The Relations between the English and Foreign Reformers.

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IN view of a recent public Episcopal pronouncement that the Anglican communion would certainly be rent in twain on the day on which any non-Episcopally ordained minister was formally allowed within its communion to celebrate the Eucharist, it may not be altogether inopportune to remind ourselves of the relations which existed between the English and foreign Reformers at the time of the Reformation, and more especially between the English and Swiss divines during Elizabeth's reign.

The English Reformers in the reign of Henry VIII. had been mainly influenced by the views of the German Lutherans, and the Thirteen Articles of 1538 were in consequence based largely on the Augsburg Confession of Faith. Under Edward VI., however, the influence of the "Reformed" divines soon predominated. Cranmer had adopted what was virtually a "Calvinistic" view of the Eucharist, and hospitably received the eminent continental refugees of "Reformed" opinions, who sought shelter in England. He had, Strype tells us, "a great and cordial intimacy and friendship for Peter Martyr," and highly valued the criticisms which he and Bucer had passed on the First Prayer Book, many of which contributed to remove the suspicion of "Lutheranism" from the Second Book of 1552. Cranmer's great aim, which he pursued throughout Edward's reign, was to obtain "one common confession and harmony of faith and doctrine," which would unite all the Protestant Churches, and remove any differences on the doctrine of the sacraments or on the government of the Church which existed amongst them. For this purpose he made repeated attempts to secure the presence in England of Melancthon, Calvin, and the leading foreign Reformers, to join in a general synod of all

Protestant divines. Insuperable difficulties, however, prevented the fulfilment of this scheme, although Calvin professed himself ready "to pass over ten seas if necessary" to bring about such a union.[1]

The intolerant attitude displayed by the Lutherans in their unfriendly reception of the English exiles from the Marian persecution led most of the latter to avail themselves of the generous hospitality offered by the Swiss Reformers at Basle, Zurich, and Geneva. Thus the fellowship and intercourse which these English refugees enjoyed during their time of exile had probably done far more towards promoting a real and essential harmony of faith and doctrine between them and their "Reformed" brethren on the Continent than would have been accomplished by a general synod which Cranmer was so anxious to secure.

A close friendship with the Swiss divines was maintained almost throughout Elizabeth's reign, and a warm affection for all the foreign reformed Churches existed amongst English Churchmen till long after the Restoration.

Although Episcopacy had been retained in the Church of England at the Reformation, there is little doubt that practically all the early Elizabethan prelates regarded it rather as a matter of practical expediency and good order than as inherently necessary for a valid ministry. Cranmer had admitted in 1540 "that in the beginning of Christ's religion Bishops and priests were no two things but both one office,"[2] and Bishop Jewel, in replying to Harding in the "Defence" of his "Apology," uses the same argument. "It was enough," as Keble admits, for these Elizabethan Bishops "to show that the government by Archbishops and Bishops is ancient and allowable; they never venture to urge its exclusive claim,"[3] and there is abundant evidence to show that the retention of Episcopacy in no way interfered with their full communion with other Reformed

[1] *Cf.* Strype, "Life of Cranmer," vol. ii., p. 159 (1853).
[2] Burnet, "History of the Reformation," vol. ii., pp. 281–286, *Records*, No. xxi. (1825).
[3] Keble's "Preface to Hooker's Works," p. lix.

Churches which lacked this form of government. It was regarded in the same light as "divers ceremonies" as entirely a non-essential matter, the vitally important question being the unity of doctrine which they all held in common. Thus Bishop Jewel wrote to Martyr in 1562: "As to matters of doctrine, we have pared everything away to the very quick, and do not differ from your doctrine by a nail's breadth,"[1] and Martyr, in his reply, congratulated Jewel on the production of his famous "Apology," saying "that it had not only in all points and respects satisfied him, but had appeared to Bullinger, Gualter, and Wolfius so wise, admirable and eloquent, that they think nothing in these days hath been set forth more perfectly."[2]

Bishop Horn also informed Bullinger that "we have throughout England the same ecclesiastical doctrine as yourselves,"[3] while the Bishops, in support of their petition to Elizabeth for the rejection of altars, refer to the eminent foreign "Reformed" divines as "the greatest learned men in the world."[4]

Archbishop Parker, who had never been in exile on the Continent and was considered to be very moderate in his reforming views, seriously entertained Calvin's proposal for a general assembly of Protestant divines, a project which was, however, interrupted by the death of Calvin. He referred to Calvin as an "orthodox clergyman," and much wished that either he or Martyr could have been procured to attend the "Colloquy of Poissy" in 1561 to defend the cause of the French Reformers against the Romanists.[5]

It is well also to remember that, although the "Reformed" divines had forsaken Episcopal government for their Churches, both Calvin and Beza, in writing to Cranmer, expressly acknowledged its lawfulness,[6] while the Swiss divines opposed the English Puritans who were anxious to abolish the Episcopal order in Elizabeth's reign. Gualter, writing to Bishop Cox in

[1] Zurich Letters, i. 100. [2] *Ibid.*, i. 339. [3] *Ibid.*, i. 135.
[4] Strype's "Annals," vol. i., p. 237 (1824).
[5] Parker Corresp., pp. 112, 147. [6] *Cf.* Cosin's Works, vol. iv., p. 409.

1573, says: "I wonder that they entertain such an aversion to the name of Bishops, which they cannot but know was in use in the time of the Apostles; and always, too, retained in the Churches in after-times: we know, too, that Archbishops existed of old, whom they called by another name, *patriarchs*."[1]

So close was the doctrinal agreement between the English and Swiss divines that Calvin's "Institutes" were regarded as the orthodox textbooks at both Universities in Elizabeth's reign, while Bullinger's "Decades" were officially authorized by Convocation to be studied by every beneficed clergyman under the degree of Master of Arts.[2]

Even Hooker, who so successfully assailed Calvin's system of Church *discipline*, was a moderate Calvinist in *doctrine*. He carefully studied Calvin's "Institutes," and declared him to be "incomparably the wisest man that ever the French Church did enjoy."[3] It is also evident that in his treatment of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, Hooker very closely followed Calvin's sentiments. "If any ask me," said Calvin, "concerning the mode (of Christ's presence), I am not ashamed to confess the mystery to be more sublime than my intellect can grasp or than words can tell. . . . In His sacred feast He bids me, under symbols of bread and wine, to take His body and blood, to eat and to drink; I doubt not but that He really offers and that I receive."[4] Hooker practically re-echoes this confession when he says: "Let it, therefore, be sufficient for me, presenting myself at the Lord's table, to know what there I receive from Him without searching or inquiring of the manner how Christ performs His promise. . . . What these elements are in themselves it skilleth not, it is enough that to me, which take them they are the body and blood of Christ."[5]

In 1566 the Latter Helvetic Confession of Faith was drawn up, and Bishop Grindal, writing to Bullinger in the same year, informed him that "the pure doctrine of the Gospel remains in

[1] Zurich Letters, ii. 228.
[2] "Bullinger's Decades," V., xxix.
[3] Preface, "Eccles. Pol.," II. 1.
[4] *Cf.* Cosin's Works, iv., p. 168.
[5] "Eccles. Pol.," V., lxvii., 12.

all its integrity and freedom, in which we most fully agree with your Churches, and with the Confession you have lately set forth."[1]

That this boast of complete accord in doctrine did not rest solely on the private opinions of individual Bishops or clergy was proved in 1607, when Rogers, a chaplain of Archbishop Bancroft's, published his exposition on the Thirty-Nine Articles, which he entitled "The Catholic Doctrine of the Church of England," proving "the said Articles, analyzed into propositions, to be agreeable both to the written word of God, and to the extant Confessions of all the neighbour Churches Christianly reformed." His purpose, as he informed Bancroft, was that "all men may again see that we are still at unity both among ourselves at home, and with the neighbour Churches abroad in all matters of chiefest importance and fundamental points of religion, though our adversaries the Papists would fain beat the contrary into the common people's heads."[2]

In this striking treatise the teaching of each Article is expounded, and shown to agree with similar statements drawn from the "Harmony of the Confessions of Faith of all the Reformed Churches," which had been compiled in 1581, and in which the teaching of the Church of England had been represented by Jewel's "Apology." That this thorough harmony was also fully recognized by the foreign Reformers is evident from Peter du Moulin's statement made about the same time, when, in defending the French Reformed Confession of Faith, he says: "Our adversaries, under pretence that the Church of England hath another form of discipline than ours is, charge us that our religion is diverse; but experience confuteth this accusation, for we assemble with the English in their churches; we participate together in the holy supper of our Lord; the doctrine of their Confession is wholly agreeable to ours."[3] In regard to the agreement in sacramental teaching between the foreign Reformed

[1] Zurich Letters, i. 169.
[2] Rogers, "Thirty-Nine Articles," p. 24 (Parker Society).
[3] Bingham's Works, vol. viii. 32 (1829).

Churches and the Anglican Church, a similar task was undertaken later on in the century by Bishop Cosin, in his "History of Transubstantiation," published in 1675. In this work Cosin gave numerous extracts from the Confessions of the foreign Reformed Churches, expressly, as he says, to show "how injuriously Protestant divines are calumniated by others unacquainted with their opinions, as though by these words *spiritually* and *sacramentally* they did not acknowledge a true and well-understood real presence and communication of the body and blood of Christ in the blessed sacrament, whereas, on the contrary, they do professedly own it in terms as express as any can be used."[1]

With such a thorough accord in doctrine between the English and foreign Reformers, it is not at all surprising that the fullest inter-communion existed amongst their clergy. Several of the English clergy had been ordained according to the Presbyterian form of the foreign churches during their exile on the Continent, and were allowed on their return to exercise their ministry in the Church of England without any question of further ordination. We have also the record of a licence granted by Archbishop Grindal to a divine who had received Presbyterian ordination from the Reformed Church of Scotland, in which the Archbishop declared that "he had been ordained to sacred Orders and the holy ministry by the imposition of hands according to the laudable form and rite of the Church of Scotland, and since the congregation of the county of Lothian is conformable to the orthodox faith and sincere religion now received in this realm of England, we, therefore, approving and ratifying the form of your ordination and preferment, grant you a licence and faculty that in such Orders by you taken, you may and have power to celebrate the divine offices, to minister the Sacraments, etc., throughout the whole province of Canterbury."[2]

As a further illustration of the close unity that existed

[1] Cosin's Works, iv., 168, 169.
[2] Strype's "Life of Grindal," bk. ii., p. 402 (1821).

between the two Churches north and south of the Tweed, we find that soon after the accession of James I., a Royal Proclamation was issued stating that "the doctrine of the Church of England was agreeable to God's Word, and the very same which both his highness and the whole Church and kingdom of Scotland, yea, and the primitive Church professed."[1]

In 1572, an Act of Parliament had ratified the orders of the foreign Reformed Churches by requiring all clergy ordained by any other form "of institution, consecration, or ordering" than that then in use, simply to subscribe the Articles of Religion before entering on their ministry in the Church of England."[2]

It is an undisputed fact, that for the first hundred years after the Reformation, ministers who had been ordained in the foreign Reformed Churches were allowed to join in communion, and undertake a cure of souls in the Church of England, on the simple profession of their public consent to the Established religion. Bishop Cosin, in contrasting the treatment meted out to English Churchmen by Roman Catholics and by the Reformed Churches abroad, states that, whereas the former "regard us as heretics, and would give us only the burial of a dog," the Reformed Churches "acknowledge us to be true Catholics, most willingly receive us into their churches, and frequently repair to ours, joining with us in both prayers and sacraments," and freely "allow us to bury our dead in their churchyards." "In all which regards," he concludes, "we ought no less to acknowledge them, and to make no schism between our churches and theirs, however we approve not some defects that may be seen among them."[3]

When we remember that, although the foreign Reformers did not condemn Episcopacy as unlawful, they yet deliberately preferred to return to a Presbyterian form of polity, which they considered more in accordance with primitive and divine order,[4]

[1] Rogers, *u. s.*, p. 22. [2] 13 Eliz., cap. 12. [3] Works, iv., 337, 338.
[4] "Certainly in the beginning the Bishops or Elders did with a common consent and labour govern the Church; no man lifted himself above another. . . . Now therefore no man can forbid by any right that we may return to

there is an irreconcilable divergence of opinion between a twentieth-century Bishop who declares that the Church will be rent in twain when a non-Episcopally ordained minister is allowed to exercise his ministry amongst us, and a seventeenth-century Bishop who affirms that a schism would be caused by refusing to allow him to do so.

There is, moreover, no good ground for supposing that the rule laid down for the first time in 1662, concerning the necessity of Episcopal ordination for performing ministerial acts in the Church of England, was in any way intended to strike a blow at the cordial relationship which had existed with the Reformed Churches abroad, or to reflect upon the validity of their ministry. Such a view is not only at variance with the express professions of many of the Caroline divines, but was also indignantly repudiated in the next century both by Archbishop Sharp and Archbishop Wake.[1] In this connection it is interesting to notice that a clause was inserted in the Act of Uniformity (1662) specially exempting "foreigners or aliens of the foreign Reformed Churches" from the heavy penalty inflicted on those presuming to administer the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper who had not received Episcopal ordination.[2]

There is every reason to show that the enforcement of exclusive Episcopal ordination in 1662 was simply designed at a moment of triumph, largely in a spirit of revenge and retaliation, in order to exclude from their benefices the Presbyterians and "sectaries," who had been the immediate cause of the overthrow of the Church during the Civil Wars and the grievous sufferings of her clergy during the Commonwealth. Neither was it surprising that English Churchmen should entertain no very friendly feelings towards Scotch Presbyterians, who regarded "prelacy" as absolutely sinful, and who, by their alliance with the English Puritans, had brought about the temporary

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the old appointment of God, and rather receive that than the custom devised by men."—"Latter Confession of Helvetia" in "The Harmony of Protestant Confessions of Faith." Hall, pp. 249, 250. (1842.)

[1] *Cf.* Dimock, "Christian Unity," p. 42.

[2] Gee and Hardy, "Documents of English Church History," p. 610.

destruction of both Church and Crown; while any friendly accommodation with the English Nonconformists was practically precluded by a heated party spirit of prejudice and suspicion on the one hand, and bitterness and recrimination on the other.

It is impossible seriously to maintain that the hostile and persecuting spirit displayed towards the English separatists of the seventeenth century can afford any precedent for the attitude English Churchmen should adopt towards their descendants to-day. In that age the idea of toleration was practically unknown; and all parties, with the possible exception of the new sect of Independents, considered that those who wilfully departed from the established religion not only destroyed the unity of the Church, but also seriously endangered the peace of the kingdom. Nonconformity was in most minds but another name for sedition. The Caroline divines also, from their point of view, regarded the Dissenters as wantonly creating a schism in the Church by their own over-conscientious scruples in refusing to conform to prescribed rites and ceremonies, which they themselves admitted in no way affected fundamental matters of doctrine. But wherever the chief blame for the separation lay, it is surely not necessary that the Church to-day should continue to suffer for the sins and mistakes of a former generation.

We are now confronted in the home Church with several large organized bodies of Christians who agree in all essential points with the authorized doctrine of the National Church, but who lack, if not a regular, at least an Episcopal, form of government. What, in view of the principles and practice adopted by the Reformers towards the other reformed non-Episcopal Churches with which they were brought in contact, should be our attitude towards them?

Although the Church in the present day is not bound to follow the precedents created in the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries, we have to remember that the peculiar character and position of the Anglican Church was given to it by the Reformers, who drew up its liturgy and formularies of faith; and, as Rogers stated in the dedicatory preface to Archbishop Bancroft of his

book on the Articles, as long as the Articles remain unaltered, the teaching of the Church of England remains the same as at the Reformation. Thus, while there is nothing at present in the official teaching of our Church which condemns the ministry of other non-Episcopal bodies, there can be no warrant for exhibiting a spirit so absolutely opposed to the attitude and teaching of the Reformers by an unqualified denunciation of any real communion with them.

Surely the time has come for English Churchmen seriously to consider whether the custom and practice which prevailed for a century after the Reformation was not the "more excellent way," and to ask themselves how long a rule prescribed in a time of passion and prejudice is to be allowed to bar the way, if not to a final union, at least to a fuller and more real communion with our non-Episcopal brethren.