

possible pitfalls, has been able to do. Let changes come, and come speedily. But let them not be of the kind which destroy what the past has given before we know that what is put in its place is going to work. Evolutionary change has been the genius of the Church of England, as the architecture of many ancient churches witnesses.

If there has been criticism of the Report in this article there can be none for the basic aims of the Commission. We can all agree with the statement that 'the needs of the Church, as it faces the tremendous challenge of the latter half of the twentieth century, must have priority'. The words occur as a summing up of the section which demolishes patronage. It is interesting to compare with this the words of Charles Simeon: 'It is for the *people* and for the *Church of God* that we are to provide'. He charged his Trustees that 'when they shall be called upon to appoint to a living, they consult nothing but the welfare of the people for whom they are to provide, and whose eternal interests have been confided to them'. If Diocesan Ministry Commissions ever come, they might do worse than have Simeon's Charge written into their constitutions.

Letter to the Editor

Sir,

In evaluating Dr. Hughes' editorial comments, printed in the Summer issue, on the Anglican-Methodist Unity Commission's Interim Statement, the following points should be borne in mind.

1. An inter-church commission, like any other responsible body, is bound by its terms of reference. This commission has been told simply to tidy up the 1963 scheme (see pp. 77f.). The fact that its offering is 'little more than a rehash of the 1963 Report' should not therefore cause surprise, let alone 'disappointment': what else could one expect? Equally, it is gratuitous to opine that its members 'have been happy to cast themselves in the role of apostles of equivocation' when they are simply doing their appointed job of spelling out the basis of the equivocal 1963 Service of Reconciliation.

2. The Statement, like the Interim Statement of the first commission, is unsigned. Also, it is put forward on an explicitly provisional basis: 'nothing stated here necessarily represents the final thoughts of the Commission' (p. 3). It should not, therefore, be thought 'surprising' that it contains 'no note of dissent from either Anglican or Methodist'. (The 1958 Interim Statement contained none either.) The Statement is a fragment: a specimen of work in progress, put out to test opinion and secure reactions (p. 2) which will guide the commission in composing its final report. Whether all members of the commission will be able to recommend the 1963 scheme when the tidying-up process is complete is something which they themselves cannot be expected to know, let alone to say, till that point is reached.

3. The doctrinal statements are not confessional in intent. If they purported to set up new standards of faith for the two churches as they advance through full communion into union, they could fairly be

accused, as Dr. Hughes accuses them, of vicious latitudinarianism. But their aim is different. They are descriptive, not prescriptive nor permissive. They report the state of theological opinion in the two churches on certain key issues, and on this basis pose one question, and one only: 'whether we hold enough in common to warrant advance into full communion, and ultimately union, despite differences of belief which remain at present unresolved' (p. 3). Dr. Hughes' supposition that they reflect an ungodly and hazardous 'desire to *make room* for theological turmoil and opinions that are in conflict with one another' (as if these factors were not already present!) shows only that he has misconceived the nature of these statements, and their purpose in the Report.

Yours faithfully,

J. I. PACKER

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EFAC News

The Evangelical Fellowship in the Church in Wales has recently been accepted into group membership of EFAC. The Chairman is the Rev. Bertie Lewis, Vicar of Aberaeron, and the Secretary is the Rev. Bill Lewis, Curate of Llanelli. This fellowship has recently signalled its existence by publishing a critical review of the experimental Welsh communion service. Edited by Bertie Lewis, and entitled *Revised Service of Holy Communion: some Problems Considered*, it is obtainable from Aberaeron Vicarage, Cards., at a cost of 3s.