Editorial

EPISCOPACY AND REUNION

THE place and importance of the Episcopate in any proposals for reunion or full intercommunion is bound to be a burning question for the consideration of the Lambeth Conference this summer. The inauguration of the Church of South India has forced this subject to the front, presenting as it does the anomalous position of an episcopally constituted Church, with bishops duly consecrated in accordance with Catholic tradition, yet declared to be "not in communion" with any branch of the episcopal Anglican Communion simply because for a limited interim period it has recognised the validity of its existing non-episcopal ministries. As similar schemes of reunion are now in progress, notably in Ceylon, this raises again the question of the Anglican view and teaching of the meaning and practical application of episcopacy. Can there be a truly Christian Church without bishops? If "Episcopacy is bound up with Christ's Incarnation," as Bishop Weston asserted, then obviously to recognise any organised Christian life and fellowship without bishops is a grievous sin. But we can safely say that such a view has never been formulated by the Anglican Church, and its official actions on several occasions, as the Bishop of Truro points out in the following article, have contradicted such a dogmatic interpretation. The fact that the historic Catholic Church possessed, at least from the third century, bishops who could trace their origin from the Apostles' times makes them an undoubted link with Apostolic Christianity which Anglicans regard ás a precious heritage, and also, practically, as a necessary plank in any reunion scheme. But this does not constitute the "Historic Episcopate" a *necessary* note for a true Church or for a guaranteed ministry, and our Reformed Church of England has never taught that episcopal Orders are *essentially* necessary for the performance of a valid ministry or administration of the sacrament. On the contrary by permitting, as Keble admits, "numbers" to minister in England with "no better than presbyterian Orders," it has definitely recognised the validity of non-episcopal Orders. And for this our Church certainly had scriptural warrant, since, as Bishop Headlam says, "we cannot find any support for any particular theory of Church polity in our Lord's teaching."

Further, the theory of a universal "Apostolic Succession" of ordained men is scarcely in accord with New Testament records, and certainly there is nothing to prove the theory put forth in the recently published work *The Apostolic Ministry* of "an essential ministry of apostolically appointed men with power of self-extension, and a separate 'dependent' presbyterian ministry with no such power," although Lightfoot's conclusion that "the episcopate was formed not out of the Apostolic order by localisation but out of the presbyterate by elevation" has far more to support it. Apparently at first not

all ordination came mediately or immediately from the Apostles, since prophets and teachers ordained at Antioch, and a "succession" other than "apostolic" would thus arise as the elders or presbyters ordained by this means would in turn ordain others. There is no evidence, as Bishop Blunt says, that "nobody could minister unless he had been ordained by an apostle or one whom the apostles had ordained." The Apostles ordained presbyter-bishops, and they again ordained similar successors, until later on it was thought wiser to delegate to the recognised leader of these local presbyters the duty of ordaining men to the Ministry. But this expedient change in Church Order did not destroy the inherent power of the other presbyter-bishops to ordain in special cases even if they ceased normally to exercise it, and this custom actually continued in Alexandria till A.D. 250. But as Bishop Graham-Brown said, in apostolic times "Church order was one of divine expediency rather than one of direct divine tradition." "We cannot therefore claim for episcopacy more than other forms of ministry that it was ordained by our Lord or ordered by the Apostles"; and the Church of England since the Reformation has never made such a claim. This is made abundantly clear in the admirable historical survey of "The Anglican Pattern of Episcopacy", with its valuable catena of quotations, given in the Bishop of Truro's article in this issue. The "Preface to the Ordinal" states that "these Orders" of "bishops, priests and deacons" have been in the Church "from the Apostles' time"; but Article XXIII deliberately refrains from naming the office of those who have "public authority given them in the Congregation, to call and send ministers into the Lord's vineyard," and thus, as Bishop Gibson declares, it regards episcopacy "only as an allowable form of government."

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It is in the light of this doctrinal and traditional position of the Anglican Church that we must examine present day proposals for Reunion. The Lambeth Conference of 1908 suggested that an approach might be made on the lines "of the precedent of 1610" with the Scottish Presbyterians, when some presbyters were consecrated bishops *per saltum* to revive the Scottish episcopate and the orders of the existing presbyterian ministers were fully recognised and employed. It is noteworthy that this Scottish Episcopal Church was recognised as in full communion with the Anglican Church, as it was also after its second revival in 1660, when continuing presbyterian ministers were not re-ordained. We cannot but wonder why full communion and fellowship is now withheld by the Anglican Church from the episcopal Church of South India simply for a like recognition of its existing non-episcopal ministers! A similar acceptance of non-episcopal Orders was also accorded to the existing Lutheran missionaries who were employed by the S.P.G. in India when in 1813 bishops were first consecrated for the Indian Church, until after an interim period a unified episcopal ministry was evolved. Such "accommodations" were of course only permitted for the exceptional purpose of restoring the "Broken Fellowship" in the Church, and they in no way alter the regular and normal rule of the Church of England (as stated in the Preface to the Ordinal) for episcopal ordination for all ministerial

functions. Surely a solution on these lines is the most promising method, since the "Memorandum of the Status of the existing Free Church Ministry," signed in 1923 for the Anglicans by the two Archbishops and ten diocesan bishops, declared that the Free Church non-episcopal ministries "are real ministries of Christ's Word and Sacraments in the Universal Church"; and as Bishop Headlam declared, "the only practical policy for Reunion will be based on mutual recognition of Orders." The suggestion for "supplementary ordination" in a Union Scheme for "further grace of Orders" in a wider Ministry, sounds at first sight attractive, especially in the form proposed for the union of American Presbyterians and Protestant Episcopalians, which distinctly states that the recipients of such supplementary ordering "have been truly ordained to the ministry of Christ's Church." But practically this solution lacks reality, since it is a one-sided plan designed merely to satisfy the scruples of certain Anglicans concerning the sufficiency of non-episcopal Orders. No Free Church would demand "supplementary ordination" for Anglicans to qualify them to minister in their churches. It also conflicts with the Catholic principle that ordination is for the Church of God and not for any special section or branch of the Catholic Church. The commission given to the ordinand is "take thou authority to execute the office of deacon (or priest) in the *Church of God*," and not "in the Church of England" or in "the Methodist Church." Therefore for those declared to have been already "truly ordained to the ministry of Christ's Church," supplementary ordination seems really superfluous.

But in apostolic times the whole Christian Society "was in fact a brotherhood BASED ON THE ONE HOPE of salvation through the one Lord," and full communion was normal and natural between all believers, even though the Church in Corinth was still governed by presbyters while that at Antioch or Smyrna was under the rule of a single bishop. It is the scandal of our Broken Fellowship which makes reunion or at least intercommunion such an urgent question to-day. The Lambeth Quadrilateral included the acceptance of the Historic Episcopate as one of the conditions for *full reunion*, and this was accepted by the Church of South India. But the Church of England has in the past always refused to equate "Order" with "Faith" and has stressed its unity in Faith with the orthodox non-episcopal Churches. Bishops Jewel and Horn affirmed that the Anglican Church "held the same ecclesiastical doctrine" as the Swiss Churches. James I asserted in 1603 that "the doctrine of the Church of England was the same which the whole kingdom and (presbyterian) Church of Scotland, yea, and the Primitive Church, professed". Bishop Vaughan of London in 1604 declared the French Reformed Church "to be of the same faith with our own"; and Joseph Bingham confirmed this statement when he said, in 1706, that "our Articles and Homilies contain no other doctrine but what is publicly taught in the Articles and Homilies of the French Church." Bishop Andrewes reminded Cardinal Bellarmine that the English Church "held one faith" with the foreign Reformed presbyterian Churches.

The Caroline divines excused the want of episcopacy in the foreign Reformed Churches on the plea of " necessity " ; " Popish bishops," as Bishop Cosin put it, " having turned to idolatry, orthodox presbyters may ordain instead of them." Consequently they welcomed intercommunion with them, and the eminent French divine, Peter du Moulin, reported : " We participate together with the English in the holy supper of our Lord, the doctrine of their Confession is wholly agreeable to ours." Cosin contrasts the excommunicating treatment of Anglicans in France by Roman Catholics with the cordial fellowship accorded to them by the French Reformed, " who repair to us, joining with us in prayers and sacraments " ; and he strongly urges Englishmen when on the Continent to communicate with the French Reformed, as he himself did, and to " make no schism between our churches and theirs." Archbishops Usher, Sharp and Wake also expressed their willingness to communicate when abroad with the Reformed Churches. A recent Archiepiscopal ban on this practice in the case of the Oslo Youth Conference is therefore scarcely in harmony with Anglican tradition and custom.

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Recognised intercommunion would therefore appear to be the obvious first step towards healing the schism in the Body of Christ. The Bishop of Fukien in 1929 declared that " unless the Anglican Communion is prepared to recognise the sister Communions at least up to the point of intercommunion, her very existence in what is known as Mission lands is in danger." The Bishop of Bradford in 1928 asked, " Can we not go boldly forward with Intercommunion first, not careful overmuch about offending others if we are clear that God's will may be done along the line of Christ's own example ? " In this connection it is important to remember that the Confirmation rubric offers no barrier to occasional Communion of Free churchmen in Anglican Churches, since it is, as Archbishop Davidson ruled, a domestic regulation " for our own people only." The Toleration Act, as Lord Chief Justice Mansfield declared in 1767, " established the dissenters' way of worship." But even before this Act was passed many Dissenters, including Baxter, Bates and Howe, had practised " occasional conformity " in this way with a design to avoid schism, and Archbishop Sharp even declared that the Dissenters' refusal of this practice was " schismatical behaviour."

The Lambeth Appeal, 1920, recognised that the " unity which we seek exists " in the One Lord and One Spirit and the One Body, and surely the best way " to set free its activities " is, as the Free Churches state in their reply to the Lambeth Appeal, " to welcome and promote close spiritual fellowship among the Churches, especially through the pulpit, at the Communion Table, and in the work of the Kingdom." The achievement of the South India Church is a practical demonstration of the fact that with abounding patience, persistence and prayer, longed for results can be realised.

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