

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL LEAFLETS.

THERE was but one regrettable incident at the recent diocesan Synod; we refer, of course, to the debate on the Sunday School report. To those who remember some earlier scenes in that august assembly this must be pleasing intelligence. In commenting briefly upon the incident of Thursday afternoon, we shall mention no names, we shall impart no personalities into the discussion, but will simply point the moral of the occurrence. A member of the Synod raised a discussion, which became distinctly volcanic, on the subject of the leaflets. Now, in the first place, such a discussion was totally unnecessary, and even irregular. The report did not in any way touch upon the leaflets, but only upon the lessons; and, although the leaflets are drawn up by a committee of the Synod, that body is not responsible for them and is not asked to approve of them. The discussion, therefore, was raised in ignorance, or else with a desire to throw a bone of contention into the meeting.

Evidently both of these elements were present in the minds of the objector. The ignorance was conspicuous in the case of one who protested that the leaflets issued by the committee were of a party colour—the party implied being “High Church.” Nothing could be more ridiculous. In the first place, these leaflets are based upon the publications of the English Sunday School Institute, a society established by Evangelicals, and mainly worked by representatives of that school. The local editor is a respected Evangelical clergyman, the rector of St. Philip’s Church, and these and other gentlemen of the same school (we do not say party) are the committee. All this was presently explained to the gentlemen who entered their protest against the leaflets, and it might have been expected that they would instantly express their regret for having disturbed the meeting, and let the subject drop. Unfortunately, they did not see their way to take any such course; and, but for the firmness of the Bishop, a more serious disturbance might have taken place. We hold that his Lordship was abundantly justified in the course which he took, whether as Bishop or as Chairman of the meeting. It is absurd to speak of autochory or of the suppression of the freedom of debate. There is a great deal too much of this kind of freedom in the Synod. Members speak repeatedly on the same resolution, although they are told that the rule is, that no one is entitled to speak more than twice, and, generally speaking, there is an amount of tolerance given to the vagaries of individual members of the Synod which might, with great advantage, be abridged.

The principal lesson, and the most gratifying one, taught by the incident upon which we have commented, is the moribund condition of party spirit in our communion. It may be dying hard, and in some members it is not willing to die, but it is dying. Its worst representatives have disappeared from the Synod. More moderate men are becoming alive to its folly, its mischief, and its wickedness. Thanks be to God, loyal Anglicans can now look forward to a time, in the near future, when it shall have entirely passed away.

One very curious point should be noted. It was objected by the disturbers of the meeting that teaching which would satisfy all parties in the Church must be colourless. And yet these very people ostentatiously declare their desire to work with other “Protestant” bodies. This must mean that you may join in teaching with people holding

different confessions without merging vital truth, but you cannot do so with those who have signed the same confession with yourselves!

THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

THE valuable article of Professor Dr. Salmon in the *Expositor* continues as below:

The necessary limitations of space forbid me to go into much detail as to the second century evidence. We can go back immediately to the episcopate of Soter, whose name I have just quoted from Irenaeus. A letter from Dionysius of Corinth to the Church of Rome acknowledges a gift of money sent to the Church of Corinth by the Church of Rome through “their blessed bishop Soter.” The chronology of Lipsius assigns to the episcopate of Soter eight or nine years, ending A.D. 174 or 175. The correspondence of this Dionysius makes incidental mention of other contemporary bishops: Palmas in Pontus, Philip and Pinytus in Crete, and of a previous bishop, Publius, at Athens, who had suffered martyrdom, and had succeeded by one Quadratus. Dionysius states that Dionysius the Areopagite had been appointed first of Athens by St. Paul. Of course, I make no other use of this statement than as showing that in the year 170 no doubt was entertained that the institution of episcopacy had come down from apostolic times.

Without dwelling on other second century evidence, I go back at once to the Epistles of Ignatius, the genuineness of which may, since the publication of Bishop Lightfoot’s book, be regarded as fully established. Harnack takes only ground on which there is now any room for contest, in suggesting that the letters may not be quite so early as has been generally thought; for that the universal Church tradition that the martyrdom had taken place in the reign of Trajan may possibly be erroneous, and the actual date had been some ten or even twenty years later. The matter is one which I am not concerned to contend very strenuously. Trajan died A.D. 117. If the date of the Ignatian letters could be pushed down to as late as 130, they would still be of an antiquity to which, in the remains of the early Church, we have little comparable. If I saw evidence to justify it, I should not be sorry to diminish the interval between the martyrdoms of Ignatius and Polycarp. Placing the latter at A.D. 155, if we put the former at 155 we get a duration of forty years, and possibly more, for Polycarp’s episcopate. This is an unusual length, but by no means unprecedented, and we must remember that Polycarp’s life was unusually long. Of the two prelates who were at the head of the Church of Ireland when I was ordained, the one, Primate Beresford, had an episcopate of fifty-seven years; the other, Archbishop Whately, only of thirty-two years, indeed, but if he had lived to be as old as Polycarp was at the time of his death, it would have been one of forty-two. It is certain that Polycarp’s episcopate was a very long one; for, as we know from Irenaeus, the general belief in his

later life was that it had gone back to the times of the Apostles. Eusebius certainly had no doubt that Ignatius suffered in the reign of Trajan, and in the absence of any evidence the other way, the mere possibility that Eusebius may have been mistaken is no sufficient ground for rejecting his authority. And certainly no small proof of the antiquity of the Ignatian letters is afforded by their silence on the question raised by the great Gnostic teachers, whose theories made such a noise in the Church in the first half of the second century.

When the Ignatian letters came into prominence in the modern controversy between episcopacy and presbyterianism, the idea of those who rejected the letters was that they were documents forged in the interests of episcopacy, then a new institution struggling life. I do not think that any intelligent critic will now maintain that opinion as to the object of the letters; on this point Lightfoot (Ignatius, 1377), Hatch (Bampton Lectures p. 30), Harnack (*Expositor* iii. 16), are in full agreement. The object of Ignatius is not to exalt the episcopate at the expense of the presbyterate, or any other form of government, but rather to forbid the making of schisms or the holding of private conventicles. It is taken for granted that episcopacy is the settled form of Church government; and the bishop is mentioned because he is the recognized head of the Church, on the duty of union with which the writer is anxious to insist. If the exaltation of the episcopate had been the writer’s primary object, we should not meet the strange phenomenon that the letter to the Church of Rome makes no mention of its bishop.

I think it is not a just inference from this last fact that the episcopate was less developed at Rome than in these Asiatic Churches, with whose bishops Ignatius had come into personal contact. He himself gives us no reason to imagine that he supposed episcopacy to be a provincial peculiarity of his own part of the world. On the contrary, he assumes it to be the constitution of the Church everywhere, and speaks of “the bishops settled in the furthest parts of the world over.” The explanation which I am disposed to offer of the silence of Ignatius concerning the bishop of Rome is, that in the second century the bishop was not all so prominent a figure, when the Church was looked at from without, as when looked at from within. To illustrate what I mean, any one conversant with the House of Commons, or as it used to be, knows what an important personage the Speaker is in the House, what respect it has been customary to pay him, and with what deference his rulings have been regarded. But outside the House the Speaker possesses no authority, and you might read long accounts of things done by the House of Commons without ever discovering from them that there was such a person. In like manner it appears to me that, however great the influence exercised during the second century by each bishop in his own Church, he was no autocrat, and his action had importance for the outside world only so far as it was adopted by his Church. Lightfoot shows satisfactorily

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