simpson ("The Thing Signified"). Perhaps, however, the strongest statement on this point was recently made by Dr. Headlam (*Church Quarterly Review*, January, 1916, p. 327):—

"The Church itself has always put the Bible in a superior position. It is for example a common statement of Athanasius that the Scriptures are sufficient."

This being the case and as we find nothing in Scripture to prove that "Eucharists not celebrated by an episcopally ordained priest are invalid," to ask the above question is to answer it.

But Bishop Gore shall be our first witness:—

"We have no clear information as to the limitation of the functions of the different orders in the Church, except that to the 'viri apostolici' alone is the power attributed to impart the gift of the Holy Ghost by laying-on of hands. We have no clear information as to who exactly can celebrate the eucharist or who can baptize" ("The Church and the Ministry," p. 246).

Now, if Scripture is "the final testing ground of doctrine," is it possible to urge, as the Bishop does, that the New Testament needs supplementing on so vital and fundamental a matter? To the same effect the Bishop writes in his more recent work:—

"It must be admitted that if the documents of the New Testament stood alone . . . we should feel that various tendencies towards different kinds of organization were at work in the Christian Church, that the picture presented was confused, and that no decisive conclusion as to the form of the Christian ministry could be reached. But in fact the documents of the New Testament are only some of the documents which belong to a great historical movement" ("Orders and Unity," p. 83).

And although he emphasizes the principle of Church authority, his admission destroys his own case, because he insists upon a precise form of ministry as the essential foundation of his argument. Presbyterians are just as emphatic and insistent as he is on the principle of authority.

I turn next to Blunt's "Studies in Apostolic Christianity," p. 147:—

"The well-known theory, that the continuity of God's grace in the

Church is externally secured by the Episcopal imposition of hands, that thus a conduit of grace, reaching back to the Apostles, is preserved and prolonged, has the merit of definite outline. But it is questionable whether it has any other merit. Not only does it seem to embody a remarkably mechanical and unspiritual conception of God's grace, but also it cannot produce sufficient evidence from the Apostolic writings to substantiate it. All that the evidence allows us to say is, that the threefold ministry was the system which the Church gradually developed as the representative organ of its corporate life."

Then I find similar teaching in a sermon by Dr. Ince on "The Scriptural and Anglican View of the Functions of the Christian Ministry," p. 10:—

"It must furthermore be honestly acknowledged that there are no directions in the New Testament which give to these officers the exclusive right of administering Church ordinances. . . . It was the Church itself which confirmed the administration of the Sacraments to those who were ministers of the word, and yet reserved to itself the power of relaxing in cases of necessity the universality of this regulation, as in the case of lay baptism."

Canon Simpson's recent booklet "The Conception of the Church," may also be adduced, the whole of the second part supporting this contention. And I have failed to find any proof in Moberly's "Ministerial Priesthood" or Wordsworth's "Ministry of Grace" that the New Testament teaches "Eucharists not celebrated by an episcopally ordained priest are invalid."

3. Mr. Leighton Pullan has also some statements on this subject in opposition to the Archbishop of Canterbury:—

"The reason why the Church regards Episcopacy as so important is because a genuine Episcopacy is a means of securing a transmission of the authority given in Ordination. . . . Apostolic succession corresponds in character to the whole sacramental principle. . . . We value, therefore, the threefold ministry, because it is the form through which the Apostolic succession has descended so that the acts of our ministry are done with the authority of commissions granted by our King" ("Missionary Principles and The Primate on Kikuyu," p. 47).

It is clear from this that grace is to be understood as dependent upon an episcopally ordained ministry. Mr. Pullan gives no proof of this from the New Testament, doubtless for the good reason that there is none. At this point we may quote Canon Simpson:—

"There is no hint in the New Testament of what we call the apostolic succession. That ought to be candidly admitted. There is nothing to suggest that the apostolic Church regarded all functions of ministry as inherent in the apostles in virtue of their appointment by Christ, or as transmissible to others only in virtue of the laying on of apostolic hands" ("The Conception of the Church," p. 36).

4. Prebendary Boyd also disagrees with the Archbishop and says that he is "perhaps mistaken on one point." Mr. Boyd holds that invalidity means "the weakening of something; it does not assert its total destruction" ("Facing Kikuyu," p. 26f), but that "some essential part of it is lacking."

"When we say that a Sacrament is 'invalid,' we mean that the outward sign has been tampered with and that objective security is not given; it means also, inasmuch as the outward sign is the means as well as the certificate of grace, that the course of grace has been impeded according to the measure of interference with the sign" ("Facing Kikuyu," p. 28).

According to this, Nonconformity has and can have no assurance of grace, and yet it is also said that, "By declaring that these ordinances are 'invalid' we do not imply that no grace is given through them at all" ("Facing Kikuyu," p. 30).

Two illustrations are given in support of this contention, one the difference between gold and silver hall-marked and not hall-marked, and also one in regard to the Bible, the latter of which is so surprising that the very words must be given:—

"In the same way the Church collects certain books into the Canon of Scripture and asserts that they contain the Word of God; but there is no suggestion in this statement that inspiration may not be found in Dante and Milton, in Ruskin and Carlyle. All that is said is that in the canonical Scriptures you may be certain that you have the Divine Word. This is the attitude taken by the Church throughout its system. It states the assured facts of revelation and is silent about matters which belong to natural religion" ("Facing Kikuyu," p. 31).

It is astonishing that Prebendary Boyd cannot see the futility and essential falsity of this reasoning. In passing it may be said that if this is what he believes about the canonicity of Scripture, there is no wonder that he makes so much of the Church. But apart from this, the question is obviously not settled by these illustrations. Nonconformists either have grace or they have not. If episcopal ordination is essential for grace, then obviously Nonconformists cannot and do not receive any. Validity and invalidity in this connection are mutually exclusive and no modification to mean merely lost in degree will suffice. The fact is that Prebendary Boyd cannot deny the presence of grace in non-episcopal communities, and this is his way of accounting for it and yet endeavouring to save his own position. But it is as futile as the Bishop of Oxford calling Nonconformists "rebels" and yet admitting the presence of the Holy Spirit among them ("Orders and Unity,"

p. 184). Some years ago at a meeting held at Wycliffe Lodge, Oxford, attended by representatives of various Churches, a well-known High Churchman was asked by a leading Nonconformist scholar: "Suppose our people meet next Sunday for Holy Communion under the Congregational Minister, would they receive grace?" There was a moment's silence, for the question was obviously a hard one, and then came this answer: "They would get the grace they expected to get," to which the Congregationalist naturally answered: "Ah! that answer will not do." Of course it would not, and only pressure of argument compelled the speaker to so vague and impossible a reply.

5. But now the Editor of the *English Church Review* enters the fray and quotes the use by Ignatius of the word *βέβαιος*, which is usually rendered "valid," and he refers at the same time to the New Testament usage of the word. Let us look at Holy Scripture first. The word is found in several connections: Rom iv. 16; 2 Cor. i. 7; Heb. ii. 2; iii. 6; iii. 14; vi. 19; ix. 17; 2 Pet. i. 10. 19. A careful consideration of it in the light of the best lexicons and commentators gives the meaning as "steadfast," "firm," "stable." Thus, Westcott on Hebrews. ii. 2 defines it as that which "vindicates its own claims." With regard to Ignatius, everything obviously depends upon the context. Canon Simpson maintains that in his use of it there is no hint of later technicalities involving the proper minister:—

"He is not dealing with the minister of the sacrament at all. What he says is that, if an altar be set up in opposition to the bishop, if the Eucharist is celebrated apart from his recognition or sanction, there is irregularity, and therefore no security against the inroads of gnostic heresy and the consequent depraving of a sacrament intimately associated with the Word made flesh" ("The Conception of the Church," p. 51).

The conclusion of the *English Church Review* is that a valid ministry means "one in which the essentials have been found." But this involves the previous question: "What are the essentials?" To assert that episcopal ordination is an essential is seen to go beyond the New Testament, and yet only thus can this position be maintained. And if we say of the ministry what Westcott says of the word of angels that "it vindicates its own claims," we naturally inquire as to the claims of the ministry which vindicate its validity. What are they? The only answer is, "by their fruits ye shall know them." Some recent words of Dr. Plummer

on "Christian Agnosticism" have a special application to this point:—

"We ought to cease to talk about 'invalid' sacraments. God alone knows whether any sacrament honestly administered with the intention of doing what Christ ordained, is ever 'invalid.' If we must criticize, it is safer to speak of what is 'irregular.' Every organized communion must lay down rules as to how sacraments are to be administered; for to leave everything to the discretion of the minister would be disastrous. These rules differ in different Churches, and what is 'regular' in one Church may be 'irregular' to members of another Church. But we know nothing about the 'invalidity' of an irregularly administered sacrament, and it is rash to assert that to those who receive it devoutly it is not a means of grace. It might not be such to us, if we, in a spirit of bravado, violated the rules of our own Church; but we know nothing of its effects on those who receive it in accordance with rules which they believe to be adequate. If that is true, it is well to profess agnosticism respecting it and abstain from pronouncing any judgment as to its efficacy" (*The Expository Times*, February 1916, p. 201).

To the same effect are the words of Dr. Headlam in the *Church Quarterly Review* for July 1908:—

"Let us get rid of the expression 'validity' of Orders and Sacraments. Whether or no Orders and Sacraments are valid is after all something which we cannot settle. What we should ask is whether they are 'regular,' that is to say, whether a particular body of Christians correctly interprets the mind of Christ declared to us by His Church in the fulfilment of His command to celebrate the Sacraments and to send out messengers of His Gospel. . . . We have then to be sure not that the Sacraments of the Presbyterian bodies are valid, but that they are regular."

We may add some words by the Rev. F. S. Gardiner, a Presbyterian Minister of Kingstown, which will enable us to understand something of the attitude taken by that communion:—

"You must never approach us on the subject of Union with the underlying thought in your minds that ours is not a *valid* ministry, because we have not a bishop (in the later sense) to ordain us. What would become then of the validity of the whole ministry of the Christian Church during the second century when there was no apostle, and no bishop (in the later sense)?" (Lecture on "Passing Protestantism and Coming Catholicism," p. 31).

A further expression of Presbyterian opinion on this general subject may be seen from another extract from Mr. Gardiner's pamphlet already mentioned:—

"Any proposals for Union which have any chance even of being considered must proceed on the assumption that we respect one another's position. Now, I say, from the bottom of my heart, that I do respect yours. I respect the learning, devotion, and earnestness of your Bishops and clergy. I admire the piety of your people. I find myself at one with you in heart and sympathy. But you must remember our position. We are not much inferior to you in point of numbers in Ireland. If you have half of England,

we have eight-tenths of Scotland. And we outnumber you in Wales. We have all the Reformed Churches of the Continent, except the Lutherans, who in some respects are more akin to us. We are much more numerous than you in America; and in the Colonies we are not much behind you. We have successful missions all over the world in no way inferior to yours. Our theologians and scholars are not less distinguished than yours. You have saints. So have we. You have seals to your ministry. So have we. You have evidence of Christ's presence in your Church. Not less have we. You have episodes in your Church history which are heroic and which thrill the blood when they are recalled. So have we. And I beg of you to remember that we are proud of our Churchmanship" (Lecture on "Passing Protestantism and Coming Catholicism," p. 22f).

From all that has been said it is clear that, according to the Bishop of Oxford and those who agree with him, the Sacrament of the Holy Communion must have an episcopally ordained priest as the guarantee of spiritual validity and the assurance of grace, even though the New Testament lays down no such requirement. And it is curious that baptism can be administered by any one, as though Scripture makes such a profound distinction between the two ordinances.

So the Archbishop of Canterbury is, of course, right, and it behoves Evangelicals to concentrate on this point, compared with which all else counts for nothing. Dr. Eugene Stock has well pointed out the important considerations involved in the whole question, and in particular, the remarkable admission made in the well-known Lambeth Quadrilateral that Presbyterianism satisfies three out of the four requirements, thereby implying and clearly teaching that their ministry is valid for spiritual blessing. Then, too, as Dr. Stock also says, recent references in India to the interned Lutheran missionaries imply that they are able to give the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper to their people, a statement which naturally involves the whole idea of spiritual and sacramental validity.

The reason for all this insistence on episcopal ordination is because grace is considered to be attached to, or resident in, the elements by virtue of consecration, as though grace were some quasi-material substance that required particular words and actions by special persons to guarantee its presence. There are few things about which many minds are more hazy than this idea of grace. In the New Testament grace is relationship to God, as our Article puts it, "God's goodwill" and "means of grace" are not channels or pipes conveying grace to the soul, since no application to the

body can carry spiritual blessing to the spirit. Means of grace are occasions and opportunities of eliciting that faith which is essential to a proper response to God's revelation and every means is necessarily associated with faith. Prayer must be the prayer of faith ; the Word of God must be " mixed with faith." Baptism is only efficacious on the assumption of faith, and so it is with the Holy Communion. When we are clear about what grace means and how it comes, we are clear everywhere.

Meanwhile, we say that in the New Testament (Bishop Gore being our witness) nothing is revealed as to the precise form of the ministry connected with the Holy Communion. The view that requires episcopal ordination for spiritual validity is a gigantic hypothesis which has no warrant in Scripture, fails at the very first stage of Church history (because Episcopacy was evolved, not devolved), and is also opposed to some of the most patent and potent facts in the records of the Christian Church at home and abroad. This, as Dr. Stock truly says, is the real Kikuyu question.

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