

Church Union in South India.

IT is not many years ago since an Oxford don remarked "The mention of the word India is guaranteed to empty the smallest lecture hall in Oxford." India, it used to be said, attracted no more attention among ordinary people in Western lands than if it were part of a distant planet with which we have no vital concern. Not since the tragic days of the great mutiny of 1857 has India been so much in the forefront of the minds and hearts of the people of Great Britain, Europe and America as it is to-day, and everything points to an increase rather than a decrease of such living interest for many days to come. This interest is two-fold—ecclesiastical and political. Commercial and political circles in Great Britain are being moved to the depths by the great human drama now being enacted in India itself, as so many of India's intelligentsia, with a considerable body of popular support, especially in the industrial areas, are claiming for their country what they regard as her rightful place in the sun, and her inalienable right to self-government or political independence, as the case may be. Many groups of men in Great Britain with ecclesiastical interests, Anglicans and Nonconformists, Catholics and Protestants, are stirred as they have not been for many a long day by the problems arising out of plans for Church Union in South India. At bottom, the problem, whether ecclesiastical or political, is one—India's claim to self-determination. At present my concern is with the ecclesiastical problem, and though the bent of my mind is not ecclesiastical, I may be allowed from the less ambitious standpoint of my own experiences and outlook as a Christian missionary and educationist in India for the past thirty-five years, to attempt a review of the main problems arising out of plans for Church Union in South India. Frankly, my point of view throughout my missionary career has been more Indian than European, but Indian only in so far as in my judgement the Indian claim has been in accord with the Christian spirit and ideal.

In view of the fact that my sphere of missionary service has been in North-Eastern India, rather than in the far South, I cannot claim to be in a position to speak with any special authority, based on intimate personal touch, on the question of Church Union in South India. India, it is hardly necessary to repeat, is a land of great distances, and a journey from North India to the far South is much like a journey from London to Petrograd or Constantinople. Conditions in South India, too, are very different from what they are in the North. In the North both language and civilisation are Aryan in origin and general characteristics, though the Dravidian and aboriginal elements are strongly represented. In the South, on the other

hand, though the Brahmin and Brahmanical literature and religion are great powers in the land, it is the Dravidian strain that is predominant, whether in the realm of language or civilisation. Moreover in the North, Christians from the point of view of numbers are a negligible fraction of the general population. In the South, however, Christianity—Roman, Syrian, Anglican and Evangelical Protestant—counts as a factor of some real importance in the general population. The Syrian Christians of St. Thomas date back to the early centuries of our era, if not actually to the days of the apostles. The Roman Church in India dates from the sixteenth century and owes much to the burning zeal of Francis Xavier. Anglican and Evangelical Christians are products of the organised missions of the Churches of Europe and America during the past two centuries. Speaking quite roughly, the Christians of India number about five millions, some one and a half per cent. of the general population. The Syrians, under varying ecclesiastical names, number about one million of these, while Romans and non-Romans number about two millions each. The bodies participating in the now widely discussed Church Union schemes are limited to Anglican and Evangelical Christians in South India and Ceylon, but do not so far include the main body of Lutherans or the Baptists, the High Churchmen of Nonconformity; though it needs to be remembered that the Baptists in South India are almost wholly the product of American Baptist Missions, with their stricter view of Church Communion than most Baptists of the British type. It is of interest to note that in the less ambitious efforts that are now being made for the organisation of a United Evangelical Church in North India, Baptist Christians related to British Baptist Missions are definitely represented, and as the years pass by, the problem of union, in its larger and more debateable aspects, is bound to become a pressingly live issue with every evangelical Church and Mission working in India. For a quarter of a century Congregationalists, Presbyterians, and some minor bodies, have worked together in South India as an organised communion known as the South Indian United Church, and the success of that union led some to hope that union on a still wider basis might be practicable. The origin of the present movement dates back to May 1919, when thirty-three men, chiefly ministers of the Anglican and South Indian United Churches, met together in retreat at Tranquebar on the South-East coast of India. This was the home of Protestant Missions in South India in the eighteenth century under Danish and German direction with Anglican support, as Serampore became the home of Protestant Christianity in North India from the beginning of the nineteenth century under the direction of missionaries

from Great Britain. It is interesting to recall at this stage that without Tranquebar and the work of men like Ziegenbalg and Schwartz, there could have been no Serampore Mission, for that was made possible only by the changed official attitude expressed through Colonel Bie, who in the early years of his service at Tranquebar had been influenced by Schwartz, and as Governor of Serampore successfully intervened to save the infant Baptist Mission from extinction at the hands of the then hostile East India Company. There is surely something approaching personal inspiration in historic places like Tranquebar and Serampore, hallowed by the labours and memorials of men like Ziegenbalg and Schwartz, Carey and Henry Martyn. It was at Serampore on Christmas Day, 1905, that Indian Christians of various churches founded the National Missionary Society of India on an inter-denominational basis for the evangelising of India by Indian Christians. Still more historic will prove the Tranquebar Retreat of 1919, with its reverberations already extending through the whole of Christendom.

Three Indian Christians out of every eight of the whole body of Anglicans and Evangelical Protestants come into the proposed scheme. The Romans naturally hold aloof. While the evangelical section of Syrians known as the Mar Thoma Church are sympathetic, they are not as yet participating, and the Eastern Orthodox and Roman Syrians have shown no particular interest. It has been my privilege at Serampore to come into intimate touch with Syrians of varied theological and ecclesiastical outlook, and the impression I have formed is that they are much more interested in the possibility of union among themselves, and if or when that union does come, it will include Syrian Christians of varied type—Roman, Eastern Orthodox and Evangelical. It is a significant fact that such rapprochement on practical lines as is now being proposed between Anglicans and Evangelical Free Churchmen, comes not from Europe or America but through India. I venture to prophesy that the first rapprochement on practical lines between the Roman and Eastern types of Catholic Christianity, and the evangelical type characteristic of Protestantism, will come not through the Churches of Europe and America, but by the way of India, and through the union of the varied sections of Syrian Christianity, which even now has relationships of a very definite character with Rome on the one side and Anglican and Evangelical Christianity on the other. The bond of union of these sections is the historic episcopate in combination with a strong communal and national consciousness.

I will not attempt any review of the detailed and difficult negotiations that have been taking place during the past eleven

years between the various bodies who are parties to this proposed Church Union—Anglicans, Congregationalists, Presbyterians and Methodists, together with that important body of Evangelical Protestant Christians known as the South India United Church. When the negotiations began, only the hopeful few believed that agreement would be possible, and from time to time in the course of the negotiations difficulties emerged which appeared insuperable, but the urge of the Spirit made it out of the question for those in the movement to contemplate the possibility of going back.

I must now set forth a brief review of the basis of union, which includes:—

(1) A recognition of the Holy Scriptures as containing all things necessary to salvation, and as the ultimate standard of faith: the two Creeds—Apostles' and Nicene—are accepted as witnessing to and safeguarding the faith. The two sacraments—Baptism and the Supper of the Lord—are to be administered with unailing use of Christ's words of institution, and of the elements ordained by Him.

(2) A recognition of the historic episcopate in a constitutional form, with Presbyterian and Congregational elements in Church Government. The first bishops of the United Church will be selected by a central body composed of representatives of the General Council of the Anglican Church in India, the General Assembly of the South India United Church, and the South India Provincial Synod of the Wesleyan Methodist Church. Those selected may be from any or all the uniting Churches, and without doubt each of the uniting bodies will have its own representatives on the episcopate. Such bishops will be consecrated by three bishops of the Anglican Church, and by Presbyterians of the South India United Church and the Wesleyan Church. It follows that henceforth every minister ordained in India for service in the United Church will be episcopally ordained, though no theory of the episcopate is laid down, and there is to be no re-ordination of any of the ministers now serving the uniting churches.

(3) For thirty years succeeding the inauguration of the Union, the ministers or missionaries of any church whose missions have formed the original part of the United Church will, on accepting the constitution of the United Church, be recognised as ministers of the United Church, though there shall be no over-riding of conscience in forcing an unacceptable ministry upon any church or individual. At the end of thirty years the United Church shall be free to consider the matter afresh, and decide the question of exceptions to the general principle of an episcopally ordained ministry. Fellowship is being relied on to

work its power in removing difficulties in matters of creed, organisation, and worship. The uniting churches are free to retain existing forms and customs, but in the course of the years, approximation is inevitable.

I think it will be recognised that here is something different from all other schemes of ecclesiastical union that have been the subject of serious and practical discussion in our generation, or indeed I think we may say since the Act of Uniformity of 1662. The union of varied bodies of Presbyterians with one another, or of various types of Methodists, or of different sections of Congregationalists or Baptists is something in the natural order of things. Such union (like that of the Particular and General Baptists forty years ago) may sometimes be regarded as simply the ending of what had become a common scandal, though it must be admitted that the antagonisms of close relatives may sometimes take a very acute form. The union of free evangelical churches—Congregationalist, Presbyterian, Methodist and Baptist—with one another in a United Free Evangelical Church has for long been a dream of optimistic Free Churchmen in this country, but it is only in some of our colonies or dominions that the dream shows any signs of being translated into reality. Here in South India we have something of quite a different order. The parties concerned consist of men and bodies of very different ecclesiastical and religious outlook. For many years the rigid Puritan and evangelical Protestant, as you see him in some of our Nonconformist Churches, and in not a few of the very low churches among the Anglicans, the broad Churchman, whether Nonconformist or Anglican, of progressive outlook, who frankly accepts much of the modern interpretation of Christianity and who views with comparative indifference the things that divide Christian from Christian, and the High Churchman, strongly catholic in his outlook, whose view of religion is definitely sacramental, and who regards the present scheme as but a preliminary step to a larger union with fellow Catholics, whether of the Eastern or Roman type—all these, evangelical, modernist, and catholic, have been earnestly conferring together on the great things that concern the coming of the Kingdom in India. While differing seriously among themselves on many minor issues, they are all one in their common devotion and loyalty to Truth and Light, and to the Person of Christ as the supreme manifestation of God incarnate, and the Light of the World. In the presence of the clamant needs of Church and Kingdom in India, they have by a common inspiration come to see that the things that divide them are but as the dust in the balance in comparison with the great things on which they are agreed. It is my privilege to know personally several of the leaders in

this movement—Anglican and Free Church, European, American, and Indian—and I have confidence in them as men of Christian aims, sane outlook and lofty purpose. The scheme, too, is not the outcome of a wild dream of a night of excited religious emotion, but is the product of long years of prayerful conference and statesmanlike thought. Without a doubt the sponsors of this scheme mean business, and at this stage they are asking for the sympathy and blessing of the churches in the West, and I assume there will be no lack of sympathetic interest on the part of large bodies of Christian people in Europe and America who think about these things at all.

The following are some of the reasons that may be or are being urged in favour of the adoption of the plans proposed:—

(1) The ordinary Christian disciple with a New Testament mind, as distinct from the ecclesiastically-minded denominationalist, cannot be reconciled to the permanent continuance of the existing sectarian differences in the Christian Church. "As Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, I pray that these may be one in us." There is the ideal. Compare this with the reality in a typical small country town in our land, with its five or six different churches of varying ecclesiastical complexion and in more or less competitive separation. The cleavage between Romanist and Evangelical may go so deep as to be wholly beyond adjustment in our day and generation, but the differences separating the various evangelical bodies from one another are such that the plain man in the broadminded religious environment characteristic of our time cannot and will not appreciate. True, the difficulties of re-union are accentuated by the fact that our denominational differences are traceable to historical causes bound up with the social and religious history of Europe and America, since the Reformation, and patient spadework is necessary if we are to retrace our steps. But—so it is urged by many—for us to take these denominational differences to missionary lands, like India and China and Africa, and to insist and persist in labelling our Christian converts there with our denominational labels, and burdening them with our ecclesiastical shibboleths, is an outrage on the Christian rights of these peoples, for which we ought to pray that God in His mercy may forgive us. The South India scheme is in essence the first instalment of a demand that this outrage shall cease.

(2) Moreover, from the standpoint of Indian Christianity in its non-Christian environment there are strong grounds favouring organic union on the lines proposed. The terrible loneliness of many Christian converts and communities, who in obedience to a divine urge from within have separated themselves from great non-Christian organisations of immemorial antiquity

is something difficult for us Westerners to realise. Our denominational differences have further made many of them feel keenly that they are but scattered fragments in their relations with one another and the whole body of Christ throughout the world. India does not want for the development of her church life elaborate tyrannical organisation any more than anarchical independence. She needs all the wealth of spiritual power that organised Church life can give, whether it is Episcopal, Presbyterian or Congregational, but she wants these forms of Church government not in competitive separation but in constructive combination as one organic whole. Undiluted Episcopacy, Presbyterianism, Congregationalism, all of these working independently of each other are productive of destructive exaggerations and abuses. The Church in India has made it clear that she wants them all, wants the real thing in all of them, but in constructive combination, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone.

(3) Moreover, the Indian Church has its own grave dangers to guard against, and not a few fear that our own sectarian divisions, if perpetuated, may lead with disastrous results to the formation of caste churches, with our denominational divisions as a basis. Indian Christianity is confronted with the supreme task of evangelisation side by side with the development of its own theology and special spiritual genius, and the presentation to the Indian peoples of a Gospel and Church that unifies rather than perpetuates divisions so disastrous to India's best life through the centuries. If our own vision in the matter of spiritual unity has been blurred as a result of age-long sectarian strife, God forbid that we should be guilty of darkening the eyes of our Indian Christian brethren, in the name of denominational loyalty, exalted above the higher loyalty we owe to Christ Himself as the supreme Head of His body, the one Universal Church.

(4) Another and final argument in favour of the proposed union is that already the Churches in India have travelled so far towards one another that the present step appears to many of us natural and inevitable. The following remark on the subject by the Rev. George Parker, a Congregationalist Missionary of South India, accords with my own observation and experience. "Missionaries have not been greatly occupied in teaching denominationalism. They have had a bigger job to do than that. Face to face with heathenism, they have been driven to a common message, to very similar methods, and the church organisations which have been worked out separately for Indian conditions show remarkable approximation." Even in Baptist Church Government on the mission field there are

strong Presbyterian and Episcopal elements which experience has shown to be indispensable if things are to be done decently and in order. Denominationalism in India is largely geographical, apart from the big cities, for generally speaking the laws of mission comity have in recent years been well observed, and in the main if you know the district from which a Christian comes, you can be fairly sure of his denominational affiliations. Yet so long as the divisions continue, the seeds of possible sectarian strife remain, and as Mr. Parker points out, "There are areas where the Indian Christians of one church are forbidden to join with Indian Christians of another at the Lord's Table." As a matter of fact, Church discipline is under present conditions often exceedingly difficult and ineffective. Comity and federation of a general character have proved quite inadequate in dealing with many of the grave problems affecting caste and idolatry in certain church areas. A real unity of organisation will alone meet the requirement. Under this head I may in conclusion quote the views of Anglican Bishops of the Church in India, well known to me personally and for whose devotion, vision and statesmanship I entertain the highest regard. Says Dr. Azariah of Dornakal, "Unity may theoretically be a desirable ideal in Europe and America, but it is vital to the life of the Church in the mission field. The divisions of Christendom may be a source of weakness in Christian countries, but in non-Christian lands they are a sin and a scandal." Says Dr. Tubbs, of Rangoon, "We on the field are drawing nearer to the realisation of a great united church, but we are hampered by the doubts and difficulties of our leaders at home. We earnestly ask the home churches not to strain the loyalty of the Mission Churches and of native Christians. If to move forward is dangerous, it is more dangerous to sit still. The Church of Jerusalem took a vast risk when it allied itself with Gentile Christianity. Cannot we also take risks?" Says Dr. Palmer, late of Bombay, "We believe that in spite of our differences and waywardness and sins God sees what we do not see, one Church on earth at this present moment. We have to clear away all those things, both in our souls and in our organisations, in opinion and in practice, which hide from us and from all men the unity of the Church which the all-seeing eye of God alone can perceive. Thus we are not trying to invent yet another Church, we are trying to see the Church that God sees and to make it visible."

Such are some of the chief things being said in support of this great adventure of faith under the leadership of a living and present Lord, but objections of a varied character are being urged, and of these I shall attempt a review:—

(1) Why, asks Lord Hugh Cecil, should the Indian Bishops

send irritating controversies to Lambeth any more than they would send coals to Newcastle? He considers it would be wise to follow the counsel of Gamaliel and not depart from the possibly fragile but still unbroken basis of reunion in the English Church. I am sure that most will feel that this attitude of Lord Hugh Cecil is inspired by a narrow nationalistic outlook not worthy of a Christianity that aims to be truly catholic. It is difficult to conceive of a Roman Catholic or a Mohammedan speaking in such terms in connection with any serious problem affecting any section of his own ecclesiastical organisation, whatever be the national boundaries. I am a Christian and not a Moslem, a Protestant and not a Roman Catholic, and yet I have a feeling, based on long observation, that in some important respects both Romanism and Islam have grasped the significance of the world-wide spiritual brotherhood outlined in the New Testament in a far larger measure than anything we see in our average Protestantism, characterised as it is with much of the exclusiveness we associate with social clubs of a certain type. I consider it a healthy sign of the times that this question of the union of Churches in South India is exciting interest far beyond ordinary missionary circles. Moreover, problems such as our fellow-Christians are now facing in South India are bound to arise sooner or later, and possibly sooner rather than later in an acute form in regard to our own ecclesiastical organisation at home. Yet, so far as I can see, the average church member at home (and would I be far wrong if I said the average minister?) is not really interested in church union, any more than as a student of the New Testament he thinks it necessary to render lip-service to what in his heart he knows to be a great New Testament ideal, but which from the point of view of practical politics he regards as a mere chimera. Men like Dr. Shakespeare and other pioneer advocates of Christian union were born perhaps generations before their time. The true greatness of their vision and endeavour may be recognised a century hence. In any case, I trust that we shall be able at this time to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest the significance of this South Indian movement not only for India but for the churches at home.

(2) Another objection one hears against this movement is that it is wholly unnecessary, whether from the standpoint of the non-Christians of India, or of the native Christian Churches concerned. The non-Christians, it is urged, are in no way scandalised by our Christian divisions, which appear to them perfectly natural in view of similar sectarian divisions in their own organisations. So far as Indian Christians are concerned, it is urged that the rank and file are really indifferent to the

ornate architecture, elaborate organisation, all these were anathema, seductive temptations that could have no other end but popery and the Babylonian woe. I still remain a Puritan at heart, but intimate experience of other aspects of religious thought and life different from my own has taught me much. I have come to see that essential popery and rigidity of authority are not limited to Rome, but that Independency may breed little popes by the score. I have come to recognise that vital religion may sometimes run to a very low ebb in a Nonconformist chapel where there is no suspicion of any departure from the old Puritan outlook, while on the other hand the Christianity of a community essentially Catholic in its organisation and general bent may have about it all the vitality and thrill that we associate with the Christianity of the New Testament. I have as a result of a long experience come to the conclusion that our independency may sometimes be accompanied by a radical lack of the Christian spirit that recognises it as incumbent upon us all, whether as individuals or church communities, to bear one another's burdens in obedience to the law of Christ, while on the other hand I have seen in church organisations more elaborate than my own—whether Presbyterian, Methodist or Episcopal—an ability and a readiness to co-operate in a spirit of Christ-like helpfulness with weaker brethren and more needy communities of Christians, that have made me feel ashamed of our own separatist methods and tendencies in the government of the Church. I have met ministers and missionaries wholly innocent of any of the paraphernalia of clerical attire and unbendingly Puritan and Biblical in their creed and worship, yet at heart Papal dictators and persecutors, and bearing in their inner soul all the essential marks of the beast of Revelation. On the other hand, I have met men devoted to an elaborate Catholic ritual and possessed of pontifical ecclesiastical authority, yet at heart humble saints of God, who in the spirit of Christ would not break a bruised reed, or quench the smoking flax. I am reminded of a story told of a former verger of a University Church who remarked, "I have in my long life listened patiently to a legion of theological lecturers, but thank God I am a Christian still." I too can say, "I have seen in Puritanism and Dissent many things that I have felt to be revolting, and have made me ashamed, but thank God I am a Puritan and a Baptist still." I frankly admit that the form of Christianity I adhere to is one-sided and fractional as an expression of the Mind of Christ, but I have the same feeling in regard to practically all the forms of Christianity with which I have come into intimate contact. Most of them are almost as fractional as my own, some of them perhaps more so, and yet in all of them the essence of

the Christian spirit may find beautiful and adequate expression. The Spirit of Christ, in all the fulness of His working, refuses to be confined within the rigid enclosures of our narrow sectarian watchwords. Our ecclesiastical and religious outlook may think of things largely or mainly from the standpoint of the past, or it may be confined to the needs of the present, or it may rush forward in headlong speed in anticipation of the needs of the future; or it may embrace in one comprehensive vision all three standpoints—past, present, and future. But whether the vision, individual or ecclesiastical, be comprehensive or limited, the Spirit of Christ works without restraint. I think the future of our faith is in the hands of such as can assimilate all that reason and modern thought supplies, and combine it with all the heritage of a catholic past. I want for the Church as a whole something on the lines of what we have tried to incorporate in our Serampore ideal during the past quarter of a century. There we have organised theological studies for the whole of Protestant and Anglican Christianity throughout India, and we have worked together with the utmost cordiality and goodwill during all these years, whether at Serampore on interdenominational lines, or through our affiliation system with colleges in various parts of India. Our ecclesiastical differences have created no difficulty worthy of mention. Many good Nonconformists look with grave suspicion on High Anglicans. All I can say is that we have found them capital fellows to work with. I cannot reasonably object to their holding on to doctrines like Apostolic Succession, to them important but not particularly so to me, any more than they can object to my entertaining the suspicion that infant Baptism is a concession to a type of religion more characteristic of the Old Testament than the New. I am sure that I have far more in common with a High Anglican of modern evangelical outlook than I have with some members of my own denomination with an outlook, theological and ecclesiastical, radically different from my own. It is my profound hope and conviction that the genius of the Indian soul, the spirit of Indian Christianity, will find worthy expression not in a pale copy of the denominational differences that mean so much to us, rooted as they are in our religious history, but in a framework of religious organisation and faith that will give ample scope to the men of God and disciples of Christ in India to shape our faith in a way that will do justice to the Indian outlook, and ultimately lead to the enrichment of our common Catholic Christianity.

(4) Finally there are certain extremist views, Protestant and Anglo-Catholic, that may yet give real trouble before the scheme of union is consummated, and that require a little more

detailed reference. On the Anglo-Catholic side, men like Bishop Gore and Dr. Sparrow Simpson have been expressing their grave fears that the acceptance of the scheme in its present form may lead to disruption and the break up of the Anglican Communion. The latter for instance in his recent book *South India Schemes* writes, "The fact that various theories about the ministry are held by individuals within the comprehensiveness of the self-same English Church has led some controversialists to contend that the South Indian Scheme only proposes to carry into practice what already exists in the Church of England. But this contention is obviously inexact. For whatever differences of theory individuals are permitted to hold within the English Church, all its clergy, without a solitary exception, are in the historic succession, and all its people receive the sacrament from priests, and from none but priests. Neither in its official declarations, nor in its practice of ordaining does the Church of England ever allow anything else than priestly ministries. The consequence of this Anglican comprehensiveness is that both Evangelicals and Anglo-Catholics have been able to abide within the Church of England. But the South India Scheme proposes to allow men who are not priests to consecrate the Eucharist in the same church with those who are priests. To do that is deliberately to make a minister equivalent to a priest in the ecclesiastical rite, and if the Church of England were to insist on committing itself to this Protestant conception, it would render dangerously insecure the loyalty of a very large section of its own members, and incur the risk of a very serious secession. The allegiance of a Catholic is primarily to the Universal Church, and to the local as a faithful representation of the Universal. The individual cannot accept the judgment of the local church if he is conscientiously convinced that that judgment is contrary to the mind of the Universal Church." While I am poles asunder from Dr. Simpson in his view of the ministry, I cannot but think that there is a good deal of sturdy Protestantism and sound Christianity in the way in which he strongly maintains the supremacy of the individual conscience. Indeed, a moderate Anglican paper like the *Guardian* writes, "Those who threaten to sever their connection with the Church of England, if the South India Scheme is accepted, claim to be Catholics, but the full meaning of a catholic is that he accepts the judgment of his church as opposed to his own individual judgment. For one to set his own judgment or that of any unconstitutional committee or clique against his church is just simply Protestantism, and it is the method that has always led to schism." It seems to me that the position advocated by the *Guardian* would have made

impossible Christianity itself, which ultimately broke with Judaism on a great principle. It would make impossible such great movements as are associated with the names of such men as Wycliffe, Luther and Wesley. It is not for me to suggest to the Anglo-Catholic what his duty is at this juncture, but I confess to some real sympathy with him in the difficulty he is up against. The fact that the irregularity of contrasted ministries under the scheme would only exist for thirty years, and would afterwards be cancelled by the unity which is to be ultimately attained, does not weigh with a thorough-going Anglo-Catholic like Dr. Simpson, who maintains that it is "not a question of duration but of intrinsic rightfulness." Yet the feeling remains that a sense of Christian duty sometimes demands a compromise and temporary accommodation in the interests of the larger whole.

On the other hand, a certain section of extremist Protestants regard any recognition of the historic episcopate as nothing else than ecclesiastical bondage and sacerdotal superstition, and maintain that any participation in the scheme implies the abandonment of a sacred trust which we have inherited from our Puritan ancestors.

With regard to the position of episcopacy in the new scheme, it may be well to recall the basic terms of the agreement.

(1) That believing that the historic episcopate in a constitutional form is the method of Church Government which is more likely than any other to promote and preserve the organic unity of the Church, we accept it as a basis of union without raising other questions about episcopacy.

(2) That by a historic and constitutional episcopacy we mean—

(a) That the bishops shall be elected. In this election both the diocese and the province shall have an effective voice.

(b) That the bishops shall perform their duties constitutionally in accordance with such customs of the Church as shall be defined in a written constitution, and

(c) That continuity with the historic episcopate be effectively maintained, it being understood that no particular interpretation of the fact of the historic episcopate be demanded.

As to the episcopate, I accept the view of Dr. Garvie, who writes, "It must be admitted that the early origin, the long continuity, the wide diffusion of the episcopate in the Christian Church, makes it an appropriate, nay, the most appropriate, organ for making manifest this universal character of the Christian ministry. The congregational type of church polity asserts the liberty in Christ of the Christian people, the

whole problem, and are prepared to go on just as they have been for the last century or more. The whole movement, it is maintained, has been cleverly engineered by a few enthusiastic leaders—European, American and Indian—and if it is firmly turned down at the present stage by the home authorities whose financial and moral interests may be involved, there may be visible no ripple of disappointed emotion except among the interested few. So far as non-Christians are concerned, I must admit that they in general show no particular signs of shock when confronted with our own ecclesiastical differences and antagonisms. From their standpoint all religions are equally good or equally bad, as the case may be, and when they witness our defects, they recognise them as being quite in the order of nature, and are confirmed in their view of all religions as being pretty much alike both as regards their virtues and their vices. Unless we can bring to the people of India in our Christian propaganda and life something that has in it the stamp and image of the supernatural rather than the natural, Christianity will continue to be regarded by non-Christians as a religion rather than *the* religion, and hopes of world conquest under such conditions must be futile. When the non-Christian world, looking at us individually or in our ecclesiastical relationships is able, indeed is compelled, in all sincerity to exclaim "See how these Christians love one another!" there will be some hope of a revolutionary advance, compared with the admittedly somewhat slow pace of growth now visible. Yet I am convinced there is movement in the right direction, sure and steady. When I first went out to India in 1895, the relations for instance between Baptists and Anglicans were greatly strained. Sheep-stealing was rampant, and the possibility of any comity between these two extremes of the Protestant Church was scouted as a wild dream. To-day Baptists and Anglicans co-operate in the most cordial way; Bishop's College, with an Anglican Bishop as Principal, and Serampore College with its Baptist traditions from the days of Carey, co-operate, under the Serampore Charter, in a common theological senate, and in some cases common theological teaching in association with representatives of practically all other churches in India, including the Syrian Orthodox, the Romans only excepted. I mention that as only one achievement in the direction of union during the generation it has been my privilege to serve the cause of Christ in India. Frankly, I think with but rare exceptions, the relations of Christian bodies in India with one another have ceased to be scandalous, and it is this that makes one hope for the success of the great experiment now being proposed.

In regard to the suggestion that the great mass of Indian

Christians are not themselves interested in this advance, but are content to be led by the few; well, is not this the case more or less, practically all over the world in the great things that count? It is the very few who lead the many. Ministers and prominent church workers at home know what this means. And how true it is of politics, trade unionism, Bolshevism, and what not. But even in regard to the great mass, when the intelligence and conscience of Indian Christians is definitely appealed to on this issue, the response is all in the direction of movement on the lines so earnestly advocated by the leaders among their own Christian fellow-countrymen. If we are to wait for everything until there is an impulse of overwhelming strength visible from below, we shall wait a long time indeed. It is an Athanasius that converts to his view a whole world against him, it is a Luther that rouses the forces of Protestant conviction, it is a Wesley that awakens England to a new evangel, it is a Carey that rouses the missionary conscience of a torpid church, it is a Wilberforce that awakens a nation's conscience in the matter of slavery and the slave trade. Christian leaders in South India must be given credit rather than otherwise for all the pioneer work they have done in rousing the conscience of the Church on this issue in their own areas, and in Christian circles far and wide throughout the world.

(3) Another objection sometimes urged against the scheme is that it conceives of unity more from the standpoint of organisation than community of spirit, that too much importance is attached to standard creeds like the Nicene in the place of reliance on the simplicity of the Gospel of the New Testament, that the recognition of the historic episcopate is but the thin end of the wedge for introducing the doctrine of apostolic succession and a whole array of other mediæval dogmas, calculated to prove fatal to any living evangelical Puritanism, sure in the long run to prove destructive of the present freedom enjoyed by individual congregations, and bound to lead to artificiality and mental reservations incompatible with the essential liberty of the Gospel of the Spirit as taught by our Lord. In short, the adoption of the scheme means that we shall begin the descent of the slippery slope to Rome. It is difficult to argue with anyone obsessed by a mentality that sees Rome in every approach to organisation in the government of the Church, formulation of belief, and order or ornateness in worship. Yet I can remember the time quite vividly fifty years ago when as a boy in a village congregation in Wales that was my own mentality, and to all intents and purposes the mentality of the religious circle in which I lived and moved and had my being. Clerical dress, credal confessions, liturgical prayers, the chanting of psalms,

presbyteral type the equality of all the ministers of Christ, the episcopal the authority of the Church as a whole over the parts." It is wholly beside the mark to think of the modern constitutional episcopate in terms of the old prelacy. The World Conference of Faith and Order at Lausanne, in giving their approval to the South India Scheme, expressed a point of view regarding the problem of organisation which ought to remove many difficulties, unless we are more concerned to score against one another than to sink minor differences in the interests of a great spiritual ideal. "In view of (1) the place which the episcopate, the council of presbyters, and the congregation of the faithful respectively had in the constitution of the early Church, and (2) the fact that episcopal, presbyteral and congregational systems of government are each to-day, and have been for centuries, accepted by great communions in Christendom, and (3) the fact that episcopal, presbyteral and congregational systems are each believed by many to be essential to the good order of the Church, we therefore recognise that these several elements must all, under conditions which require further study, have an appropriate place in the order of life of a re-united church, and that each separate communion, recalling the abundant blessing of God vouchsafed to its ministry in the past, should gladly bring to the common life of the United Church its own spiritual treasures." Let us in this connection not forget that Anglicans, Presbyterians, Congregationalists and Methodists, European, American and Indian, men of very different traditions and religious temperaments and habits have, after eleven long years of careful thought and abundant prayer for the guidance of the Holy Spirit, come to unanimous convictions on the great issues involved. While it is obvious that the scheme as it stands may be capable of improvement under the guidance of the Spirit of God, it is clear that any radical change in the fundamental principles of the scheme would wreck the whole movement, and this would be a very serious responsibility to take from the standpoint of our relations with our Indian Christian brethren, who are apt to be, in the words of Bishop Palmer, "indignant when they reflect that the divisions in which they find themselves imprisoned had their origin in the controversies of foreigners in distant lands, in which they had no part and have no interest. The more thoughtful know that division has for centuries been the ruin of their own country. Young Indians will join any society that promises to unite Indians, but none that will divide them." I must also draw your attention to the resolution passed by the All India Conference of Indian Christians held in Lahore in December last, and I attach great importance to it as an

expression of the Indian Christian standpoint throughout India. "This Conference is convinced that organic unity of all Christian denominations in India is essential for the full witness of the Church to its Lord and Master. This Conference therefore rejoices that powerful consideration is being given to the schemes of union in various parts of India. It earnestly hopes that the union scheme in South India will be brought to consummation in the near future, and will pave the way for the formation of the united visible Church of Christ in India as an integral part of the Church Universal, and in communion with the churches of other lands."

Dr. Vernon Bartlet is of the opinion that never in the history of the Church has such liberty of conscience been permitted to individuals in the matter of belief and practice as is proposed in the present scheme. In this connection Bishop Palmer points out that "to some the theory of the Apostolic Succession is of great importance as true and as symbolising spiritual truths. To others it is an erroneous bit of history which has led to superstitions and abuses. A member of the church will not be bound to either opinion; a minister will not be condemned for teaching either." The group of Anglican evangelicals invited to attend the Archbishops' Committee on Faith and Order in November last point out that "the sacraments and ministry of the Presbyterian Churches were recognised as truly apostolic in their own branches of the Church by practically all the Anglican bishops of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The phrase 'apostolic succession' is not found in our formularies. We admit and value the historical fact of the succession of our ministry and ordination from the times of the Apostles, a succession shared by the Presbyterian churches. We do not believe that any validity of Sacraments or ministerial grace attaches to episcopal ordination which is not shared by them. We regard the Grace of God as His direct gift, and not as mechanically transmitted or transmissible."

I fail to see where ecclesiastical bondage comes in, where full liberty of conscience is allowed on issues of this kind. If many of our Christian brethren draw comfort from the doctrine of apostolic succession as a bulwark of the Catholic past, or find satisfaction in the doctrine of Infant Baptism as witnessing to the solidarity of the Christian family in relation to the Church, is that an insuperable barrier to union, provided our convictions or idiosyncrasies are similarly recognised and respected? The real schismatic is the man who will not work side by side with a Christian brother differing in important respects from himself, but one in common loyalty to Christ and the Church.

GEORGE HOWELLS.