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A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php

The Historic Episcopate

IN THE LIGHT OF SOUTH INDIAN EXPERIENCE

BY GEOFFREY PAUL

WHEN the Church of South India accepted the historic episcopate in its constitutional form as one of the four bases of union, it laid down that acceptance of episcopacy must not be held to commit the church or its members to any particular view of episcopacy. This provision met with a good deal of criticism in the early days of the C.S.I. from people who said that the C.S.I. was accepting episcopacy from reasons of expediency only and did not really want the kind of bishops known throughout history to Catholic Christendom. I remember, for example, a bishop of another communion saying to me that the fact that the C.S.I. maintained relations of communion with non-episcopal churches showed that we did not believe seriously in episcopacy. On the other hand the provision was sometimes seen as a piece of duplicity intended to deceive the simple. Once when I said to an old Lutheran missionary that if they were to unite with us I thought we were ready to learn with them things about the ministry that we did not yet understand, he said, "Ah, that's what you say now, but once you've got us inside, you'll turn us all into high Anglicans".

But apart from mere personal feeling, this statement of the C.S.I. Constitution has had to face serious criticism and misunderstanding. On the one hand, it is well-known that the discussions in South India had a great deal to do with the publication in 1946 of the volume of essays edited by Dr. K. E. Kirk, then Bishop of Oxford, with the title *The Apostolic Ministry*. In the opening essay, Dr. Kirk himself says quite plainly, "for anyone to say, as so many of the present re-union proposals say emphatically, 'So long as you retain episcopacy, it does not matter whether you hold this or any other doctrine about it', is as absurd as to say, 'So long as you have a font, a Bible, and an altar in each church, it does not matter what you teach about them, or indeed whether you make any use of them or not'". He then goes on to outline what we ought to have said. "The episcopate," he maintains, "is the divinely ordained ministerial instrument for securing to the Church of God its continuous and organic unity"; and again, "it and it alone can permanently carry on in the Church the Essential Ministry derived from the apostles of our Lord".

Now I personally have a great deal of sympathy with what Dr. Kirk says here and am grateful that Anglicans, in their bishops have shown their attachment to the notion of historic continuity. It is in the sequel that one meets with two particular difficulties in his statement of the case. In the first place Dr. Kirk believes that he has the general sense of Scripture behind him in insisting that it is the episcopate alone that ensures continuity with the apostolic Church. Yet while I believe that the notion of continuity with the Church of the apostles is one to which New Testament Christians attached importance, I think it not only impossible to show that the New Testament upholds his view of the Essential Ministry as the prescribed means of ensuring this continuity, but it seems to me that the evidence we have bears witness

against him. There is no evidence that any one of the twelve consecrated successors, and the only references to any ordinations at all are to those of Saint Paul, who, although he vigorously argued that he was an apostle, strenuously denied that he stood in the succession. His case is of particular interest. Years after his call and the beginning of his apostolic work, he says that he did meet the other apostles and laid before them the Gospel that he preached, "lest I should be running or had run in vain". Presumably, with his tremendous conviction that there can be but one Body of Christ, Saint Paul means that if the twelve had not recognized his work or accepted his Christians as real Christians, all his labours would have been in vain; but he goes on at once to insist that he did not for an instant submit to the twelve by way of subjection. Now I suspect that Saint Paul would not have accepted from anyone else the arguments he uses in his own behalf; nevertheless what he explicitly does say completely explodes Dr. Kirk's case. For he is maintaining that he is exercising a valid ministry by direct call from God and that for this the call or consecration of those who had been the companions of the Lord had not been necessary.

One meets the second difficulty in Dr. Kirk's very interesting discussion of validity. When breakaway groups—particularly those who have broken away for good reasons—continue to grow generation after generation, to produce saints and theologians, to preach the Gospel fervently at home and abroad, to nourish their people on regularly conducted sacraments, then it seems to me that we have to admit that God is less logical than we are, that he has mercy on His blind and tiresome children, and that He Himself validates the group's activities, and accepts them as churches. This was always the argument of the free churches, who claimed that God had blessed with undistinguishing regard both episcopal and non-episcopal churches, and it seems to me that no talk of defective intention or of a lack of the concept of priesthood can refute their claim. It was in default of the plain evidence of Scripture and in the light of the evidence of real non-episcopal churches around them, that the South Indian negotiators did not wish to commit themselves to a particular doctrine of episcopacy.

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As a matter of history, I think it is true to say that we may discern four influences at work to produce the provision that the C.S.I. accepts the historic episcopate but without committing itself to any particular view of it.

First of all, it should not be supposed that the Anglican negotiators in the long discussions that went before union were all low churchmen or men who valued episcopacy lightly. Without doubt, the most influential of all the Anglican team, from the earliest days till his retirement in 1929 was E. J. Palmer, Bishop of Bombay. A man of great personal charm and sanctity, of the widest sympathies, tremendously eager for unity and ready to make quite surprising gestures in order to show penitence for Anglicans' part in the sin of disunity, he was nevertheless a determined high churchman. A firm believer in apostolic succession, he was scornful of the notion of the equal validity of all ministries, calling any service of mutual commissioning which

this entailed "a pestilent muddle". Yet he was equally convinced that other ministries had been raised up by God, and was eager to see them all brought together again.

On the other hand, the free church negotiators had an inborn horror of prelacy in any form and they regarded with suspicion any claims for a special authority inherent in the episcopate. Yet it needs to be remembered that as early as 1916 free churchmen had begun to speak of reunion with the Church of England on the basis of a constitutional episcopate, and these discussions found echoes in India, where Congregationalist missionaries were ready to admit that congregational polity appeared paradoxically to engender individualism rather than an interest in constitutional development. We find, in the famous 1919 manifesto, the old South India United Church leaders declaring their belief that "it is a necessary condition that the episcopate should re-assume its constitutional form, on a primitive, simple, apostolic model". Free churchmen, then, were ready to look again with favour at bishops, but they could not accept any doctrine of apostolic succession without admitting the invalidity of their own orders.

Thirdly, it needs to be realized that there were some criticisms of the practice of episcopacy from India itself. A learned Hindu, Sardar K. M. Pannikar, in his book *Asia and Western Dominance*, speaks contemptuously of "numerous bishops flaunting territorial names" in an effort to dazzle poor Hindus by their splendour and eminence. That Christians in India were sensitive to these criticisms is shown by the fact that bishops in the Church of South India are called Bishop *in* Madura, or whatever it may be, and not Bishop of Madura, and thus make no suggestion of a claim to right of title over Indian territory. It is shown also in the words found in the constitution of the C.S.I. that it desires "to express under Indian conditions and in Indian forms, the spirit, the thought, and the life of the Church Universal". I recall my first sight of Bishop Hollis, the C.S.I.'s first Moderator, who was addressing a meeting of students in Hampstead. A student rose to ask a question: "My Lord", he began. . . . "Not my Lord," interrupted Bishop Hollis; "we've got rid of lords in South India". There was a desire to discover a new pattern of episcopacy in the C.S.I. and it did not want to fetter itself at the outset with too precise definitions.

But of course the final reason for this provision, that no particular view of episcopacy was to be accepted as the official doctrine, was that the episcopate was to be that of the whole united Church, and those who had never till the time of union experienced what it meant to live with the episcopate could hardly be expected to make or agree to a statement about episcopacy until they had tasted it.

However, the constitution of the C.S.I. did not leave it to everyone to interpret episcopacy as he wished. It did lay down certain definite guide-lines to its understanding of episcopacy. It underlined that it desired its bishops to be constitutional bishops by saying that the bishops would perform the functions traditionally associated with their office, and then went on to enumerate them in the constitution. It declared that "episcopacy has been accepted in the Church from very early times. It may therefore fitly be called historic"—a

deceptively simple assertion, to which it added the assurance that "it is needed for the shepherding and extension of the C.S.I.", and this declaration was reinforced with the pledge that "continuity with the historic episcopate will be both initially and thereafter effectively maintained". In a longer paragraph the Basis of Union said: "In making provision for episcopal ordination and consecration, the C.S.I. declares that it is its intention and determination in this manner to secure the unification of its ministry, but that this does not involve any judgment upon the validity or regularity of any other form of ministry, and the fact that other churches do not follow the rule of episcopal ordination will not in itself preclude it from holding relations of communion and fellowship with them". When the Church of England asked it to reconsider this last statement the C.S.I. said it could not do so.

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The C.S.I., then, made certain statements of fact about episcopacy and it took up certain positions on the basis of these facts. It did not however attempt to give explanations of the facts or reasons for the positions which it took. With these apparently rather sketchy sentences, the C.S.I. set out on its career as an episcopal church. But what bishops God gave it! and I now hope to show that these few bare statements and the content with which the bishops of the C.S.I. have invested them have in fact given the C.S.I. a clear, coherent and consistent view of episcopacy which some of our early critics have come to covet for themselves.

One of the elements in the development of the C.S.I. concept of a bishop has been the choice of bishops by election. When a see is vacant, the Moderator appoints a Commissary, and fixes a date by which nominations from the diocese must be sent in. Any three members of the Diocesan Council may nominate a candidate, and in addition to the names received, since in general these are likely to come from inside the diocese, the Synod Executive may nominate up to two more men from outside the diocese. On the appointed day, the Diocesan Council, presided over by a layman, meets to elect a panel of not less than two and not more than four names. A man must get at least 70% of the votes in a ballot to go on to the panel, and a nominee who gets less than 10% is excluded from further ballots. Voting continues until a panel is completed or after three negative ballots. If the Council elects a valid panel, it is sent to the Moderator, who with two bishops, two presbyters and two laymen from outside the diocese makes the final choice from those names. If the Diocesan Council fails to make up a valid panel, the Moderator is free to appoint as he thinks fit. This last provision has been a useful one. Diocesan Councils tend to elect men they know from their own number, and this would produce a rather intuned episcopacy (though when the diocese of Coimbatore was created at the entry of the North Tamil Council of the S.I.U.C. into the C.S.I. in 1950, its largely congregational diocesan council chose as its first bishop an Anglican Archdeacon, the learned Dr. A. J. Appasamy). In each case where a diocese has failed to elect its own panel of men, the Moderator has taken advantage of the situation to bring in a man from outside, and in each case, after

some initial indignation, the choice has been seen to be an excellent one. Now I do not know what is done in Wales, but while most people in England admit that the English system is ridiculous and immoral, not everyone thinks it is worth the trouble of trying to change it, partly because we do get good bishops that way, but also because the prospect of electioneering and canvassing is not an attractive one. Well, we do have elections in South India, and they are sometimes frightening and horrible things, but to watch a diocese during a vacancy praying both in public services but much more during its daily family prayers for the man of God's choice, ought to give us more faith than we sometimes have, and so far, thank God, no man who canvassed has ever been elected a bishop. This means that gradually the church has come to see that it does not want ambitious men as its bishops, however clever they may be, and that the love of power and the desire to be a bishop is the last qualification for a proper candidate.

The same depreciation of the notion of power and authority comes out in the way in which bishops from South India have written about their office.

For example, Bishop Sumitra, while Moderator and Bishop in Rayalaseema, wrote a charming sketch of the work of a bishop as one having little independent administrative authority, primarily a teacher of his clergy and his flock at large, a father-in-God, a leader in evangelism, and a liturgical figure. He ends his sketch with the words, "Thus a bishop of the C.S.I. has little leisure to dwell upon his status or authority in the Church".

Bishop Legg similarly, writing in the volume of essays entitled *Bishops* and edited by your own Bishop of Llandaff, concludes with these words: "Bishops in the C.S.I. are fortunate in the ease with which in Indian conditions they can move amongst the people of town and village, offering and receiving friendship with learned and simple, exercising a personal ministry of reconciliation, admonition, and encouragement among ministers and people. The only authority that is worth much in the Christian Church is the spiritual authority that is rooted in service and flowers in trust and affection. Episcopate is only fully Christian if it is a form of diakonia. He who called Himself the Good Shepherd also said, 'I am among you as he that serveth'".

It is hardly surprising that since the bishops in general did embody these high ideals, their authority came to be gladly accepted even by those who had at first feared the very name of bishop.

For the early years of its life, the C.S.I. made use of a provisional ordinal based on the Anglican rites, but in 1958, the Synod authorized a radically revised ordinal. It met with a very kind reception. The Lambeth bishops of 1958 averred soberly that they had "no hesitation in adjudging these forms to be adequate to secure a regular and valid ministry". The Regius Professor of Divinity at Cambridge, Professor E. C. Ratcliff, was more enthusiastic, urging that any church of the Anglican Communion proposing to revise its ordination rites will turn for guidance to the rites of South India. Notable features of the service for the consecration of a bishop are the following declaration: "In this act of consecration we believe that it is God who gives you grace and authority for the office and work to which you are called,

and that He does so in answer to the prayers of His Church and through the actions and words of His appointed ministers. We act and speak as part of the Universal Church". Then the searching questions addressed to the candidate, which in addition to questions similar to those found in the Anglican rite, include a question as to his inward motives in accepting this office, and questions requiring him to be a leader in evangelism, in the development of worship and in seeking the unity and peace of this church and the whole church of God ; the substitution of what is, I believe, the more primitive prayer for the sending down of the Holy Spirit in the actual consecration, for the later declaratory form of words found in our Ordinal, and the special petition in the litany for the Bishop's wife, who, before all others, receives communion with him in the service. It is indeed a noble and most orthodox service, setting forth with great beauty the humble majesty of the bishop's office, and once again, we see that the C.S.I. has emphasized the pastoral and ministerial aspects of the bishop's work as against his authority and status.

Thus in these various ways, the C.S.I. began to show the world that it took episcopacy with the highest seriousness and had not adopted it for any reasons of compromise or expediency, and this was gladly recognized by all who visited the C.S.I. The Lambeth fathers were generous enough to say ; " It may well be that the Church in the West may be able to learn from the polity of the Church of South India lessons which would restore to its exercise of episcopacy more of its primitive pastoral character as the office of Father in God ".

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Yet in spite of this wholesome development of the episcopate in the C.S.I., it was a fact that the Church has never answered plainly or extensively why it accepted episcopacy rather than any other form of church order. The theological conversations with the Lutheran churches in South India challenged it to explain itself on this point.

Among the various Lutheran churches in South India, those of Danish origin have a bishop who stands in the historic succession, but the remainder are not episcopally ordered. However, it was soon clear that the form of the ministry is regarded by Lutherans as secondary, continuity in the Church being ensured by the Word of God. C.S.I. negotiators often found it hard to know what this meant, but Lutherans would put the matter alternatively by saying that wherever the Word of God was preached and the sacraments rightly celebrated, there was the Church. In the light of the provision that the C.S.I. had accepted episcopacy but without teaching any particular view of it, some Lutherans supposed that the C.S.I.'s position was the same as theirs, and when it began to be evident that it was not, they pressed the C.S.I. for a clearer statement of why the C.S.I. held to episcopacy and asked whether they would be prepared if necessary to reconsider the whole question.

The C.S.I. Theological Commission in 1956 answered these questions, in " A Statement concerning the Ministry ", and in this answer we shall begin to see that the sketchy statements of the original constitution were not just temporary bulletins issued till the C.S.I. had had further time to think, but were in fact basic statements by which the

C.S.I. had lived and which provided her with a distinctive attitude to episcopacy. In answering the Lutheran questions the C.S.I. refused to go beyond what it knew to be true into the realm of unproved theory. I shall quote some paragraphs from that statement.

Para. 2. The historic episcopate is retained in the C.S.I. because it has proved itself to be of great value for the enrichment of the life of the church.

Para. 3. Neither its original acceptance nor its retention depends upon the acceptance of any doctrine of apostolic succession, in the sense that one particular form of the ministry is the sole and essential channel for the transmission of the grace needed for the exercise of the ministry in the Church of God.

Para. 5. In any future union it would certainly be the policy of the C.S.I. to follow the same line of acceptance of all ministers of the uniting churches as "equally and without distinction or difference ministers of the United Church", without any suggestion of re-ordination, and to maintain the same full communion and fellowship with all the parent churches however organized.

Para 11. In answer to the questions above, we have felt bound to indicate the reasons which make it seem to us most unlikely that we shall be led to abandon the historic episcopate. Certainly in entering into negotiations for wider union, the C.S.I. would not refuse to discuss with the utmost frankness and to listen to all that the other churches might desire to say about the theology of the ministry, and this would obviously include the fullest discussion of episcopacy. We dare not lay down beforehand where the Holy Spirit will guide us and we must be ready to and willing to follow where He leads. But in the light of our experience we earnestly commend to our Lutheran brethren the gift which we have received and which we have increasingly come to value.

I think this is an honest statement, pragmatic, based on experience, unwilling to commit itself to theoretical explanations which it could not bring proof to justify.

It had been the custom in the conversations with the Lutherans to discuss subjects which were felt to be controversial and then try to issue Agreed Statements. It was thought at first that no Agreed Statement on the ministry would be necessary since the Lutherans did not hold the form of the ministry to be essential; but when it became clear that the C.S.I. was not indifferent to the form of the ministry (some Lutherans honestly believed that this concealed a belief in apostolic succession that would be openly declared at a later stage), it was decided at the final meeting of the series of theological conversations in 1959, at which I myself was present, to attempt to draft an Agreed Statement on the Ministry. The discussion was very fast, but equally speedily a statement was produced and accepted that amid much quite unexceptionable theology of the ministry, contained this paragraph:

It is true that the exercise of oversight (episcopate) was early entrusted by the Church to one bishop in each area. This ordering was for many centuries universal and is still the accepted form among the majority of Christians. We do not hold that it is

essential for the existence of the Church, or for the ministry and the sacraments ; or that God has bound Himself to grant through it greater blessing, authority, or grace than through other forms of Christ's ministry. It has been and can be grievously misused, as can every gift of God. But we see value in it as expressing through a person the oversight which is a vital part of the pastoral ministry within the Church. However, the presence or absence of episcopacy ought not by itself to determine the relation of one church to another.

I can remember that I and another Anglican present were somewhat dismayed by the very negative form of this statement, which was put in this form to overcome the doubts and suspicions of one particularly tough German, and it is a fact that Anglicans outside the C.S.I. felt that this statement represented a departure from our earlier position. On reflection, I do not think this is so. We had made it perfectly clear to the Lutherans that our original contention that the historic episcopate was necessary for the shepherding and extension of the C.S.I. remained unchanged. But we had not passed judgment on other ministries ; we not only maintained relations of communion with non-episcopal churches, but we had invited responsible non-episcopally ordained visitors to minister in the C.S.I. and while missionary societies in general agreed to the suggestion that their theologically trained men should be ordained in the C.S.I., there was no provision for refusing such men if they were ordained before they took up work in the C.S.I. This made it plain that while the C.S.I. valued episcopal order for itself, and intended to continue as an episcopal church, it did not regard episcopacy as the only validating form of ministry, and, as the statement declared, it could find no warrant for saying so.

Nevertheless, it was felt by many that the time had come for making a somewhat more positive statement. The first attempt, received for study by the Synod of 1962 was not particularly brilliant. It spoke of the episcopate as a witness to the church's continuity in these terms : " While we do not deny the reality of other forms of ministry and other ways of preserving this continuous ministerial authority, we believe that the historic episcopate has most to commend it as an effective sign of this continuity by its link with the Church of the early centuries ". It speaks of the historic episcopate as being the most widely recognized form of ministry and as being therefore most likely to be acceptable in wider unions, and it shows that the office of bishop has been greatly used for reconciling those previously divided ; but the remainder of the statement is a discussion of the various checks on the bishop's authority and an attempt to show that the bishop should not be thought of chiefly as an administrator.

The statement was sent for discussion to the dioceses where it met with a rather varied reception. An ex-Congregational bishop criticized it in these terms : " It would seem that a fourth school is being added to the three usually in vogue among those who retain Episcopacy (the *Esse*, *Bene Esse*, and *Plene Esse* schools), viz. : The Sufferance School. That is, it seems to be said that the episcopate serves no purpose ; but that it may be allowed to exist and that we may even find a little work for it ". No one need suppose that this criticism was intended with

full seriousness, but it is true that the 1962 statement was not considered very satisfactory, and in the light of comments received from the dioceses, a fresh statement was prepared, which was adopted by the 1964 Synod with one amendment, as "an interpretation of episcopacy in the C.S.I.". It contains a useful summary of the functions of a bishop as these are seen in the C.S.I.: "The bishop is a sign of the unity of the church in time, the sign of the grace of God in giving His gift of ministry to His Church in continuity from earliest days. The bishop is the focus of unity in his diocese. The bishop is a centre round which the Good Shepherd continues to gather His scattered sheep into one flock. The C.S.I. constitution presents the bishop as pastor and as leader in evangelism, teaching, worship, and discipline". Some useful thoughts are added on ways in which the episcopate should be protected from becoming a worldly office, but that this statement is hardly likely to be the C.S.I.'s last word on the subject is plainly stated in the last paragraph: "We are still in the process of discovering the full meaning of episcopacy as a gift of God to His Church. The replies to the (1962) statement revealed a growing appreciation of the bishop's office (the greatest enthusiasm coming often from areas which knew nothing of bishops till 1947). We do not believe that churches without episcopacy are not true churches. Some of the churches with whom we are and intend to remain in full communion are non-episcopal. Yet our experience so far goes to show that episcopacy is not only an effective instrument for the deepening of unity within the Church, not only the form of ministry most likely to establish wider unity with other churches; but a ministry blessed by God's grace with such positive good that we are determined to hold to it ourselves, commend it to others and preserve it in any union with other churches".

After such a clear statement, it might seem that the Lutherans were a very difficult group to convince of our seriousness when they again raised the question, for by now we had gone beyond conversations and were actually negotiating for union with them. Would we insist on a united church being episcopally ordered? Could we admit that it might be partly episcopally ordered and partly non-episcopally? To show that we were open to further discussion we agreed—I myself believe mistakenly—to examine two draft constitutions for a united church, one with a fully episcopal order, the other with a mixed order, but it became clear when these two drafts were studied that the mixed constitution represented no advance in the matter of unity and fellowship over that which already existed between us, that the C.S.I. would not be able to accept it for itself, and that it would compromise any further attempts at closer relations with other episcopal churches, for instance the Anglican Church.

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The most recent step in the matter came when the Theological Commission of the C.S.I. was asked to advise the church, in view of Lutheran questions, whether we held ourselves bound by the pledge given before union to maintain the historic episcopate in any future union, or whether we might feel free as an autonomous church to reconsider the matter, and whether the undertaking given that in 1977 the church would make up its mind whether or not it would

permit any further exercise of ministry by non-episcopally ordained ministers, implied that in 1977 the C.S.I. might ask Lutheran ministers of churches uniting with it to submit to reordination. In the absence of Dr. Russell Chandran in America, I was acting as convener of the Theological Commission, and what most impressed me was the complete unanimity of view in the replies sent to my circular. All agreed that we were bound to maintain the historic episcopate; all equally agreed that there was nothing sacred about 1977, and that we should certainly not want to ask for the reordination of ministers of any church uniting with us before or after that date. The Synod Executive adopted the following two resolutions:

1. The Theological Commission is of the opinion that, although the C.S.I. is an autonomous body and could legally alter its constitution and go into a further union on any terms, it is nevertheless morally bound to observe the pledges given in the Constitution, Chap. II, 11 (iii) and B.U. 9 (iii) "Continuity with the historic episcopate shall both initially and hereafter be effectively maintained", and from its own theological convictions would wish to do so. Yet it would always be willing to explore more deeply the meaning of the term 'the historic episcopate' and the possible forms it might take.

2. The Theological Commission is of the opinion that the pledge to consider in 1977 whether the exercise of ministry by non-episcopally ordained ministers is to be permitted any further in the C.S.I. (i) does not apply to ministers already at that time in service in the C.S.I. (ii) does not prevent us now or later from entering into negotiations with churches whose ministries will not be fully episcopal by that date. On the contrary, the C.S.I. would wish to extend to other churches intending to unite with it the same privileges which its members enjoyed in 1947, namely, that of uniting without any reordination of ministers and that of taking some time for growing together into a fully episcopal Church. Neither the date 1977 nor the period, thirty years, are sacred, and the period may certainly be extended in the interests of wider union.

This statement, it seems to me, brings us full circle, and enables us to sum up the attitude which the C.S.I. has adopted towards episcopacy. It will be seen to be a remarkably consistent picture, the latest statements being no more than interpretations of the first brief sentences drafted before union in the constitution which all churches accepted.

In the first place, experience has filled in the description of the functions of a bishop given in the constitution, with a wealth of reality which members of the C.S.I. have come to treasure to the point of being unwilling to consider ever surrendering the episcopate, and which outsiders also have learned to respect. Undoubtedly the actual men whom the C.S.I. received as its first bishops have done more than all the theologians in fostering this understanding and appreciation. Many of these men grew up in the negotiations before 1947 and so had the thinking of the C.S.I. in their blood, and some have feared that as they retired and their place was taken by men whose whole ministerial experience has been gained within the united church, something of value might be lost. But to prevent this, God in his mercy has given to the C.S.I. these rather drawn-out negotiations with the Lutherans

to remind them, in discussion and constitution-drafting, of the deepest meaning of their heritage. And if, in the blessing of God, these present negotiations bear fruit before long in a wider union of the Lutheran churches with the C.S.I., then a fresh influx of energy and theological and pastoral reflection on the meaning of episcopacy will be released into this new C.S.I. This will be of particular value since until now the churches which have come together in the C.S.I. have been largely the fruit of the English Reformation. The insights and experience of the Continental churches can bring a great new enrichment.

Little has been said in this paper, or anywhere else, about the authority of a bishop in the C.S.I. The bishop is expected to rule according to, and indeed be the chief expositor of, the spiritual meaning of the constitution. Apart from this, both bishops and the church as a whole have shown themselves sensitive lest the bishop's spiritual authority should in any way be corrupted with notions of worldly power and glory.

As focuses of unity, the C.S.I. bishops have found a great work laid to their hand. In times of turbulence and division, Ignatius and Cyprian maintained that to be a Christian, that is, to live fully in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit was to remain loyal to the bishop, the focal point of the Church's life and structure. In very similar circumstances, one C.S.I. bishop, coming fresh to a diocese where there had been serious breakdowns in fellowship, took exactly the same position and required from all his presbyters a special pledge of loyalty; and by this means he soon restored peace to the diocese. In general such extreme measures have not been necessary, and simply by being a pastor, by trying impartially to love, visit, and understand all his flock, the bishop has been able to bring into living fellowship those who before only knew caricatures of one another. Moreover, the C.S.I. bishops have been able to make the idea of union between episcopal and non-episcopal churches a more credible thing throughout the whole world.

As witnesses to the continuity of God's church, the C.S.I. bishops have stood by the truth of the simple statement found in the constitution: Episcopacy has been accepted in the Church from very early times. It may thus fitly be called historic. The C.S.I. has shown that it values this historic continuity by the great care it took in revising its ordinal, by the way it has stood by its pledges to maintain the historic episcopate, and by the way it has constantly spoken of the historic episcopate as a gift of God to His Church. But since Scripture does not prove the episcopate to be the one form of ministry prescribed by our Lord to maintain His Church in His truth, and since the C.S.I. has never wished to deny that God has in days past and at the present time too blessed and, it seems, validated churches without it, the C.S.I. has refused to use its episcopate as a means of judging others, or as a reason for refusing them fellowship.

The matter may be admirably summed up in a short sentence of Bishop Legg's in his essay in the Bishop of Llandaff's book: "We have found that the pastoral office of a bishop is a great instrument for bringing together divided Christians, and we do not believe it should be turned into an instrument of division".