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The Church of South India and Reunion in England

BY J. I. PACKER*

ON 27 September 1947, the Church of South India was born. On 27 September 1968, it came of age. It is a bonny young adult consisting of more than a million ex-Anglicans, ex-Methodists, and ex-members of the South India United Church, which was a Presbyterian-Congregationalist merger dating from 1908. Recently a small Lutheran contingent has been added to the Church's numbers, and it is probable that something like 400,000 more Lutherans will unite with the CSI in the not too distant future. It is recognised that a merger on this scale would in effect be the creation, once more, of a new church, but this prospect is welcomed rather than shunned, for the CSI has sought from the outset to be a uniting, as well as a united body. It is an episcopally ordered church, consisting of thirteen dioceses; its three-fold ministry is structured in the Anglican manner; and it is still, after 21 years, the only church united out of episcopal and non-episcopal units that the world has yet seen. Bishop Stephen Neill's statement that the inauguration of the CSI is 'the greatest venture yet made anywhere in the direction of church union'¹, remains as true in 1968 as it was in 1960, when it first appeared in print. No other scheme for such a union has yet come to fruition. The CSI still goes it alone.

Has the union in South India succeeded? The question is easier to ask than to answer, for it is hard to establish criteria, short of subsequent schism, by which the 'success' or otherwise of a union could be measured. Opinion as to what constitutes success in church union will vary in the same way that opinion will vary as to what constitutes success in marriage. But this much, at least, may be said.

First, those who speak from inside the CSI, as past or present members and officers, are unanimous that the new fellowship has been liberating and creative, and that beyond any question the life of the catholic church, as mirrored in the New Testament, has been authentically manifested within the CSI structure. The witnesses here include Bishops Stephen Neill, Michael Hollis, and Lesslie Newbiggin, Professor Anthony Hanson, and the Indian lay leader Rajaiah D. Paul. Their testimony has recently been confirmed in all essentials by a discerning and by no means uncritical observer, Mark Gibbard, S.S.J.E., in his book *Unity is not Enough* (Mowbrays, 1965). What is claimed here is not, of course, that the CSI is a perfect church, nor even that it is a healthy church (its own report on itself, *Renewal and Advance*², was scathing in self-censure), only that it is a real church, that is that it is part of the one universal church of Jesus Christ, of which each particular congregation or group of congregations is a local outcrop.

* Originally read to the 1968 Conference of Evangelical Churchmen.

Second, the Anglican world has reached a striking consensus of agreement as to the authenticity and catholicity of the CSI. In 1948, Lambeth's attitude to the young church was one of freezing non-welcome. The bishops expressed disapproval of the way that its ministry had been unified (i.e., by unqualified mutual recognition of episcopal and non-episcopal orders alike, under the historic episcopate), and said that though this 'heroic experiment in reunion' was 'under the guidance, as we believe, of the Holy Spirit'³, no such unification should ever happen again if Anglicans could help it. They added that, largely because of the method of unification followed, doubts as to the new church's catholicity were too widespread to allow recognition of its orders for the time being. In 1958, Lambeth was more positive on this latter point, and noted without disapproval that five Anglican churches (the four in Britain, and the Church of India, Burma, Pakistan and Ceylon) had already accepted South Indian orders by formal synodical resolution; but Lambeth made no recommendation of its own. The atmosphere, if not exactly icy, was still cool. But, whereas in 1948 the Lambeth Fathers had laid it down that 'the establishment of full communion in a complete and technical sense . . . must wait till the ministry of the CSI has been fully unified on an episcopal basis'⁴, the 1968 Lambeth Conference recommended 'that Churches and Provinces of the Anglican Communion re-examine their relation to the Church of South India with a view to entering into full communion with that Church' (Resolution 48b), just as half the Church of England's own Intercommunion Commission had urged a few months earlier⁵, despite the known fact that the CSI ministry is not entirely episcopal⁶ nor is it likely to become fully so in the immediate future. Full communion with South India is something which Evangelicals have long desired to see⁷, and one is thankful that this move has at last been made by Anglican world leaders.

It is not, of course, open to denial that there is a certain practical awkwardness about the 'CSI method' of integrating episcopal and non-episcopal ministries, due to the fact that many present-day Anglicans 'conscientiously hold' (I quote the words of the 1958 Lambeth Conference) 'that the celebrant of the Eucharist should have been ordained by a bishop standing in the historic succession, and generally believe it to be their duty to bear witness to this principle by receiving Holy Communion only from those who have been thus ordained'⁸. That these are not the convictions of all Anglicans was known, or at any rate knowable, long before 1958, and has been made very clear since, but it remains true that a large number of Anglicans see these positions as integral to Christianity itself; and consciences, however weak and misguided, must be respected, even while one is labouring to correct them—otherwise one dishonours the image of God in which man was made. Therefore there is written into the Constitution of the CSI the Pledge, a provision designed to guarantee to ex-Anglican congregations and their members liberty to decline the eucharistic ministrations of non-episcopal clergy in the united Church without either being accused of breaking fellowship or losing status in the Church. The Pledge is, of course, drafted in general terms, but it was, and is, only Anglicans who ever have difficulties at this point.

The key sentences of the Pledge are as follows:

They [the uniting Churches] therefore pledge themselves and fully trust each other that the United Church will at all times be careful not to allow any overriding of conscience either by Church authorities or by majorities. . . . Neither forms of worship or ritual, nor a ministry to which they have not been accustomed or to which they conscientiously object, will be imposed upon any congregation; and no arrangements with regard to these matters will knowingly be made, either generally or in particular cases, which would either offend the conscientious convictions of persons directly concerned, or which would hinder the development of complete unity within the United Church or imperil its progress towards union with other churches*.

The constitution also gives assurance that after the first thirty years the question of non-episcopal orders in the CSI will be reviewed.

The Pledge expresses, on the one hand, the belief that the differences of conviction involved here are tolerable within a united church and, on the other hand, an attitude of mutual love, trust, and pastoral concern. Professor Hanson has testified that in his experience the Pledge was faithfully honoured: when certain Anglican clergy declined to receive Holy Communion from their non-episcopal colleagues, he writes, 'their refusal was not misunderstood by their Free Church brethren: a wonderful exercise of charity on their part'¹⁰. Naturally, however, this set-up has seemed to many Anglicans very much a second best compared with the ideal put forward in the 'Appeal to all Christian People' of the 1920 Lambeth Conference, of a ministry acceptable to all without exception from the start of a united church's life. It is, accordingly, no wonder that in all other union negotiations in which Anglicans have been involved since 1920, a determined attempt has been made to secure such a ministry, by the only means by which the scruples of 'catholic' Anglicans about non-episcopal ministers could be removed—that is, by asking those ministers to do something which could be construed as fulfilling the 1920 plea that for ministry in a united church they should 'accept a commission through Episcopal ordination'. (This, in fact, was the proposal in South India till in 1926 the Anglicans, led by the 'catholic' Bishop Palmer¹¹, broke the deadlock which the proposal had caused by suggesting in its place the essentials of the present procedure.) For the furthering of the Lambeth 1920 ideal a number of unification rites have been devised in the various union schemes, including the proposed Anglican-Methodist Services of Reconciliation. These rites, and the schemes of which they are part, have, however, created problems. In England, in particular, it is clear that if the Services of Reconciliation take place as proposed, hurting division at ministerial level will be inflicted on both the churches involved. The situation obliges us to ask whether, in our attempt to realise the 1920 ideal, we have not in fact bitten off more than we can chew, and whether the right course is not to retreat to something which, while less ambitious, will be less disruptive. The twenty-first birthday of CSI was marked by a meeting in London under the title 'Church Unity—has the CSI the answer?' I propose to argue

that, for us in England at any rate, it has, in the sense that the only way through our present difficulties that does not threaten more harm than good is to apply the principles on which the CSI was founded in 1947.

GENERAL COMMENTS

I begin my argument with some general comments on the Anglican-Methodist scheme, which provides for union by two stages, with full communion operating throughout Stage 1 on the basis of an episcopal unification of the two ministries in the Services of Reconciliation. As the one member of the Anglican-Methodist Unity Commission who was unable to sign its final report, I had better indicate my view of it at once¹². I believe that the Commission did a wholly responsible job, conscientiously fulfilling its terms of reference and making the best of them that could be made. My difficulty was not with my colleagues, but with the terms of reference which bound us. The detailed precision of these was such as to constitute us not so much an exploratory body as a ways-and-means committee, and their contents made inevitable the defects which I find in our report. On the scheme, as the report presents it, I have three observations to make.

First, note its *limited scope*. It is, strictly speaking, much less than a union scheme. It is no more than a prelude to a union scheme, seeking only to create conditions in which a union scheme will later become possible. Its concern is to arrange the engagement, not to plan the wedding. Bishop Michael Hollis puts this clearly. 'It is essential to realise' (he writes) 'that the proposals here being considered seek something radically different from what was aimed at and achieved in South India. There from the first the negotiators were trying to find God's way to one united Church. In England the result of Stage one, with which the two Churches are now concerned, will be the continuance of the same two separate Churches, with their relations somewhat improved but retaining their essential independent power structures unaltered. It is hoped that the removal of certain barriers to closer fellowship will make possible that growth of understanding and desire for unity which are essential if there are to be effective negotiations leading to one united Church. The Report insists that Stage one has no meaning except in the context of a solemn pledge to seek full integrated union at the earliest possible moment. But it proposes Stage one just because the representatives of the two Churches are convinced that the conditions in which effective negotiations for unity can be carried through do not yet exist in this country but have to be created. Stage one cannot ensure success in Stage two.'¹³ What is proposed, in other words, is no more than an initial accommodation, with a promise to go on to union if we can.

It is important to see the limited scope of the report clearly. It has been criticised as pedestrian, lacking a vision of unity, theologically unenterprising, preoccupied with institutional adjustments, and far too much concerned with finding room for as much of the present faith and practice of both Churches as possible. These characterisations

are doubtless true, but they are hardly fair criticism. It is unreasonable to blame our report for being pragmatic and accommodating when our task was precisely to arrange a pragmatic accommodation. I can see why the report should disappoint people whose concern is with unity in the full biblical sense—people, that is, who seek that ‘unity of the Spirit’ (Ephesians 4: 3) that appears in a common confession of divine truth, a common quest for holiness and obedience to Jesus Christ, a mutual love and acceptance among Christian people, and an active partnership in mission and evangelism. I can see why they should feel that our preoccupation with external ecclesiastical adjustments is sub-spiritual, and why they should feel bound to protest that unity involves more than this. Also, I can see why people should ask about this scheme Ian Henderson’s question about all union schemes involving Anglicans¹⁴—whether it expresses a Christian concern for human beings, or an Anglican concern for ecclesiastical power (coupled, perhaps, with a Methodist concern for status and security). These, I think, are all natural Christian reactions to so limited a document. What I cannot see, however, is why anyone should accuse those who oppose the scheme as it stands of being enemies of unity. May we not raise the question whether this preliminary pragmatic adjustment, as proposed, will really make for happy union? and whether the union resulting will really be a true manifesting and furthering of ‘the unity of the Spirit’? If there is a flaw in the scheme, the best friends of unity are those who most faithfully point the flaw out. Movement is not progress when the move is ill-conceived. (Have you never heard of the motto displayed in the Wayside Pulpit, ‘Anywhere, provided it be forward—David Livingstone’, under which someone wrote ‘And so say all of us—The Gadarene Swine’?) The fact that the report was too limited in scope to be able to probe in depth at this point makes it all the more necessary for others to do so, and to suggest otherwise would be as ridiculous as it would be offensive to anyone of responsible mind.

Second, note the scheme’s *inner incoherence*. When I use this phrase, I am not (I hasten to say) referring to the ‘ambiguity’ of the Services of Reconciliation; this is not incoherent at all. The fact that the report forbids either Church to say that these Services either do or do not confer episcopal ordination upon Methodist ministers is a calculated effect, with clear and careful thought behind it. The report is expressing the conviction that unless you can say of these Services ‘they are ordinations, if you wish to think so, but not if you don’t’—unless, that is, the question, are we to treat these Services as ordination? is answered as some answer the question, are we to go to confession?, with the formula ‘all may, none need, some should’—the Services cannot achieve full communion. There is no incoherence in this. But there is real incoherence in the report at two other points, at least.

First, the ‘Stage 2 Pledge’ cuts across the provisions and intentions of the draft Bill. By the ‘Stage 2 Pledge’ I mean the recommendation that ‘as our two Churches move forward into Stage One they should do so with the firm and declared intention that ways shall be found by which at Stage Two no relations at present maintained by either Church will be broken’ (para. 165). This means that, unless Stage 2 is to be

postponed till all non-episcopal churches throughout the world have become episcopal, and no non-episcopal ministers are left, entry into Stage 1 must be held to involve an agreement on the part of Anglicans that arrangements must be made for the united Church to continue in the same relation of full communion with orthodox non-episcopal Christendom (something like 200,000,000 Christians all told) as the Methodist Church enjoys now. This would involve that ministers in the united Church would be able to invite Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, Congregationalist, or Lutheran ministers from anywhere in the world to celebrate Holy Communion for them, just as present-day Methodist ministers can do. The recognition in para. 166 that 'the requirement of the strictest invariability of episcopal ordination, with its concomitant that the celebration of the Eucharist is confined to bishops and presbyters so ordained, cannot in a united Church be reconciled with a provision which allows the Holy Communion to be celebrated by visiting ministers who have not been episcopally ordained' serves only to make the meaning of the Pledge explicit. Yet section 3 (2)(a) of the Bill maintains the principle of excluding non-episcopal ministers from celebrating Communion in the Church of England, by providing that after the Services of Reconciliation only 'ministers of each Church *who have taken part*' may interchange functions at the Lord's Table. But the imposing of this restriction must be judged arbitrary and pointless, if we are also asked at Stage 1 to be ready to abandon the exclusive principle at Stage 2. The Bishop of Willesden, from his standpoint, sees this clearly, and writes that one of his reasons for objecting to the Services of Reconciliation is 'because I believe, with Dr. Packer, that the pledge for Stage Two for full communion with non-episcopal Churches, to be taken as part of Stage One, makes it difficult to see any significance in the inclusion of the laying on of hands'—apart from a merely frivolous significance as 'a gesture to satisfy certain Anglicans'.¹⁵

This incoherence was rendered inevitable by the need to take note of both the insistence on 'the strictest invariability of episcopal ordination' in the 1963 *Conversations* report, and also the insistence of the 1967 Methodist Conference that 'no scheme of union should be considered which involves a severance of the Methodist Church from other Churches in this country or overseas with which it is already in full communion' (para. 159). Whether inevitability should be held to make such incoherence tolerable may, however, be doubted.

Second, the report, while budgeting for the certainty that some Methodist ministers will for conscientious reasons decline to take part in the Services of Reconciliation and so will not be eligible to celebrate Communion in the Church of England, regularly speaks as if Stage 1 will inaugurate full communion between the two Churches. It will not; it will bring in partial communion only, since this class of Methodist ministers will be excluded from the full relation of interchange. Perhaps non-participant Anglican ministers will be treated as *personae non gratae* by the Methodist Church also; we shall see. But in any case, the report has no business to give the impression that its proposals can lead to full communion at Stage 1 in practice. Its attempts to leave this impression constitute a further incoherence.

This leads to my third general observation, which is: note the scheme's *divisive tendencies*.

First, it is certain to divide the two ministries at Stage 1. We know already that some ministers in both Churches will not take part in a Service of Reconciliation because they cannot accept in the present situation the principle of episcopal exclusivism which the Bill enshrines, and that others in the Church of England will not take part because the scheme does not, in their view, express the episcopal principle definitely enough. When this happens, the calamity of 1662 will be repeated in both Churches: ministers who on grounds of conscience and conviction cannot accept the newly imposed uniformity (in this case, participation in a Service of Reconciliation) will find their ministry limited, and limited by the deliberate action of their own Church. Nobody will intend discrimination, any more than the scheme does, but the logic of the situation makes it inevitable. There will be a large number of posts in both Churches for which non-participant ministers will not be thought eligible. Whereas the effect of the CSI scheme was to constitute all the clergy of the uniting bodies, episcopal and non-episcopal alike, a single ministry, unambiguously viewed as such even though individual congregations could not accept particular clergy, the effect of this scheme will be to divide two hitherto united brotherhoods of ministers, probably in each case in a proportion of about three to one. The hurt likely to result from this division into first- and second-class ministers is great, for the latter can hardly help feeling that their own Church has failed them (and, of course, from one standpoint they will be perfectly right to feel this). It will be a bitter business.

Second, the scheme is likely to divide the two Churches before Stage 2. Para. 166 urges us to go ahead with the problem of the irresistible force of the Methodist commitment to full communion with non-episcopal churches versus the immovable object of Anglican addiction to episcopal exclusiveness at the Lord's Table still unsolved. But are we not asking for trouble if we do this? One foresees sooner or later a situation in which Methodists and some Anglicans argue that the time for Stage 2 is come and are met by other Anglicans arguing that this cannot be so, because they cannot accept the Methodist stipulation for the united Church. Then confidence will break down, and mistrust and a sense of betrayal come in, at the most damaging possible point. It needs to be remembered that the desperate question, sometimes heard in these discussions, 'can the Church of England unite with anybody?', is a question about Stage 2, not Stage 1. Is Stage 2 attainable, if we accept the present proposals for Stage 1? is a question which may well give us pause. For my part, I doubt whether it is. Para. 166 exhorts us to trust God about it, but a truer and less presumptuous piety might move us rather to amend our badly constructed scheme.

SOUTH INDIA PRINCIPLES

I have pointed out some of the built-in weaknesses and drawbacks of the present scheme. I now ask, what changes would South India

principles suggest? The answer to that question is, I think, a double one. First, the application of South India principles would lead to *a shift of interest in the project as a whole*. We should stir ourselves up, at this level, to bite off more. We should embrace more clearly and whole-heartedly the South India objective of multilateral union enhancing the significance of the local church by enabling its truly local character to be realised. Here and now, we should advance our concern beyond full communion between continuing independent Churches with parallel episcopates, to union itself; we should seek a clearer vision of Stage 2 to animate us at Stage 1. Here and now, also, we should look beyond Anglican-Methodist relations to the project of multilateral union, and we should set up round-table discussions about it with other Free Churches before final decisions on the Anglican-Methodist scheme were taken. Here and now, finally, we should shift our attention beyond the problems of rapprochement at canonical level between two centralised institutions (the problems on which the report concentrates) to the problems of discovering the unity and mission of local congregations (the problems which the report neglects); our concern would be to see how 'the unity of the Spirit' should be 'grown' locally, and we should not be content to stop short with plans for organising new adjustments centrally. Our present horizons are, I think, too narrow, and it would be wise if decision-making could be postponed till we are clearer than the report enables us to be about our ultimate objectives.

Second, the application of South India principles would lead to *a change of method for integrating the ministries at Stage 1*. We should content ourselves, at this stage, with biting off less. We should accept the fact that no course is open to us that will lead to more than partial communion in Stage 1, and we should choose the course, of those open to us, which coerces no consciences, does least harm to morale in the two Churches, and raises least problems for the future. This would lead us to an adaptation to our two-stage scheme of the course followed in South India. On the basis of a Pledge and a mutual commitment to the goal of an episcopal united Church with a domestic rule of episcopal ordination, we should at Stage 1 accept each other's ministries as they stand, correlating Methodist presbyters with Anglican presbyters by an act of direct recognition. The inaugural service for Stage 1 would express, not an Anglican resolve to adhere rigidly to the principle of episcopal exclusivism in eucharistic ministry, but a full and unqualified recognition that the reconciling of churches is the reconciling of their ministries, and that acceptance of one church by another entails acceptance of all its accredited ministers, just because they are its accredited ministers. The basis for such action is confidence in the God of grace, who has already shown in history his acceptance of both the churches and their ministries—not because of their merit, let alone their formal pedigree, however reckoned, but because of his own undeserved favour in Jesus Christ. This is simply to say, what the South India theologians have constantly said, that the basis for church union is the same as the basis for church life as a whole and Christian life as a whole—namely, the truth of justification by faith, through God's free grace. Churches coming together offer themselves,

with their ministries, to each other on the basis that Christ's pardon and acceptance of them requires them in turn to accept and, if need be, pardon each other. In accepting each other's ministries, sinful and defective as they no doubt are, each church shows its confidence that the God who has already shown his acceptance of these ministries, by the use he has made of them, will continue so to use them and bless them, whatever their formal shortcomings may be. If justification by faith is, as Anglican 'catholics' love to say these days, a catholic doctrine, and if the principle of 'economy' (suspending ordinary church rules, without prejudice to the future, for necessary pastoral ends) is a catholic principle, Anglo-Catholics should not find the South India method insuperably objectionable, and others in both our Churches should find it positively congenial. As Colin Buchanan has argued more than once,¹⁸ the CSI way holds a genuine balance, not weighting the scales for or against either 'catholic' or reformed convictions about church and ministry.

PRACTICABLE ALTERNATIVE

I shall not say more about the theological basis and justification of the CSI way; those who wish to explore this further will find the matter magisterially handled in Leslie Newbiggin's *The Reunion of the Church*. What I wish to do now, in this last section of my paper, is to show the strength of these proposals as a plan of action. The report glances at the CSI way and dismisses it as impracticable, likely to cause less good and more trouble than the present scheme (paras. 430-432). This assessment seems to me false, for the following reasons.

The CSI way (so I judge) would prove unitive where the present plans are demonstrably divisive. This is because, on the one hand, the CSI way will directly meet all the conscientious difficulties of those who, while approving the project of union as such, find the current proposals unacceptable, and because, on the other hand, there is really no evidence, despite the portentous *obiter dicta* of some, that supporters of the present proposals would find that the CSI way would raise new problems of conscience for them.

The report refers to some of the gains which adoption of the CSI way would bring. 'This procedure, it may be argued, would eliminate the problems of conscience which the Service (of Reconciliation) has raised for some ministers in both Churches. It would also lay a foundation for eventually resolving the problem of maintaining at Stage Two present Methodist relations of fellowship with non-episcopal Christendom. It would not prejudice the goal of organic union, and it would be likely to make any future negotiations with other Free Churches a great deal simpler' (para. 431). These advantages would seem so great that one is amazed that the report does not pause to look into this argument with more care. If the cool phrase, 'it may be argued', is intended to insinuate that my subscribing colleagues on the commission think the argument sophistical and unsound, it would have been helpful if they had given some reasons for so thinking—but no such reasons are given, nor I think could be. The CSI procedure would indeed bring these gains—and great gains they would be.

The advantages of this method can also be spelled out in human terms, in relation to the actual clash of convictions within our Churches that make the scheme a rod for so many backs. Anglican evangelicals and Methodists, many of whom have problems with the Services of Reconciliation as they stand, will have no problems about mutual recognition. Some 'catholic' Anglicans, like others in South India 21 years ago, will agree with those of their brethren who took Approach C on the recent Intercommunion Commission⁴⁷ that, when union in a fully episcopal church is a pledged intention between an episcopal and a non-episcopal body, it becomes more anomalous to refuse to receive Holy Communion from non-episcopal ministers than to accept it, and on this basis reciprocal recognition of ministries for full communion will not seem insuperably difficult. Other 'catholics', not convinced of this view, nor free in conscience to act on it, will be covered by the Pledge, and sustained by the knowledge that the formal impropriety which they will find in the recognition of Methodist ministers by the Church of England will eliminate itself as time goes by. If it be said that this procedure asks a lot of Anglo-Catholics of this school, this may be admitted; but it is pertinent to point out that since many of them have already publicly declined to take part in the Service of Reconciliation, and presumably will not feel able in any case to practice full communion with Methodist ministers who have taken part in it, their position will be *more* invidious and open to misunderstanding if they are not protected by a Pledge (as at present) than if they are (as they will be if we follow the CSI way).

Another way of evaluating my proposal is to note the difficulties, created by the present plan, which the CSI way avoids. Division in the two ministries, to start with, will be avoided. Granted, some Anglican congregations will decline to invite Methodist ministers as guest celebrants, but the Methodist ministry as a whole will remain a unity because the Church of England will have recognised it in its totality. The situation will not then be as a Methodist dissentient minister put it to me recently—'I'm sorry your Church is going to drive me into the wilderness'. As it was, I could only say I was sorry too; but if CSI principles were being followed, his problem would not exist. Then, too, the CSI way would make the Stage 2 Pledge credible, which it can hardly be held to be at the moment, and would go far to remove the very real likelihood that Stage 2 will prove unattainable.

If it were objected that to move to the CSI way at this stage would mean going back to the beginning and negotiating a wholly new scheme, the reply would be that, so far from this bring true, the *minimum* needed to make the transference would be a single amendment in the draft Bill, to make 3 (2)(a) say that on and after 'reconciliation day' *all* ministers of both Churches may exchange all functions, instead of limiting this privilege, and it does now, to ministers who have taken part in a Reconciliation service. Then it would be desirable to draft a Pledge. More alteration and addition might well be desirable, but no more would be necessary.

But are there not counter-considerations, leading to the conclusion that, after all, the CSI way will prove more divisive than the present proposals? The report thinks so, and gives its reasons in para. 432.

But this paragraph seems perfunctory and confused. It appears to reflect two unwarranted assumptions. The first is that a South India scheme would have to be forced on the Church of England in the teeth of violent opposition from a massive Anglo-Catholic bloc. The second is that there will be a vast amount of interchange between celebrants during Stage 1, so that any minister of either Church whose ministry at the Lord's Table was not acceptable to virtually the whole membership of the other would be in constant trouble and difficulty. But the first assumption is open to question, as appears at once when one reflects on the lead given by Anglo-Catholics in South India, the developments in Anglican 'catholic' theology during the past 20 years, the fact that half the Intercommunion Commission and the whole Lambeth Conference have this year recommended full communion with the CSI, and the further fact that three Anglican provinces in Africa negotiating union with non-episcopal churches (Central Africa, Accra, and the Church of the Province of South Africa) have either agreed, or propose to agree, to practice intercommunion now with those with whom they plan later to unite. I have talked to a number of Anglo-Catholics who would prefer us to follow a similar course here: I suspect that few deanery chapters lack Anglo-Catholic exponents of this point of view. The second assumption is also doubtful. Incumbencies will not be exchanged between the two Churches during Stage 1, and it may safely be said that to find a minister of one Church celebrating Communion in the other will not be a common thing; when will there be occasion for it? But once these two assumptions are queried, the arguments of the paragraph appear lame to a degree.

'The very proposal *would certainly* bring serious division within the Church of England.' This is a guess without evidence. Now that the Church of England has begun to face the serious division that the present proposals have brought (at least one diocesan bishop, and more than one suffragan, together with a four-figure number of clergy and several hundred Methodist ministers, have already announced their inability to take part in the Services of Reconciliation), can we be sure that the CSI way would prove more disruptive, or be thought more objectionable?

'The majority in both Churches *might well regard* the presence of ministers who have not taken part in the Services of Reconciliation as a lesser anomaly than the widespread diversities of practice to which this alternative would give rise.' Another guess without evidence. Also, the reference to 'widespread diversities', with its suggestion of incipient chaos, is misleading. There will be only *one* diversity—non-acceptance by some Anglican congregations of present Methodist ministers as celebrants. Until opinion is tested, this kind of vaguely alarming sentence can safely be discounted.

'Its practical difficulties are *likely to exceed* those attaching to the present proposals.' A further guess, both unsupported and unpalatable once one sees that the interchange of celebrants will be merely occasional at Stage 1. In any case, one cannot imagine a practical difficulty greater than avoiding discrimination against non-participant ministers under the present scheme, as the report charges the Churches to do.

'The prospect of embarrassment for Methodist ministers in particular

would be increased. *It is probable* that many Anglican priests would in practice refuse the recognition of Methodist ministers which had been officially agreed upon.¹ This, again, is only a guess; but what if it were true? First, there is no doubt that the mass of Anglican layfolk would accept Methodist ministrations at Holy Communion without hesitation, whatever individual priests might say. Second, is it not insulting to suggest that Methodist ministers are so much more concerned about status than service that they would be seriously worried if a particular Anglican congregation declined their ministrations? Surely we may be allowed to believe better of them than that. In any case, in a South India scheme the Church of England would officially accept all Methodist ministers, and the invocation of the Pledge by individual priests or congregations could not under those circumstances cause greater embarrassment to the Methodists than the discovery that we are not likely to be invited to certain Anglican churches causes to some of us Anglican clergy. Furthermore, if the present scheme goes through it is clear that Methodist ministers will have to face the experience of being *personae non gratae* in certain Anglican quarters anyhow.

There is good evidence to suggest that the Methodist Church would refuse to accept the dislocation which would be involved in taking episcopacy into its system, if it knew that the immediate result would be something which fell *so far short of full communion*.² Here the bogey of massive Anglo-Catholic opposition seems to have destroyed all logic. How far short of being full communion in practice would the relationship be, when *ex hypothesi* the Church of England would have established full communion synodically with the whole Methodist Church and all its ministers?—which under the present scheme it will never be able to do, incidentally? If the Church of England is able to make such a decision at all, there is no reason to think that local practice will fall 'far short of full communion'—just the reverse.

If the Church of England is able to make such a decision at all—aye, there's the rub. I have argued that such a decision would be much better than a vote for the present scheme, but whether the Church will be able to make it remains to be seen. What is already clear, however, is that even if the present scheme gets enough support to be constitutionally practicable, it cannot be a spiritual success—it has already divided both Churches too deeply, and its built-in weaknesses make it simply inadequate as a blue-print for advance. We have, I think, seen clearly that the CSI way is the better way, and that the arguments against it are not substantial. If I have in fact carried you to this conclusion, I can only invite your prayers that God will so order events that this way may in due course be taken. Perhaps I may without presumption close with Paul's words, 'I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say' (1 Corinthians 10: 15).

NOTES

¹ *Men of Unity* (London, 1960), p. 61.

² *Renewal and Advance* (Madras, 1963) was produced by a CSI commission consisting of four bishops and three laymen; only one member was not an Indian.

³ *Lambeth Conference 1948* (London, 1948), II. 48.

⁴ *op.cit.*, II. 46.

⁵ *Intercommunion Today* (London, 1968), para. 220, p. 124. The more general recommendation that 'the present relationship of partial communion with the Church of South India should now be re-examined' (para. 218) was unanimous. The Convocation decisions constituting that partial communion are given on p. 135f.

⁶ In 1965, according to Alan Wilkinson, 84 per cent. of the CSI clergy were episcopally ordained (*Faith and Unity*, November 1965, p. 112).

⁷ The Anglican Evangelical Group Movement, the Church Society, and the Modern Churchmen's Union, jointly petitioned the Convocations for full communion with CSI at the time of the 1950 debates (*Faith and Unity*, November 1965, p. 109). The case was argued again by C. O. Buchanan in his essay, 'The Church of England and the Church of South India', in *All in Each Place* (Marcham, 1965), pp. 189ff.

⁸ *The Lambeth Conference 1958*, 2. 44.

⁹ Basis of Union, section 16. On the official interpretation of the Pledge, see *Documents on Christian Unity*, Third Series 1930-1948, ed. G. K. A. Bell (Oxford, 1958), pp. 230ff.; L. Newbiggin, *The Reunion of the Church*, 2nd edition (London, 1960), pp. 114ff.

¹⁰ A. Hanson, *Beyond Anglicanism* (London, 1965) p. 156.

¹¹ On Palmer's theological position, cf. B. Sundkler, *Church of South India: the Movement towards Union 1900-1947*, pp. 117ff.

¹² For more on this, cf. my Note on p. 182f. of *Anglican-Methodist Unity: 2, The Scheme*, and my essay in *Fellowship in the Gospel*, ed. J. I. Packer (Marcham, 1968).

¹³ *The Churchman*, Autumn 1968, p. 172.

¹⁴ See *Power Without Glory* (London, 1967), *passim*.

¹⁵ *Church Quarterly*, October 1968, p. 108.

¹⁶ See, for instance, 'The Place of Ambiguity in Schemes for Reunion', *The Churchman*, Autumn 1967, pp. 171ff.

¹⁷ *Intercommunion Today*, pp. 63ff.