

with the separated Churches of our own land, it is a matter for profound thankfulness that on the question of Baptism our Church, clear and definite as to her own position, opens the door as wide as possible.

[Mr. G. A. King then gave an address on The Holy Communion.]



## The Historic Episcopate.

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THE subject which I have been asked to speak on—The Historic Episcopate in its relation to Home Reunion—naturally suggests two initial questions: (1) What, precisely, is connoted by the term Home Reunion? and (2) What is involved in the description Historic Episcopate?

One of the "Findings" of this Conference last year stated that "the goal to be aimed at is some form of federation rather than anything like organic reunion." With all respect for this decision I would venture to qualify it by the addition of the word "immediate," so as to read "the immediate goal to be aimed at is some form of federation rather than organic reunion." For recognition, fraternal intercourse, and even federation, important as they are to attain as soon as possible, will not, I am persuaded, at least in the Homeland, secure for us a visible realization of our Master's high-priestly prayer "That they all may be one." Nothing but corporate reunion, that is the witness in each country of one and only one organically united Christian Church will effect this, and for our ultimate goal we should be wrong to be satisfied with anything less. Intercommunion and federation may very probably prove the most desirable and practicable form in different countries, testifying to the virtual unity and solidarity of the Catholic Church, but it will never in the same country be a sufficient witness to the unity of Christians. Perhaps I may illustrate this point by the present Anglican Communion. Its various branches in different lands are not joined together by any visible central or supreme executive authority. They resemble rather our self-governing colonies in being mainly independent and autonomous Churches,

and yet their virtual unity is founded on a very real basis of a common standard of doctrine and worship as well as by a common allegiance to the historic episcopal government. But if we could picture the independent Church of South Africa working side by side with our own Church in the Province of Canterbury, even though the most friendly relationship existed, the result would surely be a witness as much to a schism as to the true visible unity of the Church. In other words, so long as we have in one country the spectacle of separate independent and rival, if not hostile, Christian organizations, it will be difficult to convince the ordinary man in the street that they are not working as much to proselytize or at least help forward their own interests as to advance the cause of Christ's Kingdom. I do not for a moment undervalue the great gain to the cause of Christian Unity which would result if our Church enjoyed a similar measure of intercommunion with the Free Churches as they now possess among themselves, but even then the different Christian bodies would still be organically separate and until a common basis of government and organization for the Church of Christ is attained the witness to the power and reality of Christ's Gospel will be marred. To quote from a striking Report recently issued under the signatures of prominent Churchmen and Free Churchmen, "The visible unity of the Body of Christ . . . can only be fully realized through community of worship, faith and order, including common participation in the Lord's Supper. . . . It is only as a body, praying, taking counsel, and acting together that the Church can hope to appeal to men as the Body of Christ, that is, Christ's visible organ and instrument in the world." (Second interim Report of a Joint Sub-Committee in connexion with the proposed World's Conference on Faith and Order.)

We come then to the conditions laid down by the Lambeth Conference of 1888 known as "The Lambeth Quadrilateral," as "a basis on which approach may be by God's blessing made towards Home Reunion." The first three conditions, The Holy Scriptures, The Two Creeds and the Two Sacraments, have already been dealt with, there remains the fourth, "The Historic Episcopate, locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the Nations and peoples called of God into the unity of His Church."

We need to notice carefully that this condition is not laid down

as an essential "note" of a true Church, but *only as a necessary plank in any scheme of Reunion*. This is really a more important and vital distinction than may at first sight appear. For in the original report of a Committee of the House of Bishops of the American Church in 1886 which preceded and led to the issue of the Lambeth Quadrilateral, the Historic Episcopate was stated to be "an inherent part of the sacred deposit of Christian Faith and Order committed by Christ and His Apostles to the Church." We may be devoutly thankful that such a statement was rejected by the Lambeth Conference, since, contrary to our Article VI, it adds an article of faith incapable of Scriptural proof, as well as an additional note of a true Church to "the ministry of the Word and Sacraments" laid down in Article XIX. The Apostolic conditions of Christian fellowship were the profession of "one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism," and we must refuse to accept anything beyond these as an essential. To assert the Historic Episcopate to be an essential part of the sacred deposit of Christian Faith would be to close the door to any possible reunion with our non-episcopal brethren.

But while we protest against the Historic Episcopate being regarded as a necessary note of the Church, we fully acquiesce in it *as an essential condition for Reunion*. Not only is its retention essential in any future, even if distant, rapprochement with the Roman or Greek Churches, but we ourselves would never dream of surrendering a primitive and ancient system of government which has been so manifestly owned and blessed of God in the preservation of the purity and unity of the Faith in the development and history of the Church. Moreover, the undoubted link with Apostolic Christianity secured by the episcopal succession is a precious historical heritage. While we must insist therefore that the Historic Episcopate is not an essential *principle* in Christian Reunion, we must also assert that it is essentially *expedient* for any successful scheme of union. It is a necessary condition only from the point of view of practical expediency.

What then is involved in the term Historic Episcopate? What is its practical and historical interpretation? Roughly speaking we may say that there are two widely different and conflicting answers usually given to this question in slightly varying forms. The first asserts the historical fact that the Episcopate is connected with Apostolic or at least sub-Apostolic and primitive times by a

succession of bishops to whom normally the supreme powers of Church government and of ordaining the regular ministers have been limited according to the rules and order of the Church. It further claims that the experience and history of the centuries has proved this historic episcopate to be for the well being—the *benefit* of the Church.

The other interpretation, while accepting this historical fact of episcopal succession, claims that it is also the sole guarantee for an authoritative and valid ministry and for the conveyance of grace. The bishops in fact are regarded as succeeding to the functions of the Apostles and from the fact of their consecration as transmitting the Holy Spirit from the Apostles' day to our own. Dean Hook in his Church Dictionary speaks of "a perfect and unbroken transmission of the original ministerial commission, from the Apostles to their successors, by the progressive and perpetual conveyance of their powers from one race of bishops to another." "The Apostolic Succession of the ministry is essential to the right administration of the Holy Sacraments. Without this no security exists that heaven will ratify the acts of an illegally constituted minister on earth" (pp. 727 and 43).

To quote another and more recent of the foremost upholders of this theory—"Authority to minister is given in the Church only by devolution from above on the principle of the succession to the original apostolic ministry" which is "a law of Divine authority in the Church and also an essential principle of the Church's continuous life." To neglect the "Apostolic Succession" is to "neglect a fundamental and Divine law of Christian fellowship," and Churches so living do so on the basis of "rebellion" (Gore, *Orders and Unity*, pp. 183-5). In other words the historic episcopate is of the "essence," the very life blood of the Church, its sole "protection for the reception of truth and grace through Word and through Sacrament" (Canon B. J. Kidd). As a consequence the Bishop of Zanzibar declares that "the very existence" of non-episcopal bodies "is hostile to Christ's Holy Church" (*Open Letter*).

Now I think we must admit that the chances of Home Reunion with an Historic Episcopate regarding all non-episcopal Christians as in a state of "rebellion and hostility" to the apostolic and divinely commissioned Church are very remote, and we have therefore the right to ask that this stupendous claim excluding and excom-

municating vast numbers of Christians from Church Fellowship should at least be based on some clear command of Our Lord and His Apostles and supported by the most unimpeachable historical evidence. But this is exactly what is not provided, and we are left at best to conjecture, probability, inference and supposition. Not only is this theory unconfirmed in Scripture but it is unsupported by the ablest and latest investigation and scholarship. Such eminent authorities as Whately, Lightfoot, Hort, Lindsay, Westcott and Gwatkin all testify against its historicity.

It is universally admitted now that the terms bishop and elder in the Epistles are used interchangeably to denote the same office, while the most careful students of the New Testament declare that in the Apostolic age the ministry of the Word and Sacraments was not confined to any particular officers of the various churches. All believers were regarded as "a royal priesthood," and there was no clear distinction between the ordained minister and the layman. The divinely inspired "prophets" often took a superior position to the bishops or elders whose duties were mainly of a regulative, disciplinary and pastoral character. The presbyters who *also* exercised the preaching office were, however, considered "worthy of double honour" (1 Tim. v. 17). As late as the close of the first century the *Didache* in advising the churches to appoint for themselves bishops and deacons, declares them to be "honourable men along with the prophets and teachers." Ordination was not confined to the Apostles but was performed at times, not only by their deputies like Timothy and Titus, but by the prophets and teachers (Acts xiii. 1-3). There is also no evidence to prove that the ceremony of "laying on of hands" was regarded as of any deeper significance than that taught by Augustine—the invocation of a blessing on the recipient. It certainly, as Dr. Sanday says, involves no idea of the transmission of grace. "It is simply," as Dr. Swete tells us, "the familiar and expressive sign of benediction inherited by the Apostles from the synagogue and adapted to the service of the Church."<sup>1</sup> To quote another modern authority, "there is no evidence for the supposition that the Apostles were regarded as the only conduits of grace which they must confer before public office could be undertaken. . . . The grace of ministry was always held to come from God, the commission to use that grace came

<sup>1</sup> *The Holy Spirit in the New Testament.*

from the Church . . . we cannot find sufficient indications to justify any theory, which would assert that the Apostolic Churches considered the ministerial grace to flow in a stream of which the Twelve and the Twelve only were the sources." <sup>1</sup>

While it is undoubtedly true that the New Testament bishops or presbyters soon ripened into a Council of presbyters presided over by a chief presbyter-bishop, who early in the second century had usually become the single supreme bishop of a congregational or city church, yet these bishops were in no way successors to the Apostolic office or functions. "In fact," as Professor Gwatkin puts it, "no two men can be more unlike than the wandering apostle, whose parish is the world, and the resident bishop overseeing a single city." <sup>2</sup> While it is also true that the adoption of monarchical episcopacy was very rapid, yet as late as the end of the first century the Church at Corinth was governed only by presbyters, and this fact alone forbids the supposition that the Apostles left a command for the episcopal government of the Church. Twenty years later the silence of Ignatius (who was most insistent, not only on an exaggerated respect for the deacons and presbyters, but also on the supreme claims and authority of the bishop) concerning any *divine command* for the episcopal office, is, as Gwatkin asserts, conclusive that no such command was ever given. The question would have been settled if he could have said "Obey the bishop as Christ ordained or as the Apostles gave command." <sup>3</sup>

The claim for the bishops to be regarded as the successors of the Apostles, the guardians and interpreters of the "Faith once delivered to the saints" was not heard of till the time of Irenaeus and was not perfected into a doctrine approaching the current theory of the transmission of grace till the time of Cyprian when the clergy began to claim sacerdotal functions modelled on those of the Aaronic priesthood. From this time also the bishops began to regard themselves no longer as the representatives of the congregation but as responsible only to God and appointed directly by Him. There is also sufficient evidence to prove that the change to a monarchical episcopal government was due solely to the circumstances and needs of the Church at the time and was not the result

<sup>1</sup> Blunt, *Studies in Apostolic Christianity*, pp. 99-101.

<sup>2</sup> *Episcopacy in Scripture*, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> *Early Church History*. I, 294.

of any recognized doctrine that the bishops were the only channel of the Holy Spirit through ordination and confirmation. Jerome's testimony of the custom of the presbyters at Alexandria up to 250 A.D. to elect and consecrate their bishop is sufficient to discredit this latter theory, while it is evident that the true origin of the supremacy of bishops was well known when he states "Before dissensions were introduced into religion by the instigation of the devil . . . churches were governed by a common council of presbyters . . . therefore among the ancients presbyters were the same as bishops, but by degrees that the plants of dissension might be rooted up, all responsibility was transferred to one person."<sup>1</sup> Augustine corroborated this statement when he declared that it is "according to the titles of honour which the custom of the Church hath now obtained the episcopate is greater than the presbyterate, yet in many things Augustine is less than Jerome."<sup>2</sup>

It is, as Dimock points out, almost inconceivable that there should have been no contemporary censure or protest against the Alexandrian practice if such ordination had been generally regarded as irregular or invalid. In confirmation of this Canon Bigg has reminded us that as late as the third century the "Canons of Hippolytus" direct that after a bishop's election by the people, he is to be consecrated in prescribed form "by one of the bishops and presbyters,"<sup>3</sup> thus proving that the Nicene rule requiring the assistance of three bishops for consecration was not yet in force. As late also as the fourth and fifth centuries the original identity of the office of bishop and presbyter was recognized by the former addressing the latter as a "fellow presbyter."<sup>4</sup>

We may however fairly claim that the change to diocesan episcopacy was divinely guided or inspired since it was imperatively needed to cope with the forces of heresy and heathenism opposing the Church, for, as Bishop Lightfoot well says, "It was only by such a providential concentration of authority that the Church, humanly speaking, could have braved the storms of those ages of anarchy and violence." Yet his further statement cannot now be seriously questioned that historically "the episcopate was formed not out of the apostolic order by localization but out of

<sup>1</sup> On Titus I, 5.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted Harrison, *Whose are the Fathers*, p. 507.

<sup>3</sup> *Origins of Christianity*, pp. 263-4.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Lightfoot, *Philippians*, p. 230.

the presbyteral by elevation," and the title which originally was common to all, came at length to be appropriated to the chief among them."<sup>1</sup>

Such being the origin of episcopacy, not only is the Tractarian theory of Apostolic succession devoid of historical foundation, but there is much to be said for the claim of Presbyterianism to possess an historic episcopate, at least in its primitive form. Principal Lindsay declares: "We Presbyterians are quite assured of the validity and regularity of our Orders. We believe them to be of more ancient standing than the Anglican. . . . We find the true threefold ministry, as we think, in every Presbyterian congregation where we have the pastor or bishop (the terms were synonymous down to the fourth century at least) surrounded by his "coronal" of elders (presbyters) and deacons. The historic episcopate is seen by us in the pastorate of our congregations which represents the congregational Bishops of the early centuries."<sup>2</sup>

Another and perhaps even more important historical question bearing on Home Reunion is the opinion of our Reformers on the importance of episcopacy. What was their practical attitude in regard to it, what doctrine of its value did they enshrine in our authorized formularies? In other words did they assert it to be of the "esse" or the "bene esse" of the Church? Is it correct to assert in the words of a recent petition of London clergy to Convocation that "In accordance with the teaching of the Church in all ages, the Church of England has always taught, and must continue to teach, the necessity of episcopal ordination as a condition of exercising the Ministry of the Word and Sacraments."<sup>3</sup> Statements similar to this are so constantly being made and reiterated that at length they come to be regarded by many as axiomatic truths, in spite of the fact that they are entirely incapable of proof. Historically, as I hope to show, our Reformed Church of England has *never taught that episcopal orders are essentially necessary for the performance of a valid ministry or sacraments*. We Evangelicals need, I think, to take a lesson from our opponents, and to emphasize and re-emphasize the undoubted fact that our Church has always regarded the Historic Episcopate as only of the "bene

<sup>1</sup> *Philippians*, p. 196.

<sup>2</sup> *Church Family Newspaper*, Aug. 7, 1908.

<sup>3</sup> *Steps towards Reunion*, p. 40.



esse" of the Church. Were it not for the fact disclosed by the recent correspondence in the *Record* that there are apparently still some Evangelical Churchmen who are ignorant of, or who refuse to credit, well established facts, it would seem to be mere waste of time to go over familiar ground to show this Conference that the Reformers and their successors fully recognized the orders of their non-episcopal Continental brethren.

Cranmer, the author of the 1549 Ordinal, publicly affirmed his conviction that "in the beginning of Christ's religion bishops and priests were no two things, but both one office."<sup>1</sup> We should also bear in mind that this view had been practically held by many eminent medieval Schoolmen who regarded the episcopate as merely a different "grade" of the priesthood. The opinion "that the bishop differs only in rank and not in order" from the presbyter was not only shared by many eminent Reformed Churchmen, such as Archbishops Whitgift and Ussher, but seems to have influenced Cranmer in the compilation of the Ordinal. For while the Preface states the historical fact that "from the Apostles' time there have been these orders of Ministers in Christ's Church, Bishops, Priests and Deacons," yet 1 Timothy iii. 1, "If any man desire the office of a bishop he desireth a good work," was used as an epistle in the Ordering of Priests in 1549, while the bishop at his consecration was exhorted "to stir up the grace of God which is in thee"; and although these epistles are changed in our present Ordinal (of 1662) it is significant that there is no sermon ordered to be preached at a bishop's consecration (as at the ordination of deacons and priests), showing "how necessary such order is in the Church of Christ."

It has also been frequently pointed out that our Articles are significantly silent as to any particular or necessary form of the Christian Ministry. They define the notes of the Visible Church simply as "the preaching of the Word of God and the due administration of the Sacraments" (Art. XIX), while they make only a general statement declaring lawful ordination to depend on the authority of the Church, i. e. "by men who have public authority given unto them *in the congregation* to call and send ministers into the Lord's vineyard" (Art. XXIII). That Churchmen of that age did not consider that such "public authority" could only be

<sup>1</sup> *Barnet, History of the Reformation*, vol. ii, Records No. 21.

given to bishops is evident from Roger's treatise on the Articles published in 1607, with the express object of "proving them to be agreeable both to the written Word of God and to the extant Confessions of all neighbour Churches Christianly reformed."<sup>1</sup> In commenting on this Article (XXIII) Rogers, Archbishop Bancroft's chaplain, declares "So testify with us the true Churches elsewhere in the world." "And this do the Churches Protestant by their Confessions approve."<sup>2</sup> Bishop Hooper distinctly affirmed that those who taught people to know the Church by the sign of "the succession of bishops taught wrong."<sup>3</sup>

We have also the best practical proof that Cranmer did not regard episcopal succession as of the "esse" of the Church in his persistent endeavour to obtain a Conference of all the leading Reformed Continental divines, such as Melancthon, Calvin and Bullinger (the last of whom had never been episcopally ordained) to frame "one common confession and harmony of faith and doctrine." Although Cranmer was never able to carry out this design, it was practically realized in 1581 by the publication of the "Harmony of Protestant Confessions," in which the Church of England was represented by Jewel's *Apology*. Bishop Andrews claims affinity with the Reformed Churches abroad by referring to this compilation as "Our Harmony": "We hold one Faith as the Harmony of our Confessions sufficiently testifies."<sup>4</sup>

The modest claim in our Articles for episcopacy, that, to use Bishop Gibson's phrase, it is "only an allowable form of Church government," is thus perfectly natural when we keep in mind the important views of our Reformers and their immediate successors on the subject; for as regards the Elizabethan bishops we have Keble's reluctant but well known admission that "they were content to show that government by Bishops was ancient and allowable; they never ventured to urge its exclusive claims or to connect it with the validity of the Holy Sacraments."<sup>5</sup> Not only have we numerous testimonies to the close intercourse, as well as to the real unity of doctrine, between the Church of England and the foreign Reformed Churches at this time, but what is more important,

<sup>1</sup> Preface.

<sup>2</sup> Rogers, *Thirty-nine Articles*, pp. 239-40.

<sup>3</sup> *Early Writings*, pp. 81-2.

<sup>4</sup> *Responsio ad Bellarminum*, p. 36.

<sup>5</sup> *Preface to Hooker's Works*, p. 59.

as proving Keble's statement that the Elizabethan bishops held no exclusive views of the necessity of episcopal orders, is the undoubted fact of the admission of these foreign Reformed divines to cures of souls in England, during this period, without any further ordination. Here again Keble bears an unwilling confirmation that "nearly up to the time when Hooker wrote, numbers had been admitted into the ministry of the Church of England with no better than Presbyterian ordination."<sup>1</sup>

The plea often urged that in spite of this practice, the sufficiency of these foreign orders was always doubted even at the time, rests, I am persuaded, on a confused and faulty interpretation of contemporary history. Such doubts as were brought forward in specific cases as those of Whittinghame and De Laune, dealt with the doubtful sufficiency and validity of non-episcopal orders in relation to *the laws of the realm* and not of the Church. In other words, their essential and intrinsic validity, ecclesiastically was not questioned, although bishops were at times in doubt, whether the State recognized them as legal for the tenure of an official position in a National Church. This distinction is most important and explains what otherwise might be regarded as inconsistent in the actions and opinions of contemporary bishops. Thus Archbishop Grindal in licensing the Presbyterian divine, John Morrison, to minister in the whole Province of Canterbury adds "as much as in us lies, and as far as *the laws of the kingdom do allow*."<sup>2</sup> Similarly Bishop Overall advised Dr. De Laune, who had been ordained by the Presbytery at Leyden, "to take the opinion of Council whether by the *laws of England* he was capable of a benefice without being ordained by a Bishop," while at the same time admitting his readiness to institute him to a benefice with the orders he possessed. Bishop Hall also definitely tells us that where any scruple arose concerning these foreign Orders, it was only a question of what "the Statutes of the Realm do require." "It was not," he affirms, "in the case of ordination but of institution, they had been acknowledged ministers of Christ without any other hands laid upon them," but, he adds, "I know those that by virtue of that ordination which they have brought with them from other Reformed Churches have enjoyed spiritual promotions and livings without any excep-

<sup>1</sup> *Preface to Hooker's Works*, p. 67.

<sup>2</sup> *Strype's Grindal*, p. 402 (1821).

tion against the lawfulness of their calling."<sup>1</sup> Bishop Cosin some years later in confirming this statement declares that all that was required of such foreign clergy by "our law," was "to declare their public consent to the religion received among us and to subscribe the Articles established."<sup>2</sup> He is evidently referring to the Act XIII Eliz. cap. 12, which Strype asserts was passed "undoubtedly" to comprehend Papists, and likewise such as received their Orders in some of the foreign Reformed Churches when they were in exile under Queen Mary.<sup>3</sup>

That the concession covered by this Act was exploited and abused by extreme Puritans of the school of Cartwright, who denied the actual lawfulness of episcopacy and reviled and "depraved" the discipline and ceremonies of the Church, was evident in the case of Travers, who to retain his ecclesiastical office and yet avoid the detested episcopal ordination, employed the artifice of obtaining foreign Orders and then appealing for the protection of this statute! Such a course was not only dishonourable but was regarded in that age of an exclusive National Church as a seditious attempt to undermine the existing government in Church and State. Yet, in spite of this Travers would have been left in peace had he not have created the scandal of directly controverting Hooker's teaching in his own pulpit! A little later he received another preferment in the appointment to the Provostship of Trinity College, Dublin. But the attitude of the authorities of the Church in suppressing and rigorously condemning, as they did in the Canons of 1604, such "impugners" and "depravers" of the doctrine, discipline and worship of the Church, proves nothing against their full recognition of non-episcopal ministries as such. For while they denounced and excommunicated in their sermons and Canons the secret conventicles and presbyteries of the English schismatics, who were endeavouring to subvert the national religious settlement, their 55th Canon of 1604 officially committed the whole Convocation to the recognition of the Scottish national (Presbyterian) Church as a branch of "the Holy Catholic Church." Again in 1610 when bishops were for the first time consecrated for the Scotch Church, Bancroft distinctly stated that "where Bishops could not be had, ordination by the presbyters must be esteemed lawful, otherwise

<sup>1</sup> *Works*, IX, pp. 160-1. †

<sup>2</sup> Letter to Mr. Cordell.

<sup>3</sup> *Annals*, ii. p. 71.

it might be doubted if there were any lawful vocation "in most of the Reformed Churches." <sup>1</sup>

Although the Caroline divines usually followed Bancroft in claiming a divine obligation for episcopacy except in cases of necessity, they all of them vindicated the foreign Reformed Orders under this latter plea, or like Archbishop Bramhall and Bishop Hall, maintained that the "superintendents" of these foreign Presbyterian churches were essentially performing episcopal functions. We should also remember that while the new rule enacted in 1662 made episcopal ordination a necessity for ministering "in the Church of England" it did not lay down any fresh theory concerning the value of the historic episcopate. It was a domestic rule "for our own people only," and in no way condemned all other non-episcopal Churches. It was, we may safely assert, dictated as a policy of recrimination rather than from any fresh ecclesiastical principle. It would seem that the Churchmen considered that the successful attempt, during the Commonwealth, to overthrow the National Church government was deserving of greater punishment in England than in Scotland, where Episcopacy had only had a short and turbulent existence; for while the Presbyterian clergy in England were ejected for refusing reordination, the bishops consecrated in 1662 for the Scotch Church only required the Presbyterian ministers there to acknowledge the episcopal office in its executive function of instituting them to their cures. There was no question of enforcing reordination in Scotland. Had Caroline Churchmen been desirous of enunciating a fresh theory that Presbyterian ordination was insufficient for the performance of a valid ministry and sacraments, it is certain that they would not have hesitated to enforce reordination in Scotland as in England. The persecution meted out to the Covenanters is sufficient proof that they would not have been dismayed at any consequences of their convictions. In England however they were, after their recent sufferings, determined rigidly to enforce, in Professor Gwatkin's language, their "old ideal of one Church and no dissent."<sup>2</sup> Men like Travers had succeeded before in evading and exploiting the laws of "the Church and Realm," and they were determined that this should not be possible in future. That there was no intention of denying the validity

<sup>1</sup> Neal, *History of the Puritans*, vol. i. p. 449.    <sup>2</sup> *Church and State*, p. 354.

of foreign non-episcopal orders by this new regulation is evident from the "Comprehension" proposals of the bishops and clergy at the Jerusalem Chamber Conference in 1689, when the foreign divines were to be received without further ordination as they had been up to 1662.

It is most important to remember, in considering the ecclesiastical problems of this period, the great difference made by the Toleration Act of 1689 in the status and treatment of English Dissenters. Previous to this date every Englishman was legally a Churchman, and every attempt to alter the national religion or to set up a different form was treated as seditious and penal. This medieval ideal of uniformity accounts for the different feeling with which Churchmen regarded English Nonconformists and foreign non-episcopalians; as Bishop Hall once declared, "We can at once tenderly respect them and justly censure you."<sup>1</sup> In the eyes of the Caroline divines the Puritans were not only rejecting a primitive and Scriptural episcopacy where it could be had, but were attempting to overthrow the cherished "doctrine" of "one State one religion." The passing of the Toleration Act at once created a change, and it is instructive to notice that it must have been the indirect cause of the Occasional Conformity Bill. I do not remember to have seen this point often noticed, but I think it is safe to assert that had there been no Toleration Act, the objectionable practice of receiving the Sacrament merely to qualify for civil offices could have been prevented by the existing Church rules. *The strict enforcement of the Confirmation rubric was all that would have been required to stop it*, but with the existence of the Toleration Act the Dissenters for the first time obtained a recognized legal status as "non-Churchmen." The very fact that an Occasional Conformity Act was *necessary* to stop the practice, is valuable additional proof that the Confirmation rubric was never designed except as a domestic rule "for our own people."

It is thus important to remember that for over a hundred years after the Reformation the Church had no problem of Home Reunion to deal with, since Home "separation" was illegal, therefore we have no exact historic precedent to guide us on the subject. We may, however, fairly claim that the case of the non-episcopal Free Churches to-day is analogous to the case of the foreign Reformed

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Dimock, *Christian Unity*, p. 46

Churches at that time, since whichever side is the more guilty for the original schism, it is impossible now with any regard to equity to "visit the sins of the fathers upon the children." The fact of the full recognition of the orders of foreign Reformed divines, and especially of Archbishop Bancroft's refusal to reordain the Scotch presbyters consecrated bishops in 1610, proves conclusively that the Church of that day fully recognized non-episcopal ministries, and did not consider the Historic Episcopate to be any bar to a real and practical union and fellowship with other Reformed Churches. In spite of the narrow and uncharitable statements so frequently made by numbers of "Tractarian" Churchmen, there has never been any official condemnation of such ministries by our Church since that time. On the contrary we may fairly claim that the Lambeth Conference Committee on Reunion in 1908 again virtually admitted the validity of Presbyterian ministries, by declaring that wherever they have remained faithful to the "Westminster Confession of Faith" they have satisfied the first three conditions of the Lambeth Quadrilateral.<sup>1</sup> In other words they have retained a valid ministry of the Word and Sacraments. It was therefore only a natural corollary to this admission that the Lambeth Conference Report of that year should declare that "it might be possible to make an approach to Reunion" with Presbyterian and other (orthodox) non-episcopal Churches "on the basis of consecrations to the Episcopate on lines suggested by such precedents as those of 1610."<sup>2</sup> I have inserted the word "orthodox" in this quotation not only because it was certainly implied in the Report, but as an additional testimony to the fact that we have no thought or intention of considering reunion with any body of Christians which does not loyally and fully accept the Nicene Faith, as summarized by the Scriptures, the two Creeds and the two Sacraments. Neither, unless they show evident tokens of repentance, are we willing to welcome into full Christian fellowship small isolated sects which have hitherto factiously and wilfully caused or perpetuated rents and divisions in the Church of Christ or have displayed an aggressively hostile spirit towards other branches of the Catholic Church.

From this brief survey we may safely affirm that the "Historic Episcopate" does not imply a narrow, rigid and fixed system, but

<sup>1</sup> *Steps towards Reunion*, p. 28.

<sup>2</sup> Lambeth Conference Report 1908, p. 65, Resol. 75.

historically has already often been "locally adapted in its administration to the varying needs of nations and peoples," so that the Apostolic presbyter-bishop, the *primus inter pares*, was far more akin, as Mr. Hugh Price Hughes once claimed,<sup>1</sup> to the modern Methodist superintendent or the Presbyterian moderator than to our diocesan bishop; while there is certainly a family resemblance between the modern Baptist or Congregational pastor and the early bishop of a single city church.

If the Historic Episcopate has thus been locally adapted to suit the Apostolic and primitive times, the Alexandrian and Reformed Church needs, there is no reason why it may not be again adapted to receive back into an outward visible unity our separated Free Church brethren. We refuse to credit the Bishop of Zanzibar's theory that it is Episcopacy which hinders "so powerfully the work of Reunion," or to accept his mischievous and misleading alternative that "Episcopacy is either God's gift or a terrible curse,"<sup>2</sup> for we believe that rightly understood, and as held by our Church, simply for the *bene esse* of a Church, the Historic Episcopate is rather an inducement than a barrier to Home Reunion.

After all, the one ultimate and infallible test of a true Church lies in the fruit of its ministry. "A Divine Society," as Mr. Blunt well says, "can live neither upon its past history nor upon its present externals . . . the test of 'results' in the widest sense of the word is the final test whether a system shall continue to be regarded as Divinely ordained."<sup>3</sup> If we apply this test to the non-episcopal Churches, even Bishop Gore fully and generously admits that "both individually and corporately they have exhibited manifest fruits of the Spirit alike in learning, virtue and Evangelical zeal."<sup>4</sup> How then, we ask, is it possible to think that God would so manifestly fill with His Spirit those whom Bishop Gore also declares to be "rebels against a Divine law"? Since also it is "by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body" (I Cor. xii. 13), how dare we repudiate the fellowship of a body of fellow believers, who by their full possession of God's Spirit, are truly members of "the Church which is His body"? Or again how can we with such evident

<sup>1</sup> See *Methodist Times*, Sept. 21, 1899.

<sup>2</sup> *Open Letter*.

<sup>3</sup> *Studies in Apos. Christianity*, pp. 119-20

<sup>4</sup> *Orders and Unity*, pp. 183-5.



proof of the sufficiency in God's sight of non-episcopal ministries approach them with a view to real organic union on terms of superiority or condescension, simply on account of what we consider a defect in their Church polity, for which there is no definite Scriptural warrant? If however on the other hand we make it perfectly clear that our proposals for Reunion are on the basis of a full recognition of the validity of their ministries, we do not believe that the orthodox Nonconformist Churches, who accept the Scriptures, the Creeds and the two Sacraments, will long seek to hinder a visible fulfilment of our Lord's prayer by rejecting our requirement of the Historic Episcopate "locally adapted" in such a way as to safeguard their conscientious scruples and respect their cherished convictions. This confident conviction is fully borne out by the remarkable Report recently issued by the English Sub-Committee at present considering the conditions of Reunion to be submitted to the proposed World Conference on Faith and Order. This Report, drawn up by representative Nonconformists as well as Churchmen, recommends that "continuity with the Historic Episcopate should be effectually preserved," although "acceptance of the fact of Episcopacy and not any theory as to its character" should be a sufficient requirement. In other words the acceptance of the Historic Episcopate for any successful scheme of Reunion is fully recognized on both sides, while as regards "local adaptation" the same Report suggests that the "Episcopate should re-assume a constitutional form, both as regards the method of the election of the bishop as by clergy and people and the method of government after election." To quote again the words of Professor Gwatkin, If the Historic Episcopate "committed us to the Cyprianic or medieval theory of Episcopacy it would only be a sword of division in our own Church. Episcopacy is like monarchy an ancient and godly form of government which we may be proud to acknowledge and obey. . . . To claim for it a binding command of Christ or His Apostles is a defiance of history; and to make it necessary for other Churches without such a command, comes near to a defiance of Christ Himself. We cannot dream of union with the Non-Episcopal Churches of Christ unless we recognize they are as much Christ's Churches as our own, and their ministers as truly Christ's ministers as we. Our Lord Himself laid down once for all the condition of union "that they may be perfected into unity."

Unity is not the way to perfection, but perfection is the way to Unity, and the higher we can struggle towards perfection, the more deeply we shall feel that unity—the only unity worth striving for—is already with us in the one true life that binds in one true Catholic Church all those who love our ever living Lord and Saviour ” (Pan Anglican Congress Speech, 1908).

While we rejoice in the truth thus eloquently expressed, as to the real and deep spiritual unity of all Christ's believing people, yet we feel we must qualify it by endorsing the concluding words of the moving appeal to the Christian Churches, already quoted, which declares “ that it must be felt by all good hearted Christians as an intolerable burden to find themselves permanently separated in respect of religious worship and communion from those in whose characters and lives they recognize the surest evidences of the indwelling Spirit ” (Second Interim Report, u.s.). We cannot rest content until all those who confess Christ's Holy Name shall “ agree in the truth of His Holy Word and live in unity and godly love.”

[NOTE.—The second paper on “The Historic Episcopate,” by Dr. Eugene Stock, and the paper by the Rev. George F. Irwin, B.D., and address' by the Rev. Principal Garvie, D.D., on “Possibilities of Reunion,” will appear in the August number of THE CHURCHMAN.]

