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A SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY APOSTLE OF REUNION.

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TO-DAY with our different organisations actively working for the achievement of Christian Unity—with our “Lambeth Appeals,” our “World Conferences on Faith and Order,” our “South India Church Scheme”—it is especially interesting to recall the sincere and untiring efforts in this cause made by a little-known, but most remarkable seventeenth-century “Apostle of Reunion.” John Dury consecrated practically all his life as an enthusiastic pioneer in the cause of Christian Reunion. His one consistent aim and effort was to promote full intercommunion and fellowship between all the Evangelical Churches of Christendom which embraced the principles of the Reformation; and it has been asserted that he “did and suffered more for the cause of peace than probably any other man.” He was born in Edinburgh towards the close of the sixteenth century. His father was an ex-monk who became so polemical and political that he incurred the anger of the Government. Prudence therefore dictated flight to Holland, and he became a pastor at Leyden. His son John was educated there and embraced “Separatist” or “Independent” views, probably on account of intercourse with the English “Separatist” exile congregations then in Holland, some of whom in 1620 became the “Pilgrim Fathers” of the *Mayflower*. This “guess” becomes almost a certainty when we recall the fact that Leyden was the chief centre of “Separatist” or “Brownist” activities at the time, and that the “Separatist” or Independent Church there was under the pastorate of the celebrated John Robinson.

In 1628 John Dury accepted the post of pastor to the English factory at Elbing in Prussia, which at the time formed part of the dominions of Gustavus Adolphus, King of Sweden. Here he became very intimate with one of the Swedish Privy Councillors—Dr. Godeman—who suggested to him the urgent need of achieving fellowship and intercommunion between all Protestants. Dury was enthused with the project and devoted the rest of his long life with the most self-denying zeal to this laudable endeavour. Sir Thomas Rowe, who had seconded the similar efforts of Cyril Lucar when he was ambassador at Constantinople, heard of Dury’s design and recommended it warmly to the Swedish Chancellor.

Oxenstein and Rowe both agreed that the project should receive the support of Gustavus and Charles I. Sir T. Rowe then interested many influential people in England on the subject, so that Dury gladly accepted an invitation to visit England and advocate the

cause there. He was most cordially received by both Archbishop Abbot and Bishop Laud, who counselled him to see both Gustavus and the Protestant Princes of Germany and to take such action as they advised to carry out the design. Fortified by a Comendatory letter signed by thirty-eight English divines, Dury saw Gustavus in 1631, at a time when, owing to the Battle of Leipsic, he was the Protestant dictator of Europe. Gustavus strongly supported the scheme, but all that was then accomplished was a recommendation to divines to prepare for such unity by suitable sermons.

Dury next turned his attention to the Calvinists and visited the Palatinate and the Wetterau and brought about a colloquy between the Lutherans and Calvinists at Leipsic in March, 1631. But the fall of Gustavus at Lutzen in 1632 was a great set-back to the movement, and Dury again appealed for help to Abbot and Laud; and he represented England at a general meeting of the Protestant States at Heilebron. By this time considerable interest was aroused throughout Europe, and there were many friends of the movement in Switzerland, France and Germany. Dury then tried to gain over the Dutch pastors in Holland. In the autumn of 1633 he returned to England to find that Laud had become Archbishop of Canterbury. He was received most kindly and Laud inquired from whom he had received Holy Orders? Dury, whose one consuming passion was the achievement of Protestant intercommunion, did not concern himself overmuch with questions of Church polity. But he admitted to Laud that he had always had scruples as to the validity of "Independent" ordination. These "scruples" were certainly shared by Laud and the Anglicans generally, since the English "Separatists" or Independents had from the first denied the validity of Anglican Orders and sacraments and had created their own Ministry in a decidedly "irregular" manner. "The godly," said Henry Barrowe, "ought speedily and without delay forsake those disordered and ungodly synagogues of these times as they generally stand in England." This of course referred to the ordinary parishes in England then. A prominent Anglican divine therefore advised Dury to obtain Anglican Orders and thus secure a wider field of service. He was quite agreeable to this proposal, since, as he said, he "looked upon the Church of England as a Church of Christ, true in respect of the doctrine professed therein, and eminent for all spiritual gifts bestowed upon it, that I judged the government thereof by bishops with indifference, and that I *took them as men commissioned by the King to be his delegates,*" an Erastian view of Orders which although it might be quite acceptable to the Caroline supporters of the "divine right" of kings, would be so to few others! It furnishes us, however, with additional evidence of Dury's early association with the Leyden Separatist Church, and it tells us that he still retained the views of episcopacy which these Independents propounded. For in 1617 the Leyden Brownists sent "Seven Articles" of their Faith to the Council of the English Virginia Company, and it is interesting to notice that

their language concerning the King's ecclesiastical authority is practically identical with that used by Dury. "The authority of the present bishops in the land we acknowledge, so far as *the same is indeed derived from His Majesty unto them and as they proceed in his name.*"

Dury was accordingly ordained priest by Bishop Joseph Hall at Exeter in February, 1634. There is no record of his ordination to the diaconate, and possibly this step was dispensed with in view of his previous "call" to the Independent Ministry! But it should be noticed that this is not a case of a re-ordination of a regular foreign Reformed (Presbyterian) divine, in which, it is certain, Bishop Hall—any more than Bishop Morton—would "have had no hand."

Laud presented him to a living in Devonshire, giving him a special licence of non-residence so that "thus you may be able to pursue your negotiations with more effect." He now sought for further testimonials and further definite encouragement from prominent Anglican bishops for his great undertaking. Laud wrote a sort of circular letter to both the divided and contending parties. In his letter of February 10, 1634, for the Calvinists, Laud praises Dury's great zeal in his self-imposed task, and adds: "Assuredly as soon as I heard there was a hope conceived of the peace of the Reformed Churches I was filled with joy and my daily prayers are not lacking beseeching the God of peace to bring to fruition any hope whatever of a harvest so glorious and fruitful. . . . As far as I am concerned, I will strive with all my might not to seem lacking in a work so worthy of the name of Christ. Moreover, I know honestly that this undertaking will be most acceptable to the Anglican Church." His letter to Dury for the Lutherans is couched in a similar strain. "I approve up to the hilt," he says, "of this desire for Christian peace . . . greet in my name these brethren beloved in Christ and let them know that I am and always will be most eager for Christian reconciliation. . . . I commend to you and to them this undertaking with my utmost earnestness."

Dury also appealed to his episcopal supporters to publish their "Opinions" as to the best methods of securing this Protestant unity and intercommunion. One result of this appeal was a tractate by Bishop J. Davenant called "An Exhortation to brotherly Communion betwixt the Protestant Churches." In his "Introduction," Davenant discusses what are the essential "fundamentals" of the Catholic Faith, and he is most eager to give some advice "which may serve to advance so holy a work" as Dury's. He wisely declares that a full and *perfect* agreement between the opinions of divines is not to be expected, but that this should not prevent a "brotherly holy communion" between them, and he instances the Concordat recently achieved in the Polonian Churches. He longs that they should "bid farewell to all dissensions and establish so near a Communion betwixt themselves that they refuse not to admit each other into their congregations either to the hearing of the Word preached or receiving of the sacraments." He further asserts that the three obstacles to unity are—

(1) The tyrannical jurisdiction of one Church lording it over the Faith of others.

(2) The approving of idolatrous worship on one side and detesting it on the other, although he adds that there was no fear of the least "spot or stain of idolatry" on either side in the Reformed Churches.

(3) The assertion of a Fundamental Article necessary to salvation. He declares that the common faith is sufficiently set forth in the Apostles' Creed. "Other differences of opinion and interpretations of the Scripture are not sufficient to cause a break in Communion between one Church and another." He concludes that none of these obstacles really block the way to union between the Lutheran and "Reformed" or Calvinistic Churches. Such "brotherly Communion" he declares to be incumbent on all Christians; and he adds that "I doubt not at all that the Saxon and Helvetian Churches . . . acknowledge to have and to desire to retain brotherly communion with the English, Scottish, Irish and other foreign Reformed Churches. Surely as concerning us, although we consent not with them in all points and titles of controversial divinity, yet we acknowledge them as Brethren in Christ and protest ourselves to have a brotherly and holy communion with them." "If," Davenant concludes, "they are like-minded towards us, why do they (the Lutherans and Calvinists) deprive each other of that brotherly communion?"

He then advises a peaceable Conference between the divines, and the disuse of bitter terms such as "heretic," and adds a plea which all sincere disciples of reunion will re-echo to-day, that "it were to be wished that those surnames of Lutherans, Zwinglians and Calvinists were packed away and utterly abolished which are rather ensigns of faction than badges of brotherly union."

Dury also secured Opinions from Bishop Morton and Bishop Bedell of Kilmore, and the latter allowed him a pension for the rest of his life to prosecute his mission. Bishop Hall, in a Tract entitled *Good Counsells for the Peace of the Reformed Churches*, declared that "the Articles of religion wherein the Divines of both sides do *fully agree* are abundantly sufficient for the establishing of a firm and lasting peace in the Churches of God." In the same Tractate we find a Sermon preached before King James I by Archbishop Usher, wherein the same sensible advice is given. If, said Usher, we leave the points wherein Christians differ from one another, and "gather into one body the rest of the articles wherein they do generally *agree*, we should find, that in those propositions which without all controversy are universally received in the whole Christian World, so much truth is contained, as being joined with holy obedience may be sufficient to bring a man into everlasting salvation."

It is interesting to discover that learned and pious divines three hundred years ago had such a breadth and charity of outlook and such a true Christian vision, and that they were then advocating the same healing principles for achieving Christian unity, which are to-day, in our Reunion efforts, being propounded as "fresh and enlightened" views, by modern pioneers in the cause.

We must follow the persistent and sincere efforts of Dury a little further, although they are largely the record of the difficult and disheartening nature of attempts to secure religious Concordats, and the healing of the broken Fellowship of Christendom, of which we have had many examples in past years. In 1634 he returned to the Continent and he held repeated Conferences with Protestant States and divines. He also pleaded the cause in Scotland and in the Netherlands before Dutch Synods, and in most places he received many fair words and resolutions of sympathy, which, however, resulted in no practical action.

Special mention must be made of his effort with the Church in Sweden, where he went in July, 1636. The Chancellor Oxenstein accompanied him on a tour throughout the kingdom, and he attended a large Synod of divines at Stockholm. The Swedish Church was not only Lutheran but it had also retained the ancient episcopal government. We have, however, sufficient evidence to prove that it held no rigid theory of the essential necessity of episcopal polity. On the other hand its official actions, at times, certainly go to prove that it regarded this ancient, catholic and scriptural Order with singular laxity. On various occasions or emergencies the Swedish Church practically assumed the identity of the offices of bishop and priest even to the extent of ordination. Thus in 1758, 1764 and 1775 the Dean of Upsala, during the vacancy of the See, ordained numbers of candidates to the ministry of the priesthood. There was not, therefore, any barrier on the score of "Order" which hindered the Swedish Church from furthering Dury's scheme of general Protestant Intercommunion, and in fact the main obstacle centred round the Lutheran doctrine of the Eucharist. The Swedish churchmen demanded that the "Reformed" should accept fully the teaching of the Confession of Augsburg, and although Dury tried to prove that the difference was mainly one of words, he was unsuccessful. In February, 1638, he was told that his proposals were quite unacceptable, and a Royal Edict expelled him from the country, declaring that "he had resided some time not without the great scandal of our ecclesiastics and he should depart without delay." The effect of this great disappointment was such that Dury became seriously ill in Stockholm, but vowed that if spared he would devote the rest of his life to this sacred cause. He recovered, and continued his difficult and often disappointing task. He visited many German States and Princes and also the German Lutheran Universities of Wittenberg, Jena, Leipsic and Bremen. He then advocated his Mission in Denmark and Holland. But although much approval was given to the Scheme no real progress was effected.

He returned to England in 1640 and was selected as Tutor to the Princess Royal at The Hague, where he remained till 1643, when he was invited to the "Westminster Assembly" of Divines. The Prince of Orange refused to allow him to accept this invitation, and so Dury resigned his post and became Chaplain to a Merchant Adventurers' Company at Rotterdam. He returned to England in

1645 and pleaded the cause of Christian Unity before the House of Commons. He remained in England for the next nine years, during which time he married a lady with comfortable means—a fact which must have greatly facilitated his Mission. He exerted his utmost efforts to save Charles I, but he was able to accept both the “Covenant” and the “Engagement.” In 1654 he secured recommendations from Cromwell and the English divines, and he then pleaded his cause before the Swiss Protestant Cantons. He visited Germany again in 1655, but his association with Cromwell rendered him unacceptable to the Elector Palatine. He visited many cities and attended Synods in Holland, and in spite often of a lukewarm reception, he doggedly persisted in his efforts to bring about Conferences between the Lutherans and the “Reformed.” He even tried again in vain to interest the Prince of Sweden in his Mission. Returning to England in 1657, at the Restoration he endeavoured to secure the sympathy of Charles II, who was already secretly a Romanist. It was not therefore surprising that he received no reply. He appealed to Archbishop Juxon, who although most sympathetic, declined to move unless the foreign Princes would ask for the mediation of the Anglican Church. Baffled in this attempt, but still persevering, Dury, now an old man, revisited Holland, Sweden, Belgium and Switzerland, always ceaselessly and strenuously advocating his cause. In 1664 he settled in Cassel and from there visited many States, but in the end he found that he could make very little progress with the Lutherans. In 1672 he published an “Eirenicon,” in which he reduced the necessary terms of belief to the “Apostles’ Creed,” and he was apparently, on this basis, willing to embrace even the Roman Catholics in his scheme of reconciliation. In 1678 he was visited by the Quaker—William Penn—but beyond this date there is no authentic record of his career. He is supposed to have lived till 1680.
