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The Kirk of Scotland and the Experiment of 1610.

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THE consecration of Spottiswoode, Lamb, and Hamilton is an incident that throws considerable light upon the relations then existing between the Churches of England and Scotland, and the manner in which Presbyterian ordinations were actually regarded by the former. To enter into the causes which led to the institution of "The First Episcopacy," or the very questionable methods by which it was effected, would be a needless digression. What is of real importance is that the experiment proved that there is no inherent incompatibility between the two systems of Church government, for, as Dr. McAdam Muir observed, "had it not been for lack of toleration and forbearance, they might have been working together yet."[1] As early as 1566, the thirteenth General Assembly had "ordainit ane letter to be directit to the Bischops of Ingland . . . and requiests Mr. Knox to putt the heids in wryte quhilkis he thinks necessar to be wrytin to the said Bischops, the tenour whereof followes: 'The Superintendents, Ministers, and Commissioners of Kirks within the Realme of Scotland, to their brethren the Bishops and Pastours of Ingland.'" Here follows a remonstrance against the too rigorous treatment of "'diverse of our dearest brethren, among whom are some of the best lernit within that Realme,'" because of their conscientious objections to the wearing of "'sick garments as idolaters in the tyme of blyndnes have usit in the tyme of idolatrie,'" and a request is made "'that our brethren who among zou refuse the Romish ragges, may find of zou, the Prelates, sick favour as our heid and maister commands every ane of His members to schew to another.'" The letter con-

[1] See his closing address, as Moderator, to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, 1910.

cludes, "'Zour loving brethren and fellow-preachers in Chryst Jesus.'"[1]

That the Church of England herself did not claim for episcopacy an exclusive Divine right is clear from the 55th Canon—one of those drawn up in 1604 (and still in force!), which acknowledges the Church of Scotland as a sister Church, and decrees that the clergy "shall pray for Christ's Holy Catholic Church, that is for the whole congregation of Christian people dispersed throughout the whole world, and especially for the Churches of England, Scotland, and Ireland." It is sometimes argued that this Canon has reference to the Church of Scotland as under the government of Bishops, but such a contention is unhistorical, for, whatever designs as to its future may have been simmering in the minds of King James and his Bishops, the Kirk of Scotland was, at the time of the Hampton Court Conference, actually passing through what was, perhaps, its most uncompromising phase of Presbyterianism under the leadership of Melville, who, in direct opposition to the opinions of Knox, declared not the Divine right of Presbytery merely (for this Knox allowed), but the positive unlawfulness of Episcopacy, the so-called "Bishops" in Scotland being nothing more than a Titular or Nominal Episcopate—only a degree less disreputable than that of the "Tulchans" of 1572. It is, indeed, noteworthy that in the controversies of the time the *absolute* necessity of Episcopal succession is not urged by those very writers whom we would naturally expect to make the best use of it, as, for instance, Jewel, Whitgift, Hall, Andrewes, and Ussher. Even Hooker is constrained to admit that, though imperfect, non-Episcopal forms of government may, nevertheless, be lawful: "For mine own part, although I see that certain reformed churches, the Scottish especially and French, have not that which best agreeth with the sacred Scripture, I mean the government that is by Bishops, inasmuch as both those churches are fallen under a different kind of regiment; which to remedy

[1] Bishop Keith's "Affairs of Church and State in Scotland," vol. iii., pp. 149-151.

it is for the one altogether too late, and too soon for the other during present affliction and trouble"—he means the civil war in France—"this their defect and imperfection I had rather lament in such case than exagitate, considering that men oftentimes without any fault of their own may be driven to want that kind of polity or regiment which is best, and to content themselves with that which either the irremediable error of former times or the necessity of the present hath cast upon them."[1] The fact is that, whatever may have been the attitude of the Church of England under Laud and thenceforward towards Presbyterian systems, up to the time under consideration numbers had been admitted into her ministry with no other than Presbyterian ordination. It is this uncomfortable fact that Keble urges as an explanation why Hooker and some others of those mentioned contented themselves with showing "that the government by Archbishops and Bishops is ancient and allowable."[2] Add to this the fact that Anglican divines were present as official representatives of their Church at the Synod of Dort in 1618, and it will be clear enough that, until then at least, the differences which marked the reformed Churches of England, Scotland, and the Continent were not regarded as sufficiently grave to form barriers to their mutual recognition. It is important to keep these facts in mind if we would estimate the full significance of the act of 1610, for when the three Presbyterian ministers were consecrated in London, the objection raised by Andrewes, Bishop of Ely, that they had not received episcopal ordination to the priesthood was overruled by Archbishop Bancroft on two grounds: (*a*) That to require them to submit to ordination to the priesthood would be, in effect, to discredit the orders of the reformed Churches on the Continent with which the Church of England was on terms of communion; and (*b*) that, as the less is included in the greater, it was possible validly to consecrate to the episcopate *per saltum*—*i.e.*, without previous admission to the inferior order. As,

[1] Hooker, "Ecclesiastical Polity," book iii., xi., 16.

[2] See Keble's "Preface to Hooker's Eccl. Pol.," p. lxvii. Seventh edition, revised by Church and Paget. Oxford, 1888.

however, this custom had long fallen into disuse, there is every possible reason to believe that in alluding to it at all Bancroft was prompted by a desire to quiet the scruples of a somewhat sensitive theologian like Andrewes, for it is obvious from his reference to the Continental Churches that he had no intention of throwing doubts upon the validity of the orders of the Scottish candidates. Moreover, the contention that the consecration of the three "titulars" was *per saltum* is not borne out by facts; for if the General Assembly of Glasgow, which consented to receive the restored episcopate, had really felt that the Church in Scotland had lost the Catholic heritage of the Apostolic Succession, it would be natural that we should expect to find the hundred or more ministers who had composed it flocking to the newly consecrated Bishops, and anxious to receive true priestly ordination. But no, the very contrary is the case, and, apart from the fact that within a year the King "received the welcome intelligence that all the Bishops of Scotland, including the Primate of St. Andrews, had been duly consecrated," and that he "had put into their hands full episcopal jurisdiction,"[1] there is not the slightest evidence to show that they ever attempted to reordain a single minister who was already in possession of Presbyterian ordination.[2] Their functions were, indeed, confined to matters of jurisdiction derived from their having been accepted by the Kirk as perpetual Moderators of Provincial or "diocesan" Synods in place of Moderators elected annually as heretofore, but the Bishops themselves were still subject to the authority of the General Assembly. Under this new constitution the Church of Scotland was in full communion with that of England, but her national peculiarities were retained and respected: General Assemblies, Synods, Presbyteries, and Kirk Sessions, continued to be held; no change was made even

[1] Dean Luckock, "The Church in Scotland," p. 173.

[2] It is well to remember, also, that although the Bishops consecrated in London in 1661 were, owing to the change in Anglican opinion and notwithstanding Sharp's protest, obliged to pass through the orders of deacon and priest, they themselves did not insist on the same process when they consecrated the others at Edinburgh and St. Andrews.

in the services of the Church, the "Book of Common Order" still being in use.[1] Thus it was that in the very year in which Melville was released from the Tower of London, only to go into the banishment from which he never returned, the pious intention of King James was carried into effect. He had entered upon his work of restoration with the full conviction that "a Scottish Presbytery as well agreeth with a monarchy as God with the Devil," and perhaps it is not too much to say that therein may be found the true motive of his zeal for episcopacy. So the Bishops returned to Scotland; but all went on as before, and it had been well for British Christianity—as for his own comfort—had Charles I. respected the pledge that his father had given to the Assembly at Perth through his Commissioner, Lord Hamilton, that "if they would accept the Perth Articles,[2] no further innovations would be made"—a pledge, be it said, that King James scrupulously kept.[3]

But a change had come over the spirit of the Church of England; the Bishops who presided over her destinies were no longer of the men who, in the bitter times of the Marian persecution, had sought and found refuge among the Presbyterians abroad, and had consorted on terms of brotherly intimacy with the reformers of Geneva and Zurich, of whose influence many a trace is still visible in the formularies of the Book of Common Prayer. It is strictly true to say that while in England "a John-Bull-Theology had arisen which rejoiced not only in defending the peculiarities of the Anglican Reformation—for

[1] Dr. McAdam Muir, "The Church of Scotland," p. 39.

[2] By the five Articles of Perth:

1. Kneeling at the Lord's Table was approved.

2. Ministers were to dispense that Sacrament in private houses to those suffering from infirmity or from long or deadly sickness.

3. Ministers were to baptize children in private houses in cases of great need.

4. Ministers were, under pain of the Bishop's censure, to catechize all children of eight years of age, and the children were to be presented to the Bishop for his blessing.

5. Ministers were ordered to commemorate Christ's birth, passion, resurrection, ascension, and the sending down of the Holy Ghost.

These Articles were ratified by Parliament in 1621.

[3] Dean Luckock, "The Church in Scotland," pp. 174, 180.

this might have been reasonable enough—but in extolling them as the most essential criterions of the Christian Church;"[1] in Scotland the Church, ripened in experience, had widened its outlook and adopted a more tolerant attitude towards other communions, and there can be no doubt that the original demands of the Covenanters came short of the total abolition of episcopacy.[2] It was only after Charles, at the instigation of Laud, had "so insisted on the acceptance of Anglican customs as to render them utterly hateful,"[3] that the eyes of Scotsmen were opened to the real cause of the evils under which they suffered, and it needs no special brief for Presbyterianism to justify the assertion that the act of the General Assembly of 1638 in deposing and excommunicating a fanatical and time-serving prelacy was one of the noblest examples in history of a Christian Church asserting its independence and seeking to purify itself from Erastianism. Then, if ever, was one of those occasions when it is lawful for a National Church to fall back upon its rights of self-organization and government.[4] The

[1] The late Duke of Argyll, "Presbytery Examined," p. 150.
[2] McCrie, "Sketches of Scottish Church History," vol. i., p. 238.
[3] McAdam Muir, "The Church of Scotland," p. 40.
[4] *Cf.* Hooker, "Eccl. Pol.," book vii., chap. xiv., 11: "Where some do infer that no ordination can stand but only such as is made by Bishops which have had their own ordination likewise by other Bishops before them, till we come to the very Apostles of Christ themselves; in which respect it was demanded of Beza at Poissie, 'By what authority he could administer the holy Sacraments, being not thereunto ordained by any other than Calvin, or by such as to whom the power of ordination did not belong, according to the ancient orders and customs of the Church; sith Calvin and they who joined with him in that action were no Bishops'; and Athanasius maintaineth the fact of Macarius a presbyter, which overthrew the holy table whereat one Ischyras would have ministered the Blessed Sacrament, having not been consecrated thereunto by laying on of some bishop's hands, according to the ecclesiastical canons; as also Epiphanius inveigheth sharply against divers for doing the like, when they had not episcopal ordination: to this we answer, that there may be sometimes very just and sufficient reason to allow ordination made without a bishop. The whole Church visible being the true original subject of all power, it hath not ordinarily allowed any other than bishops to ordain: howbeit, as the ordinary course is ordinarily in all things to be observed, so it may be in some cases not unnecessary that we decline from the ordinary ways. Men may extraordinarily, yet allowably, two ways be admitted into spiritual functions in the Church. One is, when God himself doth of himself raise up any, whose labour he useth without requiring that men should authorize them. . . . Another extraordinary kind of vocation is, when the exigence

question uppermost in the minds of the Covenanters was, however, one that concerned not the Divine right of Presbytery as opposed to Episcopacy, but the freedom of the Church from secular control. This was the great principle which Andrew Melville affirmed when he admonished James VI. that "there are two kings and two kingdoms in Scotland: King James, the head of the Commonwealth, and Christ Jesus, the King of the Church, whose subject James the Sixth is, and of whose kingdom he is not a king, nor a lord, nor a head, but a member"; and it was in defence of the same principle that Alexander Henderson, as Moderator in 1638, set aside the mandate of the Royal Commissioner dissolving the General Assembly, and claimed for that body the right of freedom of session and power to judge even the prelates themselves.

It has been said that the history of a Church is the best exponent of its dogmas. "We do well to remember," says the late Duke of Argyll, "what it was that Presbytery had principally to defend, to see what it was that was very likely to become its *idée dominante*. Its theology had not been the object of attack. . . . It had not been its doctrine, but its liberty—not the tenets of its divines, but the power of its Assemblies—which had been continually exposed to hostility and attack. Yet on the liberty and power of those bodies depended the liberty and power of the Church to exercise the right of self-government. But the right was a natural right, and like all such, claimed first by instinct—then defended on principle—at last on doctrine."[1] It is behind this principle—this doctrine—that the Kirk of Scotland is entrenched. She has asserted her right to revive the presbyterial form of Church

of necessity doth constrain to leave the usual ways of the Church, which otherwise we would willingly keep; where the Church must needs have some ordained, and neither hath nor can have possibly a bishop to ordain; in case of such necessity, the ordinary institution of God hath given oftentimes, and may give, place. And therefore we are not simply and without exception to urge a lineal descent of power from the Apostles by continued succession of bishops in every effectual ordination."

[1] "Presbytery Examined," pp. 156, 157.

government, and she maintains that what was valid in the first century was valid in the sixteenth and seventeenth, and is equally so to-day. Her principle is Catholic—it is also Apostolic—and so demands the respect of all who look back to the age of the Apostles as that in which true Evangelical liberty was best understood. She does not claim for her own system an exclusive Divine right, or deny that Episcopacy is an ancient and godly order, for she feels that her position is not weakened by acknowledging in others what they are often inclined, too readily, to deny to herself.

It is considerations such as these that tend to raise the hope that the day is not far distant when intercommunion between the English and Scottish Churches may, without the surrender of any essential principle on either side, be once more established. Efforts made in the past by Episcopalians such as Dean Ramsay and Bishop Wordsworth of St. Andrews, and by Presbyterians like Drs. Lee, Bisset, Norman McLeod, and Principal Tulloch have at least had the effect of bringing the matter within the field of amicable discussion; while the official reopening of the question by the Pan-Anglican Congress in 1908, by the General Assembly, and by the Church Congress in 1910, indicates that, in the words of the Lambeth Encyclical, "we have now reached a period in which, in view of the possibilities of the future, we must enter upon a stage of preparation." A dead uniformity is neither possible nor desirable, and for this reason it is not too much to hope that the very "varieties of opinion and practice within the Church of England are a distinct advantage to the cause of reunion," and that "her comprehensiveness and reasoned liberty mark her out as the rallying-ground of future unity."[1]

[1] See the Paper on "Christian Unity," by the Right Rev. J. A. Kempthorne, Bishop of Hull, read at the Church Congress of 1910.