

The C.S.I. and the Ministry

[We believe that readers will be interested in the following extracts from the Report of the C.S.I. Synod Theological Commission, recently received.—Ed.]

THE EPISCOPATE IN A UNITED CHURCH

With the help of the Holy Spirit we need to give earnest and prayerful attention to the following points :

(a) We must keep before our people the image of the bishop as first and foremost a father in God, involved in and concerned about the affairs of his spiritual children ; one to whom his people come not in the first place about financial and property matters, but for spiritual counsel ; a man of God to whom they can look up for prophetic guidance. It was our concern to restore this image of the bishop which prompted the suggestion that administration should be separated from the bishop's pastoral office. This concern comes from the apostles themselves, as we read in Acts 6. We need the guidance of the Spirit to know what lightening of the bishop's burden of administration corresponds today to the removal from the apostles of the 'serving of tables'. Without getting himself entangled in the financial, educational and medical administration of the diocese, the bishop and his council must co-ordinate all the various aspects of the life and work of the diocese so as to edify the church, witness to the Gospel and serve the needy world.

(b) We need to give much more thought to the question of the *episcopate* of the whole Church as distinguishable from and complimentary to the personal *episcopate* of the bishop, i.e. to the constitutional form of episcopacy. The bishop is pastor, teacher, evangelist, etc. But it is not only the bishop who is called to exercise such functions. The Church has been rightly called a prophetic community, a teaching group, a priestly congregation, a pastoral company and an evangelistic brotherhood. Similarly, the personal *episcopate* of the bishop is representative of the *episcopate* of the whole diocese. *Episcopate* is rightly exercised when bishop and Christian community exercise it each in due measure. The *episcopate* of the bishop does not remove responsibility from the Church as a whole ; nor does the due exercise of the Church's corporate *episcopate* lessen the responsibility of the bishop. We need to make much clearer to ourselves and others the meaning of the claim to have an episcopacy of a bishop-in-council, where personal and corporate elements are combined.

THE DIACONATE

We need to be clear that the ministry, in all its forms, is the ministry of the whole Church. Every member of the Church is a part of God's chosen race, God's royal priesthood, God's holy nation, God's own people. It is through the whole body that the Lord continues to proclaim the Word, gather the flock, do His work of compassion. Every Christian has a part in all these activities. In a real sense the Christian's initiation into the Church, his baptism and confirmation, is his ordination as God's minister, to work for Christ in the world. But it is God's way to set aside certain called and chosen ones as special ministers for the sake of the ministry of all—as bishops, presbyters and deacons. Every Christian is in one sense all three, partaking in the obligation to witness, love and serve. But some from the whole number are set aside by ordination to be the explicit and representative organs of the Church's whole activity in the name of Christ. The distinctive character and function of the ordained ministry is also to be understood in terms of the Liturgy (*leitourgia*), where the Church offers her own life and the world to God, remembering the sacrifice of Christ and participating in the sacrifice, and has a foretaste of the final fulfilment of God's work in Christ. The ordained ministers, therefore, have a special function in the Liturgy and help to interpret the ministry of the people of God in the world as the ministry of Christ. Within the threefold ministry some who have a calling for compassionate service are to be set aside by deacon's ordination to be the representative organ of the Church's *diakonia* in the name of Christ. We believe this to be a lifetime calling to serve and that only when the diaconate is so conceived will it be a worthy instrument of Christ's *diakonia* and a part of His total ministry. The deacon's particular responsibility in worship would be for the offerings of the people and the intercession for the world. His responsibility in the world would be the organization, co-ordination and promotion of Christian service and social action, a ministry which expresses Christ's compassion for His people.

OUR CONTRIBUTORS

The Rev. D. Rajarigam is Principal of the Tamil Evangelical Lutheran Church Divinity School, Tranquebar, South India.

The Rev. Dr. J. R. Chandran is Principal of the United Theological College, Bangalore, and Secretary of the C.S.I. Synod Theological Commission.

The Rev. Dr. F. S. Downs is Acting Principal of Eastern Theological College, Jorhat, Assam.

The Rev. Dr. M. L. Kretzmann was until 1963 Principal of Concordia Theological Seminary, Nagercoil, South India.