THE BISHOP OF LONDON'S OVERSEAS JURISDICTION.

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It must now be generally known that, apart from his great responsibilities in connection with the metropolis, the Bishop of London has within his jurisdiction the whole of North and Central Europe. Every chaplain officiating within that area does so under a licence from London. Some of the chaplaincies are directly within the gift of the Bishop, while in others he has rights more or less clearly defined. For many years the episcopal functions have been fulfilled by a bishop set aside for that purpose, holding a commission from London. Of recent years a new step was taken: the continental part of London's responsibilities has been entrusted to a suffragan, the Bishop of Fulham, who was consecrated for that work at the request of the Bishop of London. Within the last few months a further and final step has received the approval of the authorities. When the necessary endowment has been raised, there will be created a diocese independent of London, presided over by a diocesan with powers equal to those conferred upon the Bishops of Gibraltar.

This overseas jurisdiction of successive Bishops of London is exactly three hundred years old. It was conferred by an order of the Privy Council, passed on October 1, 1633, placing all chaplains in factories beyond the seas under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of London as their diocesan. The immediate cause of the order was the dissatisfaction felt by Charles I, largely at the instigation of Laud, at irregularities reported from Delft and Hamburgh, where the representatives of the Merchant Adventurers were most unwilling to approximate their Church life and services to that of the home Church. In reality the order was the climax of a long agitation and dispute in which Laud had played the leading part.

Though, by reason of this Order in Council, every English congregation overseas became part of the London diocese, the only vital consideration was the prevailing laxity, from Laud's point of view, of worship and observance prevailing among English congregations in the Netherlands.

For two or three hundred years, the merchant companies had been established in places such as Bruges and Middleburg. In both places churches had been built. Other places, such as Hamburgh and Delft, had received them later. The introduction of English and Scotch troops during and after the reign of Elizabeth produced a new kind of chaplaincy. Regiments in the field or in garrison had their own chaplains. Distinct from the troops and the merchant companies, there were many other English resident

in the towns. Some were political or religious refugees: some were business people: some were students. In 1633, for example, there were four chaplains to regiments, eleven in garrison towns, two connected with the Merchant Adventurers, and six in commercial towns. These last, under certain conditions, were paid by the Netherland States. The garrison and regimental chaplains were paid by the captains, while the Merchant Adventurers paid their own elected chaplains.

While there was no such thing as recognised organised dissent until 1672, there had been since the days of Henry VIII a fairly large section opposed to episcopacy, disliking parts of the liturgy of the Church of England, and favouring freedom of worship and discipline. The merchant class was, apparently, particularly favourable to these "independents." Many of the regiments and garrisons in the Low Countries were Scotch, and consequently also of the Puritan type. Indeed, of the twenty-three chaplains in the Netherlands in 1633, the great majority could be reckoned "independents."

From the first these English chaplains had been attracted by the local reformed Church which was governed after the Presbyterian model by "classes" exercising disciplinary and other powers. Some of the chaplains joined the Dutch classis, membership of which brought a subsidy from the Government. Others formed, on the Dutch model, an English classis exercising similar powers.

It was hardly to be expected that English Churches, modelled on such lines, would pass without protest from individual Churchmen resident in the Netherlands. Again and again protests were made, but without avail until Laud took the matter in hand. It was he who constantly urged King James I to take steps to end what he deemed to be nothing less than a scandal. The bishops were powerless: the Netherlands, as other foreign parts, was outside their jurisdiction. The King had been persuaded in 1622 to allow the chaplains in the Netherlands to govern themselves, to meet in their own classes, and to reform abuses, provided that they did not do anything directly contrary to the practice of the home Church. Hardly had this favour been granted than further protests were forthcoming in such force that the King in 1624 demanded one of two things. The chaplains must accept a moderator nominated by him, or the classes must be dissolved. A moderator sounded to them too much like a bishop. As for dissolution of the classes, that was unthinkable from many considerations. They sent across to plead their case before the King, one John Forbes, chaplain at Delft, who was kept waiting the King's pleasure through some weary months. Rumour said that James offered to create him a bishop if he would go back and rule the chaplains as a bishop of the Church of England. Forbes, in any case, was not to be won in that way.

Meanwhile Laud was making himself active in the business. He was in constant correspondence with ambassadors and others. As early as 1626 he formulated to the Privy Council a scheme for

regulating divine service in English factories and among English troops abroad. He became a repository of stories from the Continent illustrating the looseness of discipline and worship, and was constantly bringing them to the King's ear. One particular correspondent, Lord Carelton, ambassador at the Hague, urged and urged that something should be done to bring these chaplains to conformity. In 1628, Laud succeeded in securing the King's consent to "six articles to be delivered to the synod of English and Scotch ministers in the Netherlands in the name of his Majesty of Great Britain." At the same time Carelton was asked to signify to the Netherland States that the King's desire was that they should not pass any act to prejudice his Majesty's order.

The six articles were briefly as follows:

1. The chaplains must not "meddle" with the liturgy, much less publish any new liturgy or set form of prayers for their congregations.

2. They must by no means exercise the power of ordination but leave both English and Scottish to receive holy orders from their own mother-Churches.

3. They must not bring in any novelties in rites or ceremonies particularly as concerning the actual admission of lawful ministers to their pastoral charge.

4. They must not "meddle" with any point of doctrine but keep themselves to what has been established by the English and Dutch Churches.

5. The King will allow them to retain the powers given by King James—to suppress unqualified preachers, to examine and punish those who give scandal by their vicious lives, and the King asks them to make diligent inquisition after those who write books or pamphlets derogatory to the Church or State of England, and to suppress them.

6. If there is any doubt about these directions, let them go to the King's ambassador or agent: he will obtain necessary directions from his Majesty.

The chaplains concerned lost no time in replying to these articles. They pleaded their right to use whatever they found good in any liturgy provided that it did not offend the Dutch Church and was approved by the classis of which they were members. They did not propose "to leave every man to his own liberty to use what liturgy he pleaseth, seeing thereby as great, if not greater, confusion and disorder should reign amongst us after order established, as was before the erection of our Synod." They very definitely declined to surrender their power to ordain: "with good conscience we cannot omit it, nor leave it wholly to others without being guilty of neglect of the office laid upon us by Christ." Not only so; by surrendering the right "infamy and disgrace shall be brought upon us, your Majesty's subjects, as the only men in these Churches who are unworthy to enjoy the freedom, which other strangers (and, namely the French) do peaceably possess." Should they continue "a synodal body without practice of ordination, they

would be such an ecclesiastical body as is not to be found in any reformed Church in the world."

The King could present directions and articles: he could by no means enforce obedience. He had tried and had failed. Laud would not acknowledge failure. There was simmering in his mind the plan which he ultimately forced through the Privy Council. Among the State Papers of 1630 is one endorsed by Bishop Laud as "Propositions concerning the English Churches in the Netherlands." It enumerates twenty places in the United Provinces where public churches were already established, or were shortly to be allowed, for English congregations. It states that in the public worship in these churches the congregations "served God without any set form of prayer, and administered the Sacraments with conceived forms of their own." This is followed by a statement of advantages which would follow if these congregations were to be placed under ecclesiastical government and adopted the formularies of the Church of England.

The immediate occasion for further representations to the Privy Council was found in the complaints made by Edward Misselden, deputy governor of the English merchants at Delft, to Windebank, Secretary of State. Misselden, anxious to see the King's articles carried into effect, found himself opposed by the majority of the English in Delft. His complaint, printed in one of the Historical Manuscripts Commission's Reports, is typical of many that came across the North Sea:

> "It hath much added to the fame of this worthy fellowship of Merchant Adventurers that besides the well-governing of this great Society, they have ever maintained the ministry of God's word amongst them, that so the young branch of the company consisting of many knights' and gentlemen's sons and others of quality, as well have good education in religion as in matters of merchandise and commerce with foreign nations. . . . Our minister here concurreth not either with the Church of England, or with the Churches under the States Government here, but is wholly for the Presbyterian kind of preaching and government of the Church: and will not preach on any solemn days, as the Nativity and Passion of Christ, the Gunpowder Deliverance, and the like, nor will use any forms of prayer, but do all after his own voluntary conceptions. Whereupon I have taken occasion lately to admonish our preacher and company, but instead of reformation of these miscarriages the minister hath made a faction to plot with our company at Hamburgh to remove me out of my place . . . I have thought it my duty to acquaint His Majesty . . . that some reverend and learned divine may be sent over to catechise these young merchants better to know and acknowledge God and their King."

The answer to that complaint was a threat that in default of reformation the Company's charter would be cancelled. The Company must not entertain any minister who had left the homeland "for nonconformity." It had never been the King's intention "that any company residing in foreign parts should exempt themselves from the government of His Church and State."

In addition to the information about conditions at Delft, there came a scandalous story of lawless proceedings at Hamburgh and elsewhere. Laud saw his opportunity. His earlier proposals were

re-presented to the Privy Council, and found ready acceptance. All factories and regiments overseas were henceforward to conform strictly to the rites and ceremonies of the Church of England and to be under the supervision and jurisdiction of the Bishop of London.

Laud did not survive sufficiently long to see how far the order would prove effective. The Civil War, with its accompanying upheaval in Church as well as in State, introduced a factor which he had not foreseen. It naturally strengthened the position of the independent chaplains. There are existing nonconformist chaplaincies in Holland to-day which date their establishment from those troubled days. On the other hand, the authority of the Bishop of London remained, for all practical purposes, a dead thing for more than two hundred years.

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