

The Church Guardian

— : EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR : —

L. H. DAVIDSON, Q.C., D.C.L., MONTREAL

Address Correspondence and Communications to the
Editor, P. O. Box 504, Montreal. Exchanges to
P. O. Box 2186. For Business Announcements See page 15.

CALENDAR FOR JANUARY.

- JAN'Y 1—Circumcision of Our Lord.
" 6—Epiphany of Our Lord. Athan, Cr.
2nd Sunday after Christmas.
" 13—1st Sunday after the Epiphany.
" 20—2nd Sunday after The Epiphany.
" 25—Conversion of St. Paul.
" 27—3rd Sunday after the Epiphany.

WHY WE HAVE BISHOPS.

(Address delivered by Silas McBee at a public mass meeting in Washington during the 9th Annual Convention of the Brotherhood of St. Andrews.)

"The Kingdom of Christ, not being a kingdom of this world, is not limited by the restrictions which fetter other societies, political or religious. It is in the fullest sense free, comprehensive, universal. It displays this character, not only in the acceptance of all comers who seek admission, irrespective of race, or caste, or sex, but also in the instruction and treatment of those who are already its members. . . . Each individual member holds personal communion with the Divine Head. To Him immediately he is responsible, and from Him directly he obtains pardon and draws strength. It is most important that we should keep this ideal definitely in view, and I have therefore stated it as broadly as possible. Yet the broad statement, if allowed to stand alone, would suggest a false impression, or at least would convey only a half truth. It must be evident that no society of men could hold together without officers, without rulers, without institutions of any kind; and the Church of Christ is not exempt from this universal law. The conception, in short, is strictly ideal, which we must ever hold before our eyes, which should inspire and interpret ecclesiastical polity, but which, nevertheless, cannot supersede the necessary wants of human society, and, if crudely and hastily applied, will lead only to signal failure. As appointed days and set places are indispensable to her efficiency, so also the Church could not fulfil the purposes for which she exists without rulers and teachers, without a ministry or reconciliation, in short, without an order of men who may in some sense be designated a priesthood."

Let me place in the forefront of what I shall say to you this afternoon these words from "The Dissertation upon the Christian Ministry," by Bishop Lightfoot, whose profound learning commands confidence and respect far beyond the borders of the Anglican Communion. And while under the spell of his resistless logic, allow me to interpret this priesthood, this Christian ministry, by other quotations from his "Dissertation on the Apostolic Age."

"The priest may be defined as one who represents God to man and man to God. It is, moreover, indispensable that he should be called by God, for no man 'taketh this honor to himself.' The Christian ministry satisfies both these conditions. Of the fulfilment of the latter the only evidence within our cognizance is the fact

that the ministry is called according to a divinely appointed order. If the preceding investigation be substantially correct, the threefold ministry can be traced to apostolic direction, and short of an express statement we can possess no better assurance of a Divine appointment, or, at least, a Divine sanction. If the facts do not allow us to unchurch other Christian communities differently organized, they may, at least, justify our jealous adhesion to a polity derived from this source. . . . The evidence for the early and wide extension of Episcopacy throughout proconsular Asia, the scene of St. John's latest labors, may be considered irrefragable. . . . It has been seen that the institution of an Episcopate must be placed as far back as the closing years of the first century, and that it cannot, without violence to historical testimony, be dissociated from the name of St. John. . . . 'One body,' as well as 'one spirit, this is the apostolic rule. No natural interpretation can be put on those words which does not recognize the obligation of external, corporate union. Circumstances may prevent the realization of the Apostle's conception, but the ideal must be ever present to our aspirations and our prayers. . . . When I speak of her position I refer alike to polity and to doctrine. In both respects the negative, as well as the positive, bearing of her position has to be considered. She has retained the form of Church government inherited from the Apostolic times, while she has shaken off a yoke which even in mediæval times our fathers found too heavy to bear, and which subsequent developments have rendered tenfold more oppressive. She has remained steadfast in the faith of Nicæa, but she has never compromised herself by any declaration which may entangle her in the meshes of science. . . . The doctrinal inheritance of the past is hers; and the scientific hopes of the future are hers. She is intermediate, and she may become mediatorial when the opportunity occurs. It was this twofold inheritance of doctrine and polity which I had in view when I spoke of the essentials which could in no circumstance be abandoned. Beyond this, it seems to me, that large concessions could be made. . . . But while we 'lengthen our cords' we must 'strengthen our stakes' likewise. Indeed, this strengthening of our stakes will alone enable us to lengthen our cords with safety when the storms are howling around us. We cannot afford to sacrifice any portion of the faith once delivered to the saints; we cannot surrender for any immediate advantages the threefold ministry which we have inherited from apostolic times, and which is the historic backbone of the Church."

Bishop Lightfoot in the above words says plainly, we have Bishops because the Christian Church has known no other system of government as historic, as existing from the beginning. In reverent response to those words of God in the olden time, "Oh that my people would consider," let us, as in His presence, face the facts of history and consider them as bearing on the principles essential to the unity of Christendom.

We may not enter the domain of mere partisan debate. We dare not pass judgment upon those whose convictions while differing from our own are as sincere and abiding as our own. We shall not presume to question the presence of the Spirit of God in the ministry and sacraments of non-episcopal bodies, when on all sides we see the manifold fruits of the Spirit. We shall not discuss the theory of Episcopacy, attractive and convincing though it be, from that standpoint. We shall not even discuss the intrinsic worth of the Historic Episcopate as a system of government, though we believe it can be proved to have been the bulwark of defense for individual liberty through the ages as against tyranny on the one side and anarchy on the other. Passing by all these interesting

phases of the Historic Episcopate, let us confine ourselves to this one question: Do the facts of history justify the claim made by the Bishops of the Anglican Communion in their appeal to Christendom for unity, when with the Scriptures, the Creeds and the Sacraments they place the Historic Episcopate as one of the essentials to such unity? Not presuming to speak from God's standpoint, but speaking from man's point of view, fact precedes theory, precedes dogma. Man existed before any theory of his existence was formed. The Church of God of the old dispensation existed a thousand years before the Canon of the Old Testament was completed. And so the Incarnation was a fact before there was any theory of the Incarnation. The Crucifixion was a fact before there was any theory of the Crucifixion, and so, too, with the Resurrection. So the Christian Church with her ministry was a fact long before any theory existed as to the Church or her ministry. It existed many years before a line of the New Testament was written. It existed at least three hundred years before the Canon of the New Testament was completed.

All Christendom practically accepts the early Church as a sufficient witness to establish the authenticity of the Scriptures, the validity of the two Sacraments as generally necessary to salvation and differentiated from the many pious customs of early days, the Creeds, the keeping the First Day instead of the Seventh, and the practice of infant Baptism. Why, then, discredit the witness as to the Historic Episcopate when the testimony as to the fact of episcopal government is just as clear and rests upon as sure foundations as the testimony to any of the above facts. This testimony continues unbroken and practically universal for fifteen centuries, and in the nineteenth century an overwhelming majority of Christendom continues the same testimony. The Schaff Heresog Encyclopædia gives 81 per cent. of Christendom as Episcopal. Empanel the jury and examine the centuries as to the facts. Fifteen centuries give one voice: The history of Christianity is the history of Episcopacy, and the history of Episcopacy is the history of Christianity. They are one and inseparable. Examine the nineteenth century, and of 477,000,000 Christians in the world, nearly 400,000,000 testify to the same facts brought out by the first fifteen centuries. As a lawyer, were I to present such a case on such testimony to a jury, the verdict would be rendered without leaving the jury-box.

While discussing statistics, go with me to Whitaker's English Almanac, and see what the Anglican Bishops, who make this appeal for unity, represent. Religious statistics of the English speaking peoples of the world show:

Episcopalians.....	28,750,000
Methodists of all descriptions	18,500,000
Roman Catholics.....	15,300,000
Presbyterians of all descriptions.....	12,000,000
Baptists of all descriptions	9,200,000
Congregationalists.....	6,100,000
Free thinkers of various kinds.....	5,000,000
Unitarians of various kinds.....	2,500,000
Minor Religious Sects.....	5,000,000
Lutheran, German or Dutch.....	2,500,000
Of no particular religion.....	16,000,000

This appeal comes therefore from the largest body of English-speaking Christians, ten millions larger than any other. Then remember that the Anglican Communion is a unit. The Methodists, the Presbyterians, the Baptists are divided into hundreds of subdivisions. The percentage of membership is decreasing, while the number of denominations is increasing. Is it not calm reason which says these facts point to Episcopacy as a conserving, constructing, unifying system, while non-Episcopacy seems to be disintegrating, disorganizing, destructive? Take a hurried review. The Christian world has never been united except under the Historic