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[Cheltenham Conference Paper.]

The Historic Episcopate.

By EUGENE STOCK, D.C.L.

THE phrase "Historic Episcopate" has come into prominence through its standing for one of the conditions of connexion with the Anglican Communion, that is, the group of four conditions originally suggested by my late friend, Dr. Huntington, of Grace Church, New York, adopted by the American Protestant Episcopal Church, and accepted by the Lambeth Conference of 1888. I have always thought that the word "Historic" ought to be applied to all the four conditions. They are in fact the Historic Canon of Scripture, the Historic Creeds (two, not three), the Historic Sacraments (two, not seven), and the Historic Episcopate. Of these four, only one, the Sacraments, is plainly the command of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is permissible, I suppose, to regard any one of the other three, or all of the three, as fulfilling His Divine purpose; but certainly the records do not tell us so. So far as we can see, they grew up gradually in the Church, more or less quickly. The Historic Episcopate certainly preceded the other two. It confessedly existed in the second century, while the others were not settled till a century or two later.

Historically, therefore, the Episcopate is, as regards age, the second of the four. Does this involve its being of the *esse* of the Church of Christ? Personally I think not. I imagine that if the whole of Christendom were re-united, the united Church could, if the whole body felt it necessary or desirable, modify or change whatever was not a direct command of our Lord, without forfeiting its position as the Visible Catholic Church of Christ. Still, if any one infers from this statement that the Church, thus united, could reasonably abolish bishops, he must be prepared to allow similar liberty in adding as well as abolishing, and the adding might be to the Creeds or the Canon of Scripture. These, however, are wild imaginations, and I only use them to illustrate the practical necessity of the Episcopate. But this in no way involves a particular theory of the Episcopate, such as involves a mechanical succession and transmission of authority. The whole of our difficulty arises from that unwarrantable theory.

I myself, in the Faith and Order Committee, suggested another

illustration. I ventured to urge that while the Episcopate is truly historic as coming down to us through so many centuries, yet, if all the bishops in Diocletian's time had perished in the persecution, the Church might have started afresh and consecrated new bishops ; and again, if in Queen Elizabeth's time all the English bishops had chosen to remain in what was then in fact the Roman schism, the clergy and lay members of the English Church might have met and solemnly appointed and set apart fresh bishops ; in short, that the use of the word " historic " did not necessarily involve a " succession " so mechanical that the grace of God could be interrupted by any such unforeseen calamity. Of course the word " historic " itself conveys no such meaning. It clearly only means the actual Episcopal Order of past history. When we speak of our historic British Constitution, we mean that it is not a brand-new invention of modern politics, but has come down to us through historic ages, in Tennysonian language, " from precedent to precedent." The Jerusalem Chamber, in which the United Conference on Faith and Order holds its meetings, is spoken of as " that historic room." There is no dangerous secret in the word historic.

But when we discuss the question whether the Historic Episcopate is of the *esse*, not of any Church in any circumstances, but of the Anglican Communion in existing circumstances, I for one have sufficient reverence for history to think that if thirteen centuries do not settle that point, I do not know what can settle anything. And all that the Quadrilateral affirms is that the acceptance of the Historic Episcopate is a condition of admission to the Anglican Communion ; that is, the Anglican Communion as it exists at present. I have never been able to see how this can be disputed.

I may now be asked : What do I mean by the Anglican Communion ? It is curious how vague and uncertain many Evangelical Churchmen are on this subject. Pardon me, therefore, if I answer a question which ought not to need an answer. I mean the aggregate composed of the Church of England, and the Branches abroad of the Church of England, and the independent or semi-independent Churches in recognized communion with the Church of England.

(1) There are three such Churches wholly independent, viz. the Scottish Episcopal Church, the Church of Ireland, and the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States.

(2) Four Churches partially independent, in our great self-govern-

ing Dominions, viz., the Canadian Church, the Australian Church, the New Zealand Church, the South African Church. With these may be grouped a fifth, which has a peculiar status of its own, the Church in the West Indies.

(3) The Church of England in India, which is in a partial sense an Established Church connected with the State, and has certain special conditions. With it may be grouped Ceylon, where the Church has been disestablished, yet is under the Bishop of Calcutta as Metropolitan.

(4) The Church of England and its Branches in the Crown Colonies and British Protectorates, including some Branches with local semi-independent constitutions like Uganda, but all under the Archbishop of Canterbury as practically their Metropolitan.

(5) Branches of the English Church in Foreign States, China, Japan, Persia, Madagascar, South America. With this may be grouped the see of Jerusalem, with jurisdiction partly in the foreign country of Palestine, partly in the Colony of Cyprus, partly in the Protectorates of Egypt and the Sudan.

All these together form the Anglican Communion. It is not a Federation of Churches, seeing that it has no definite rules defining their mutual relations, and no single supreme government. But it is a group of Churches and Branches of Churches which in actual fact are closely linked together.

Observe what the essential uniting fact is. It is not that they are all one Church, as regards constitution and government. The Church of Ireland, for instance, is not in any sense under the British Parliament, as our English Church is. It has modified its Prayer-book, and arranged the patronage of its parishes and the appointment of its bishops, without our having any right to interfere. And so with some of the other Churches. The uniting fact, practically, is this, that any clergyman of any of these Churches or Branches of Churches can minister fully in the church buildings of any other. Subject to certain permits of a simple character, any of you could go away for your holiday, leaving your parish in the full charge of an Irish or American or Canadian or Chinese or Indian or Negro clergyman; or you could take one as your curate; or he could succeed you as vicar. And observe that this is also the case with a clergyman of the Scottish Episcopal Church, notwithstanding the fact that from the Establishment point of view, that Church is only

a dissenting body ; while, on the other hand, you could not employ, or engage as curate, or be succeeded as vicar, by a clergyman of the Established Church of Scotland, which is Presbyterian. Establishment has nothing to do with the question. But the Historic Episcopate, together with the three other conditions of the Quadrilateral, and with substantially the same Prayer-book, has everything to do with it. And what the Quadrilateral says to any Church which is not now in the Anglican Communion is this :—If you wish to join us in the full sense, that is, if you wish to have the privileges of the Anglican Communion, you must accept the four historic conditions, of which the Episcopate is one. Is that unreasonable ? I just now added the condition of a substantially similar Prayer-book, including the Articles—which is an important addition as a challenge to Rome ; yet the Articles themselves as they stand are not, as such, indispensable, for the Irish and American Churches, and I suppose the Scottish Church also, have them only in a modified form. You will observe that I am offering no opinion as to what ought to be the case ; I am simply stating facts.

What shall we call the mutual relations of the Churches of the Anglican Communion ? It is not in any single case Federal Union. For on the one hand, as I have already said, there is no central supreme authority over those of the Churches that are independent ; and on the other hand, those that are still merely outlying Branches of the Church of England have not the liberty of semi-independent bodies even if federated. We may use the phrase Inter-Communion ; only then we must remember that there may be a lower kind of Inter-Communion. Suppose the Church of England and the Presbyterian Church or Churches of Scotland were to make a formal agreement that the members of either were welcome to the Lord's Supper as administered by the other, not as an occasional or casual concession, but as a normal and recognized right, and also to agree on entire freedom in regard to exchange of pulpits, that would be a measure of Inter-Communion. But it would be a long way short of the Union already described. It would not make a Presbyterian eligible for an English vicarage or curacy. It would be better expressed by the word "alliance."

We need to cultivate accuracy in our use of terms ; and if in this paper I am faulty in that respect I shall be glad to be corrected. We are wont to talk rather glibly of unity, uniformity, union, inter-

communion, reunion, to say nothing of federation or alliance. Just consider these words. Unity is not an external but a spiritual thing, which all true Christians have, or could have, with one another, whatever Church they belong to. I say "could have," if they wished it, only sometimes they do not wish it. Why do they not wish for it? Because they want uniformity,—not as regards church worship and government, but as regards doctrine. Truth, indeed, is essential as a basis for real unity; but it must be fundamental truth, and with all reasonable allowance for diversity of view resulting from temperament, or education, or environment. In the eighteenth century, for instance, Toplady would have insisted on the doctrine that Christ died only for the elect, as fundamental, while Fletcher would have insisted that universal redemption (as distinct from universal salvation) was fundamental. That tremendous question, and the other points of the predestinarian controversy, do not trouble us now; but other shibboleths do, which I refrain from referring to lest I should cause division. We are, however, all agreed in deprecating uniformity in externals and secondary matters, and certainly any attempt to impose it would be an absolute bar to Reunion. If I may use a musical illustration, we do not want all the instruments to strike the same note in *unison*; but we do want them to strike notes that produce *harmony*. Reunion, again, must for practical purposes be distinguished from Union. Reunion would bind together those who were once united but are now separated, and would have Union as its result. But if some other body also joined them which had not been united with them before, that would be Union but not Reunion. I submit that it is very necessary to obviate misunderstanding by carefully distinguishing between the different phrases, and even between different meanings of the same phrase, as in the case of Inter-communion.

I want also to draw another important distinction, namely, between Churches in different countries, and the Church in a single country. Although I hold that the real ultimate ideal would be one Catholic or Universal Church for the world, in accordance with what was surely the original purpose, yet it is obvious that the attainment of such an ideal is in any case far distant, even if it can be hoped for in this dispensation at all. In the meanwhile, we might aim at Federation or Inter-communion between the Church of England and Churches in other lands. We might, for instance, have Federation

or Inter-communion in some form, without the uniting influence of the Historic Episcopate, with a Presbyterian Church like that of Holland, and certainly with the Church of Scotland, though according to its Moderator's recent address in the crypt of St. Paul's that Church is really moving towards readiness for a still closer union. But in any one country there should, ideally, be one Church, and so far as England is concerned, our aim should be for nothing less. It was so in Queen Elizabeth's day. The Puritans were not a separate Church; they were the Evangelicals of the Church of England; and barring the comparatively few who clung to the Roman schism, there was one Church for the country. That it is not so now is largely the Church's fault; and I fully believe that, in the gracious providence of God, the result of the separations has been in more ways than one an illustration of His power to turn curses into blessings. Nevertheless, the disadvantages are far greater than the advantages; and we ought all to pray and labour for the real and complete Reunion of those thus separated.

This brings us at once face to face with Episcopacy, and practically with the Historic Episcopate. Any really united Church must either have bishops or not have bishops; and the simple question is, Which is it to be? It is provoking to see how this plain question is constantly evaded by Evangelical controversialists. If they said plainly, We want no bishops, we should understand them. If they said, bishops, being not of the *essè* of the Church, we may drop them altogether, that, too, would be intelligible. But they will not go so far as this, and I really believe that they do not wish to abolish Episcopacy. But if so, why not recognize the fact that if there is to be one Church, the question has to be settled one way or the other? And then, if the decision is frankly accepted that bishops there must be and will be, the way is open for the fullest consideration of the further question, How can the Anglican Episcopate be so reformed or modified as to be suitable for a United Church and acceptable to its members generally? It is of course easy to throw the cold water of unsympathetic criticism upon those who do try to solve this problem, but it brings us "no forrarder," and meanwhile we Evangelicals are missing the chances of exercising the influence that rightly belongs to us.

The principal obstacle to Reunion in the past has been that many Evangelical Churchmen, and most Nonconformists, have not seen

the need for it, indeed have doubted whether it is desirable. They have been content with the spiritual unity which they can have without union. While upholding the most true doctrine of the spiritual and in a sense invisible Church which is "the blessed company of all faithful people," but which the world cannot perceive, they have failed to acknowledge the fact that a Visible Church is needed which the world *can* see. *This* is the Catholic and Apostolic Church of the Creeds, and this is necessarily meant when we are discussing questions, not of spiritual fellowship, but of Ministry and Ministrations and Administration. But our Nonconformist brethren have their eyes open now; at least the chief leaders among them,—no doubt it will take time to convince the rank and file. That distinguished Free Church divine, Professor H. T. Andrews, for instance, in an article in the *Contemporary Review* of April last on "The Catholic Ideal," acknowledges that, to use his own words, "the *disjecta membra* of which modern Christendom consists do not afford Christ an adequate organ with which to work upon the world"; and he adds, "From the sixteenth to the nineteenth century the Churches in England were for the most part engaged in formulating division; to-day for the most part they are trying to find the formula for unity. The centripetal forces are at last beginning to conquer the centrifugal."

At the same time, the best and most thoughtful High Churchmen—again the leaders if not the rank and file—are perceiving that if the Episcopate is to be included in any scheme of Reunion, no particular view of its origin, authority, necessity, is to be required of those who join the United Church. Why then should Evangelical Churchmen stand aloof, contenting themselves with proposals for exchange of pulpits, which is a very small part of the problem, and shaking their heads over the utterances of individual High Churchmen? High Churchmen have a right to their opinions, as we have a right to ours; but why should we hinder the cause of Reunion by seeming to admit that Reunion involves our adoption of their views?

At this point let me refer to the Reports of the Sub-Committee of the United Conference on Faith and Order, of which I was, to my own surprise, and in my absence, appointed a member. These Reports, let me say, although so short, were no hastily drawn papers. They were the fruit of repeated and prolonged discussions. Nor were they a despairing effort to combine, somehow or other, hope-

lessly divided opinions. In point of fact, there was from the first a remarkable agreement as to what would have to be said, but the greatest care and thought as to the exact language to be employed. The desire of all, throughout, was, if I may use a notable expression, uttered, not in the Conference or the Sub-Committee, but in India a few years ago by the present Bishop of Bombay, "Not compromise for the sake of peace, but comprehension for the sake of truth." The first Report, issued two years ago, included a "Statement of Agreement on Matters of Faith," a "Statement of Agreement on Matters of Order," and a "Statement of Differences on Matters of Order requiring further Study and Discussion." With the first Statement we are not directly concerned to-day. The second Statement expressed a "common conviction" (1) that it was "the purpose of our Lord that believers in Him should be, as in the beginning they were, one Visible Society," (2) that He ordained two Sacraments "as not only declaratory symbols but also effective channels of His grace and gifts," (3) that He conferred on the Church "a Ministry of manifold gifts and functions." The third Statement mentioned the still existing differences touching (1) "the nature of the Visible Society," (2) the conditions of validity of the Sacraments, (3) the source of ministerial authority. (You will understand that I have condensed these statements into the fewest words.) This Report was "generally approved" by the United Conference as a whole, a body three times larger than the Sub-Committee and comprising men of the most diverse views, say from Mr. Athelstan Riley to Dr. Hodgkin the Quaker. But it was published with only the signatures of the ten members of the Sub-Committee, to avoid the necessity of the whole Conference going through it word by word. The Sub-Committee (reinforced by four more members) was then requested to resume its work and discuss the differences.

The result of the further discussions is the Second Report, which has been supposed to be confined to the question of the Episcopate, but which really touches the whole problem of Reunion. Here again I am bound to testify that from the first there was scarcely any doubt expressed that, as a simple matter of fact, the Episcopate was a *sine quâ non* if an United Church was to be projected; and, on the other hand, that the Episcopate must be what for brevity I may call of a primitive and not a medieval character. You must not indulge in imaginary pictures of a High Church bishop

browbeating puzzled Nonconformists, or of valiant Free Churchmen dragging from reluctant bishops admissions that Nonconformity has some small modicum of good in it. One who like myself sat through many long days of most kindly and generous conversation from both sides can only smile at such absurd ideas. Most truly does the Report use these words: "What we desire is not grudging concession"—that is on either side,—“but a willing acceptance, for the common enrichment of the united Church, of the wealth distinctive of each body, Episcopal and Non-Episcopal.” No Christian community is to “disown its past.” All should “maintain the continuity of their witness and influence as heirs and trustees of types of Christian thought, life, and order, not only of value to themselves, but of value to the Church as a whole.” Each should “bring its own distinctive contribution, not only to the common life of the Church, but also to its methods of organization,” so that “all that is true in the experience and testimony of the uniting Communion would be conserved to the Church.” For instance, “the legitimate freedom of prophetic ministry should be carefully preserved”; and “many customs and institutions” “developed in separate communities” would be “preserved within the larger unity of which they have come to form a part.” While the Church’s “visible unity” “could only be fully realized through community of worship, faith, and order, including common participation in the Lord’s Supper,” this would be “quite compatible with a rich diversity in life and worship.” I confess frankly that when I read over again all these noble words, I am pained at the cold criticism with which some Evangelicals have received them.

Then, as regards the Episcopate itself, one “necessary condition” is that it shall “re-assume a constitutional form,” as regards the methods both of election and of government, according to “primitive ideal and practice”; and another is “that acceptance of the fact of Episcopacy” is to be asked for, and “not any theory as to its character.” Naturally the Report does not go into details. Even the United Conference itself has no authority to settle anything. Its task is purely preparatory, and, to use the Sub-Committee’s word, “exploratory”; to find where there is agreement or disagreement, and help to create an atmosphere of goodwill. Here, in an assembly of Evangelical Churchmen, one may freely admit that there would be dangers in any proposed changes. That is

inevitable. But dangers should not frighten us from courageous action if the action is right. It may fairly be said, for example, that under a system of election we should not get nine or ten Evangelical Diocesan Bishops in England as we have now. On the other hand, we have no security now that this happy state of things will continue; while in an United Church, containing the thousands of fine laymen now separated from us, the voting would be very different from what it would be in our present circumstances. But we ought not to be unduly influenced by party considerations; and I for one would gladly pay a high price for real Reunion. On one point I earnestly deprecate premature discussion—the ordination and status of the ministers of different Churches. Let us pray and strive to foster a healing atmosphere of hope and goodwill; and whenever the great day seems to be approaching—if ever it does—there will be such an overwhelming enthusiasm at the prospect of a really United Church, such an outburst of holy sympathy, such an overpowering sense of Divine guidance and favour, that all sides will be keen to emulate each other in the generosity of their concessions. I believe that a reasonable solution of the ordination question can be found. I could imagine more than one myself. But I decline to submit them now to the cold criticism of partisans. No, we must have the atmosphere first, and then the Lord Himself will show us the way. Personally I should rejoice to see the godly, learned, and able Free Church leaders, with whom I have sat in frank brotherly Christian converse for so many long days, consecrated themselves *per saltum* to be Bishops of the United Church.

I have treated this subject mainly in its bearing on our Home Church. I cannot forget the sight that meets my eyes continually in my own town of Bournemouth. In its central square I can stand at a certain point and count five spires forming almost a circle round me, all pointing heavenward, but representing five Christian communions, each connected with other congregations in the same town, and with hundreds of other congregations all over the country; yet all five entirely independent of each other. They are Anglican, Roman, Presbyterian, Congregationalist, Methodist. Several other equally separate bodies would be met within half a mile, but it is the five spires that impress me. I bethink myself of the city of Corinth. I read the indignant words in which St. Paul rebuked the Church parties there. I remember that they were parties within

the one Church ; and I wonder what he would have said if they had set up rival synagogues around the principal square of the city. I cast no blame on any one for the position at Bournemouth ; but I ask if it is not worth effort and sacrifice to remedy.

There is one serious obstacle to Home Reunion which I dare not pass over. That is Establishment. On the face of it, that seems an obstacle quite insuperable. We may depend upon it that our Nonconformist brethren take for granted that the United Church would not be under Parliamentary control. We see the difficulty of the question in Scotland, where the two great Presbyterian Churches, absolutely identical in both Faith and Order, have now for some years been trying to find a compromise between the strong views and feelings of both sides on that great question with a view to reunion. If they succeed, as I hope they will, they may give us also the clue to the solution. I hope also that the Free Churches in England may presently unite together as one great Church on Mr. Shakespeare's plan. They seem rapidly ripening for it ; and I believe such an union would help and not hinder their reunion with us.

But after all, the question is not one of Home Reunion only. We have the world of nations to think of. It is in the mission field that the problem is most urgent. What was it that led to the Kikuyu scheme ? Simply the divisions of Christendom. The Church in Uganda itself had no part in it, and no need for it, because in Uganda there is, apart from the Roman Mission, only one Church, and, being one, it is a powerful barrier against advancing Mohammedanism. But in British East Africa there are eight or ten independent Missions, all relatively weak as against Islam because working separately. They have their spiritual fellowship, but that is not enough. The true remedy would be one Church. But the Missions represent our home divisions, and have no authority to found an united Church. So they, at least some of them, drew up the Kikuyu scheme as a partial remedy, just as Cheltenham last year aimed at a partial remedy in its " Findings." But Kikuyu did better than Cheltenham, for it did not profess that its scheme was the goal. It knew that the true goal was one Church for British East Africa, and Bishops Peel and Willis expressly avowed their loyalty in any case to the Lambeth Quadrilateral with its Historic Episcopate. Some Evangelicals at home have made Kikuyu a battle-cry without seeing

what Kikuyu really stood for, and thereby have much embittered the controversy. Not so that brilliant Scotsman, Dr. Norman Maclean, who was himself present at the Kikuyu Conference, and had also visited Uganda. In his fascinating book, *Africa in Transformation*, he regards the C.M.S. system of Church Councils as virtually Presbyterian, and declares that part of the secret of success in Uganda is the combination of that system with Episcopacy. "A Church," he says, "that has the democratic power which Presbyterianism can give, and has also the initiative and unity which the Historic Episcopate gives, is the ideal Church for Africa." I might say much about India and China and Japan, but I must refrain. But oh! for a truce to our minor controversies, and for a broad and generous outlook over the whole wide world!

Yes, broad and generous, whether in the Home or the Foreign field. There must be no Act of Uniformity. We must learn to recognize the indisputable fact that it has not pleased God to make us all alike. A real Church for us all must be very inclusive and very elastic. It must be wider, and not narrower, than the Church of England is to-day. This is an absolute essential. We should have to tolerate extempore prayer in our public services wherever it was desired. Dr. Scott Lidgett would continue his Methodist class-meetings; Dr. Meyer's conscience about Infant Baptism would have to be respected; Dr. Horton would not be compelled to wear a surplice. But then, bear in mind, Dr. Horton would refuse to forbid High Churchmen to wear what vestments they like, on the ground that all distinctive robes in church are equally needless and equally innocent. Yes, the price of our welcomed union with our Nonconformist brethren would be the toleration of many High Church usages which we dislike. Even in doctrine there would be large recognition of the diversities of the human mind. I assume loyalty to the great facts of Christianity as distinct from theories about them. I assume a common acceptance of the Incarnation, the Atonement, the Resurrection, the Mediation, of the co-equal Son of God,—of the Gift of the Holy Ghost as the Divine Agent in Conversion, Regeneration, Sanctification,—of the supreme authority of Holy Scripture. But that would leave plenty of room for differences and for controversies. For instance, most Nonconformists take more modern views on the Bible than most Evangelical Churchmen. And on the Anglican side, Evangelicals and High Churchmen and Broad

Churchmen would still maintain their own respective views ; while each section would acknowledge the right of the others to a place in the Church Catholic. Perfect union cannot be looked for in this dispensation, any more than any other kind of perfection. But, at least, one Visible Catholic Church would with unequalled force invite the world to believe in the Divine Mission of our Lord Jesus Christ ; and that is what He prayed for.

Perhaps I may be reminded that I have left out of view more than half Christendom. Yes, I have, in order to be practical. But all Christendom should be at the back of our minds. If ever the Roman Church could be won to indispensable reform, it would be by the influence of a great united Protestant Church more truly Catholic than itself. It is, I am sure, a mistake to suppose that Protestant Reunion would hinder the larger Reunion of Christendom. On the contrary, it is the only means of obtaining such a consummation.

It may be that our Blessed Lord's early Return may render all these plans and aspirations out of date. It may be that the supreme consummation is nearer than we think. For my own part, I have learned from Professor Hogg, of Madras, what Dr. Campbell Morgan at a recent Advent Testimony meeting beautifully set forth, that "Divine determinations have nothing to do with human dates" ; that "God is long-suffering, and He waits, not for a fixed date, but for a fulfilled purpose" ; that the great Day might have been at any time in the history of the Church if the Church had fulfilled its commission ; that the Lord's appeal, "What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch," had a real message to every generation. Therefore, it may now be very near. But this in no way affects our duty to this dispensation, so long as the dispensation lasts. I myself shall probably see no further step. An octogenarian can count upon no earthly future. And if I could only see my Evangelical brethren casting aside old prejudices and joining heart and soul in the Reunion Movement, I could now sing a thankful *Nunc Dimittis*.

