

Editorial

UNTIL relatively recently most of the union schemes in which Anglican churchmen were involved were outside the British Isles. That is not to say that Anglicans in Britain were not interested in church unity. On the contrary they certainly were, as the earnest debates about the South India scheme showed. The Anglican-Presbyterian *Bishops Report* was a further example of a document that engendered a good deal of feeling, though in this case it was largely on the Presbyterian side. Yet the fact remains that until recently no union scheme involving Anglicans in the British Isles had got beyond what the Parliamentarians would call the first reading stage. And when schemes are either miles away in a country most churchmen do not know, or, if they are nearer, are simply bright ideas with little or no chance of being implemented, they are more in the realm of intellectual discussion than in that of hard fact and action which is likely to affect the lives of each of us, sometimes rather uncomfortably. Today the situation is wholly different. In England alone two actual union schemes are before churches: one between Presbyterians and Congregationalists, which has been generally received by the synods of both churches and is soon to be considered at local level, and the other the Anglican-Methodist scheme produced in 1963. There are also discussions going on in Scotland between the Church of Scotland and Scottish Episcopalians, and in England between the Church of England and the English Presbyterians. These two sets of discussions are part of the continuing Anglican-Presbyterian conversations, only now divided into regional groupings following the suggestion of the 1964 Nottingham Faith and Order Conference that unity should be sought in appropriate regional groups.

The Presbyterian-Congregationalist discussions (*A Proposed Basis for Union*, Tavistock Bookshop, 1s. 6d.) are likely to involve the least difficulties, and if all goes well, we understand the plan is for a union by 1970. There are no doctrinal issues at stake, but rather matters of church polity, and a few practical issues. As the Congregationalists have given up their traditional independency, the main difficulty has already been removed, and the united church is likely to be of a more classical Presbyterian kind. The only real criticism so far has been of the proposed title of the united church, *The Reformed Church*, with a geographical addition for purely legal purposes. The title was strongly attacked, though without success, by the English Presbyterians' leading layman, John Ross. Some may think it impertinent of Anglicans to comment, but then all our problems are each other's in these ecumenical days. Our view would be that the title is unnecessarily pretentious, especially the definite article. We are sure it was not intended, but the implication is that here is *the* Reformed church, and any other in the locality is in some degree less Reformed. That we should feel bound to dispute. Names do matter, and we may hope that Mr. Ross will yet prevail.

'TOWARDS RECONCILIATION'

The 1963 Anglican-Methodist scheme has now appeared in revised form in *Towards Reconciliation*, comments on this interim statement have been requested by this month, and the Anglican-Methodist Unity Commission has promised a final report early in 1968. The Interim Statement, it should be noted, is not a signed statement, and does not commit any member of the Commission. It presumably represents a general consensus, and is set out to indicate the lines of thinking and test reactions. The first thing to be said about this Statement is that the doctrinal section, roughly the first half of the whole, is immeasurably improved. Instead of setting out what purported to be an agreed position (on the Anglican side at any rate) which was in fact at a certain crucial point a rather liberalised Anglo-Catholic position, the Statement recognises theological differences within the churches fairly and accurately without attempting to decide between them. That restores much of our confidence, and faces the situation in our churches as we know it is, *de facto*, whatever each of us might like it to be. It is not ultimately a satisfactory solution, unless we are to become totally latitudinarian, because God is not the author of conflicting doctrines, but it is about the best anyone can reasonably expect in the current Anglican doctrinal confusion. The rest of the statement consists of a draft Ordinal and a revised Service of Reconciliation. It was beyond the Commission's terms of reference to replace or do away with that service, as many of us believed desirable.

We are frankly doubtful if this type of approach, which stems in origin from the 1948 Lambeth Conference, will do at all; it tackles the whole question of ministerial union the wrong way, and as a group of Anglicans argued in *All in Each Place* it is better to endure the anomalies involved in a South India style approach than the ambiguities of the present scheme. If the scheme is to be made acceptable, at least three things must be done. First, the 1964 Methodist Conference resolution that English Methodists should retain after Stage Two their links of full communion with all with whom they are in full communion at present, must be clearly and unambiguously agreed by both churches before they enter on Stage One. Second, intercommunion should precede Stage One, as is widely desired in both churches. Third, the words said over the Methodist ministers and Anglican ministers in the Service of Reconciliation must be the same, to avoid any implied grading of ministries into two classes. The weak and evasive footnotes in the Statement which simply say that the Commission is using the language of each church should be avoided. That reasoning convinces no one but the blind. (We should have added a fourth and legal point, had it not been mentioned to us that the Commission was likely to tackle the legal problem, for under the present law any minister celebrating communion or holding a benefice in the Church of England must have been episcopally ordained. That is one of the least fortunate legacies from the unhappy events of 1662, but it inevitably puts a legal gloss on the theology of the Service of Reconciliation.)

But as the service is already under heavy Anglo-Catholic attack,

we are frankly doubtful if such amendments would be acceptable all round, and it is, or certainly ought to be, an agreed axiom that we do want to unite *all* of each church and not merely sections of them with two rumps left. The case against the Service of Reconciliation approach has been cogently argued from the evangelical side in *Prospects for Reconciliation*, edited by C. O. Buchanan (Northwood Christian Book Centre, Middx., 3s. 6d.). What urgently needs to be done if the whole scheme is to be rescued from collapse under pressure from a sizeable Methodist dissentient group, and several sizeable Anglican dissentient groups, is for the Commission in its final report to set out the South India style alternative, at least *as an alternative*. It is an astonishing thing, when a considerable body of opinion in both churches is known to favour the South India way, and when the Service of Reconciliation approach has run into so much criticism, that there has not already been official attention directed to either a South India alternative or a detailed statement as to why it is wrong or impossible. So far as we are aware, and we checked with a member of the Commission, the only refutation of the South India way as an alternative has come in a minute pamphlet of a few pages from the pen of the Methodist Marcus Ward. Those who believe the South India method is right have developed their case at some length in *All in Each Place*, and so far they remain unrefuted. (Earlier Lesslie Newbiggin had tackled some of the major theological issues in his book *The Reunion of the Church*. The *All in Each Place* symposium went further and developed a South India alternative for England.) With their own scheme running into such heavy weather, one would have thought it was in the Commission's own interest to explore a South India alternative, or at least tell us in some detail why they think it inferior to their Service of Reconciliation.

All we have managed to gather so far is the twofold argument that England is not India, and that South India would mean two grades of ministry. But these arguments will not stand up to examination. We have yet to meet anyone who commends South India simply on the grounds of copying what happened in 1947. No advocate of this approach imagines it immediately solves all problems. What is claimed is that it is right in terms of basic *theological principle*, which is the crucial thing that has yet to be refuted, and that in the confused situation of denominational overlap in this country it is *at least no more difficult* in practice than any other approach yet suggested. What is absolutely certain is that it would bring in a large block of Methodists who are at present dissentients, and transfer another large block—from Anglicans this time—from dissentients into enthusiastic supporters.

As to the grades of ministry, the Service of Reconciliation is likely to make not two grades, as its defenders claim South India would mean, but three—the reconciled, Methodist unreconciled and Anglican unreconciled. The mind boggles at what happens when the reconciliation process is applied to further union schemes and returning missionaries from overseas. If we are to be convinced by the Commission's final report, we shall want some good reasons why South India is not preferable to the present proposals.

LORD FISHER'S CRITIQUE

If this was true before the events of July, it is tenfold more so after them. Up to that time, the chief opponents of the Service of Reconciliation, either in its 1963 or in its 1967 form, had been Methodist dissentients and Anglican evangelicals. Others, notably Anglo-Catholics and the former Archbishop of Canterbury, Lord Fisher, had been critical, but except for the extreme Anglo-Catholic Society of the Holy Cross, only Methodist dissentients and Anglican evangelicals had stated that they were conscientiously unable to take part in the Service. In July, however, there appeared Lord Fisher's booklet *Covenant and Reconciliation* (Mowbray, 1s. 6d.), his boldest sally to date from his retirement, and a long statement from the acknowledged mouth-piece of the Anglo-Catholic party, the Church Union (printed in full in the *Church of England Newspaper* for 28 July.) It would be easy to criticise Lord Fisher's booklet, which has been extravagantly praised by some: his enthusiasm for the nebulous notion of full communion and his confidence that the Church of England can never enter into this relationship with a non-episcopal church particularly lend themselves to criticism. But his booklet is notable for three things—his outspokenness, his conviction that Methodist ministers are already presbyters in the ministry of the Church of God and do not require any kind of ordination, and his thrice repeated declaration that, for reasons of clear thinking and conscience, he would himself be unable to take part in the Service of Reconciliation.

THE CHURCH UNION'S CRITIQUE

It does not take a great deal of imagination to realise that, when the former primate has announced that he will not participate in the Service of Reconciliation, the Service can hardly take place. Still less is this conceivable after the Church Union statement, recommending that 'without some more positive statement on the role of the ministerial priesthood as traditionally understood in Catholic Christendon . . . no bishop or priest should take part in the Service of Reconciliation.' In many ways the Church Union statement is a deplorable document. Though it contains certain acute criticisms, it condemns each of the improved doctrinal chapters, gives a warning against any proposal for intercommunion before the Service of Reconciliation, and reflects throughout the old-fashioned exclusive party-line of Anglo-Catholicism in the 1920's. This may be due to the fact that it was produced, not by the committee of the Church Union, but by the rank-and-file of its members at a conference. Be that as it may, taken at its face value it is a wholly negative document, and while it makes the search for an alternative to the Service of Reconciliation imperative, it gives no grounds for hoping that any alternative which was not constructed on medieval principles would be any more acceptable to the present generation of Anglo-Catholics than the Service itself.

THE DIVISION IN METHODISM

One further matter on Anglican-Methodist relations. We cannot help expressing considerable concern at the way dissentient Methodists

are being treated. The *Voice of Methodism* has had its adverts banned from the *Methodist Recorder*. No known Methodist dissident or critic appears among the Unity Commission's membership, though we hear that one was originally invited. But what is most alarming of all is the number of quite independent reports reaching us from eminently reliable sources of bitter denunciations of Methodist dissenters, dismissing them as wild men, extremists, backwoodsmen and the rest. Several senior Methodists known to be critical of the scheme have been dropped from important Methodist committees, and whether rightly or wrongly such people and many others feel that Methodist officialdom is determined to do their cause down. It is an unsavoury situation, and it ill becomes those who profess to have the cause of Christian unity at heart to let such a situation develop. Methodist public relations with others are hardly helped by a press officer who goes around threatening other members of the religious press and their contributors with libel actions. Something is manifestly wrong within the Methodist set-up.

TWO MORE ECUMENICAL REPORTS

The 1964 Nottingham Conference called on all member churches of the British Council of Churches to covenant together for union, and if they could not see their way to uniting by Easter day 1980, they were to say why not. One byproduct of Nottingham is to stimulate the Baptist Union into declaring the Baptist attitude to ecumenism. This they have done in *Baptists and Unity*, Baptist Union, 3s. 6d., though in the light of its contents it would more accurately describe it as containing Baptist attitudes to unity, for the diversity of view within the Baptist Union is much stressed. The pamphlet starts off with a review of current Baptist relationships across the globe. That is most valuable for the non-Baptist. In the next section, which tackles the difficulties, six points are listed—baptism, the position of the local church, Communion, episcopacy and ministry, credal tests for membership, and finally Church and State. On practically every issue they admit differences among themselves. Then they turn to the current scene, and note several new points—among them, the increasing self-consciousness of conservative-evangelicals across denominational boundaries, and the spread of pentecostalism within denominations. Among their positive contributions these Baptists urge a distinction between unity which is the gift of God and union or reunion which is man-engendered, a greater realisation of the unity involved in the baptismal confession, and more attention to the local church unit. These are important points for all Christians, not just Baptists, and a healthy check to an excess of ecclesiastical joinery and overlarge ecclesiastical units controlled from the centre. They also reflect the basic God-giveness of the essential unity of all Christians in Christ, a fact which is apt to be overlooked in such loose talk as 'working towards unity.' The problem of the ecumenical movement is, viewed biblically, one of realising our God-given unity, not of men placing together broken parts of a church.

Another recent report which owes its origin to Nottingham, is the British Council of Churches report *Covenant—Commitment Before*

God, CIO, 2s. This has been produced by a BCC working party and is in the form of a preliminary survey sketching out the kind of thing covenanting for union might involve. Section D perceives five possible elements in this: a solemn undertaking, before God, before other churches, to seek union together, and within the foreseeable future. Later on certain implications are drawn out, such as the common use of church buildings, general areas of ecumenical co-operation which are specified, and the designation of special ecumenical experiment areas. The difficulties felt by Baptists, Salvationists and Quakers in agreeing to the goal of union are noted, but the crucial question of intercommunion remains to be discussed in the next round of talks. That is the real heart of the question of covenanting. Let us hope that the working party will face the theology squarely, and if they cannot agree unanimously as is not improbable, at least set out clearly the theological differences rather than attempt some compromise that says nothing. We shall watch eagerly for the second report of this working party.

TWO ECUMENICAL BOOKS

Two important books have appeared on the ecumenical front. One is a reprint with a revised bibliography, but Ruth Rouse and Stephen Neill's *A History of the Ecumenical Movement 1517-1948*, SPCK 838 pp., 55s. is important for all that. It is an invaluable reference book, and among its many virtues is the historical perspective which reminds us that not all ecumenical enterprise belongs to the twentieth century. The book itself tells us that a further volume is in preparation, and for this reason the editors have not attempted to bring the present volume up to date.

The second book is a major attack on ecumenism, and it comes from the pen of a distinguished Scottish theologian. Ian Henderson's *Power without Glory: A Study in Ecumenical Politics*, Hutchinson, 184 pp., 30s. is written almost at journalistic level but with documentation where necessary. The author is mainly concerned with imperialistic Anglican intrusion into the Scottish scene, and he chronicles the Anglican attacks on the *Scottish Daily Express*, which incidentally is one of the best informed national papers ecclesiastically, whatever one may think of its editorial angle on ecumenism. He notes the affront to the Moderator of the Church of Scotland at Her Majesty's Coronation when Archbishop Fisher refused him communion, a fact that was first revealed by J. D. Douglas in *Evangelicals and Unity*, and later publicised by the *Scottish Daily Express*. He mentions the ecumenical hypocrisy of the Tirrell case when the Bishop of Edinburgh forbade a young American episcopalian clergyman to administer the sacraments in St. Giles' High Kirk, Glasgow. He retells the story of the rejection of the *Bishops Report*, and how the Church of Scotland delegates exceeded their brief in the recent discussions with Anglicans at Holland House. Those are some of the details.

Professor Henderson's case is that so far from being concerned with love, much ecumenism is in fact really interested in power, power to rule everyone in one church, power to dominate committees, and guarantee majorities even after an initial defeat or two. He ruthlessly

exposes ecumenical jargon for its real meaning which he claims the jargon is often designed to conceal. He attacks the endless claims that the Holy Spirit is behind all the latest ecumenical moves, with the corollary that inspiration comes to the critics only from the other place.

It is easy to dismiss all this as the latest manifestation of Scottish nationalism, but the professor refutes that charge, urging that it is the English who are the nationalists. For those of us committed to the ecumenical ideal of one church in one place the trouble is that there is all too much truth in what he says, though in places we do think his examples rather extreme. The most serious aspect is his criticism that when you have cut through the verbiage, the Lausanne 1927 declaration was in fact a grand charter for Anglican imperialism, and that the Protestant Episcopal Church of the U.S.A. were the real villains in achieving this. The difficulty is that whatever lip service Anglicans may pay to incorporating other elements of church order, the one fixed point for any scheme so far in which Anglicans are involved is the historic episcopate. As long as that remains so at all times and in all places, Professor Henderson's charge remains justified. It is one thing to believe in the value of episcopacy pastorally in certain situations; it is quite another to insist on it everywhere. A ministry recognised by all is a desirable goal (Lambeth 1930—significantly different from Lausanne 1927), but to assume that it must always be episcopal is quite erroneous theologically. *Episcopate* is a biblical essential; the historic episcopate as modern Anglicans expound it is a latter day development, the value of which has been much exaggerated, if we are to be frank, and which urgently needs rethinking in terms of the biblical notion of an *episcopate* of the whole church.

For Anglicans to remove the suspicion of ecumenical doublethink, or as Professor Henderson calls it imperialism, they should formally recognise intercommunion with all orthodox non-episcopal churches with whom they are not in a relationship of local schism, and Anglicans should show themselves willing to enter on union schemes in which the historic episcopate is not involved, provided corporate *episcopate* is adequately safeguarded.

Professor Henderson has written a book whose basic criticism of the all in each place concept is unacceptable to us, but ecumenically minded churchmen would be foolish if because of that and some rather overzealous phraseology they ignored some of his other criticisms, especially the power politics one, which can be uncomfortably near the truth. No wonder he finds much greater freedom of theological discussion in informal discussion with the Roman Catholics where power politics are absent. Our own experience of informal ecumenical discussions as against official ones tends the same way, though we should not express the difference so strongly. The atmosphere is much better, and in consequence the discussion is much more likely to get to the real problems. Nothing is more exasperating than watching a key committee constantly wandering round the edge of a theological problem and finally refusing to face it. That is a shortcoming to which current Anglicanism is peculiarly prone, and probably British ecumenism as a whole is nearly as bad.

Professor Henderson raises the further question as to whether the

churches are not really being distracted by all these official ecumenical negotiations which are only dividing the churches into warring parties, rather than getting on with more important tasks like evangelism, apologetics, and sorting out doctrinal issues. He may well be right.

ARTICLES IN THIS ISSUE

It is symptomatic of the extraordinary amount of diverse business which confronts Church Assembly at present, that along with the two articles in this issue prompted by the new Anglican-Methodist report, there should be one on each of two other reports. The article dealing with 'Government by Synod' is an interesting assessment from outside the Church of England, and from a church where government by synods is already familiar. The article dealing with 'Partners in Ministry', the report of the commission on the deployment and payment of the clergy, embodies the first reactions of a writer specially qualified to assess it by his wealth of experience both as a parochial clergyman and as a patronage trustee.

PURITAN EXHIBITION

An exhibition of Elizabethan Puritanism at the Lambeth Palace Library began at the beginning of June and continues until the end of the year. It is open on weekdays, from 10.0 a.m. to 4.0 p.m. There is no charge for admission. G.E.D.

Publisher's Note

It would not be right to let this occasion pass without paying tribute to the work of the outgoing editor, Dr. Philip Edgcumbe Hughes. Dr. Hughes has edited *The Churchman* since 1958, latterly from America, where he is now Guest Professor of New Testament Exegesis in Columbia Seminary, Decatur, Georgia. Under his direction the circulation of the journal has grown, and its influence in the Church has grown too. Dr. Hughes is a theological scholar of wide range, and the journal has benefited enormously from his wise and enlightened direction. His editorial articles have been greatly valued; we hope that they will still continue in some form. Meanwhile, we know that we carry our readers with us in expressing to him our warmest gratitude for what he has given during the past nine years. Without begrudging America its good fortune, we wish we had him back in Britain again!