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THE SOUTH INDIA SCHEME.

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WHILE it is a fair comment to say that the South India Scheme of Reunion reveals concessions made by Anglicans on the one hand and by Free Churchmen on the other, yet as Dr. Carnegie Simpson has suggested, stress should be laid rather upon the contributions willingly made by each of the contracting parties than upon concessions extracted from them. The suggestion represents more than phrase-making, it indicates accurately the attitude of friendly zeal on behalf of the Scheme which I found in vogue among all types of Christians in South India. The negotiations were conducted in an atmosphere of mutual helpfulness, each side asking to be provided with all that the other had to offer, not bargaining with coins on the counter and demanding a complete *quid pro quo* for every concession made. Dr. Palmer has given expression to the same idea. The Scheme does not, he says, involve "union by absorption or submission, but union by comprehension." From the best that Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Wesleyans and Anglicans have enjoyed since the beginning a contribution is being made to complete the fullness of the new whole. Of the riches garnered long ago, the best elements from each several repository are being comprehended within the new treasury. The diocese, the circuit, the presbytery and the congregation long ago proved capable mediums of the Spirit's operation, and it is not surprising that now, when they are being fitted together, they are found easily adaptable to each other, without ceasing to be what they were—to use an Ambrosian phrase—and that when extended, like the several tubes of a telescope, they contribute to a larger vision, and make clearer the distant view of the one body of Christ's Church here on earth.

Let us dissect the Scheme. To it is contributed the episcopate, without theory, though not without definition. It is a constitutional episcopacy—we had some discussion about that here last year. It is constitutional because elected, elected by a process which sifts the nominees over and over again, so that he who is finally chosen has passed the closest scrutiny of his lay and clerical brethren. The election is conducted by the Synod and the particular Diocesan Council concerned. The Synod consists of all the bishops of the church, and three presbyters and three laymen from each Diocesan Council. The Diocesan Council consists of the bishop and presbyters of the diocese and lay representatives, mostly elected but a few nominated. The Diocesan Council makes its own nomination of candidates for the vacant bishopric, and the Synod nominates not more than three names of clergy, who in this case may not be resident in the diocese. From the combined list the Diocesan Council nominates not less than two nor more

than four names, all of whom must secure two-thirds of the votes of those actually present. These names go before a board consisting of the Moderator (who is the Chairman of the Synod) and six members appointed by the Executive Committee of the Synod. This board makes the final selection. The strong lay-membership of the Diocesan Council and Synod ensure the democratic nature of the whole procedure, while the oversight of the Synod secures that no unsuitable candidate with biased local support shall be finally appointed.

Again, it is a constitutional episcopacy because diocesan committees or other bodies are to be consulted before a minister is authorized to officiate and to preach in any locality. It is constitutional because no suspension or excommunication—necessary functions in a church newly converted from strange religious rites and practices—can be pronounced or remitted without consulting the Pastorate Committee or Panchayat of the congregation concerned. It is constitutional because although president of the Diocesan Council the bishop has no control over the finance of the diocese. The power of the purse lies with the Diocesan Council. It is constitutional because the bishop may be removed from his charge when adjudged to be “mentally or physically incapable of discharging the duties of his office” (Section VII, Part I, A 10), or for other reasons. If the bishop has the right of suspending a discussion of the Diocesan Council on faith, doctrine and worship and some other matters, that is because again, in a church newly won from strange beliefs and ceremonies, error might easily creep into the doctrine of the infant community. The bishop has from the beginning been the guardian of the faith. In this contingency the interests of the Diocesan Council are guarded by right of appeal to the Synod (Section VIII, B 3).

To the scheme is contributed an organization resembling the Kirk Session and the Presbytery, while the Synod has the character of the General Assembly, with a chairman who is styled “Moderator.” I take for consideration as the characteristic element in this organization one which most resembles the Presbytery—namely, the Diocesan Council. It includes the Bishop of the Diocese, who shall be ex-officio president; “all the presbyters holding the bishop’s authorization and regularly engaged in the work of the Church, and lay representatives, whether elected, nominated or ex-officio; and may include other ministers of the diocese, whether presbyters or deacons” (Section VIII, B 1). The last provision allows for the attendance of Government chaplains, and other clergy who may not be comprehended within the Scheme. The general management of the affairs of the diocese, especially in the matter of finance, forms the special duty of the Diocesan Council (Section VIII, B 4), and the Council has power “to frame, amend or alter its own constitution,” with the approval of the Synod.

The Presbyterian organization of the diocese is by no means rigid. Opportunity is provided for its adaptation to meet special local needs. A Diocesan Council may “combine several Pastorate

Committees into a group, which shall be entrusted with administrative and financial functions within its area " (Section VIII, B 7).

To the Scheme is contributed the principle of Congregationalism. It provides for a Pastorate Committee. "A pastorate is the sphere of a pastor (with his assistants if any), consisting of one or more congregations" (Section VIII, A 1). In the latter case we see Congregational and Presbyterian elements combining together, but the Congregational principle predominates in the locality. "Every such pastorate shall have a Pastorate Committee, which shall consist of the pastor (the presbyter in charge) as chairman, and of lay communicant members of the Church elected by the communicants of the pastorate, and which may also include ex-officio and nominated members in accordance with rules laid down by the Diocesan Council" (Section VIII, A 2). The Pastorate Committee, together with the Pastor, has general oversight of the area and "all its religious activities" with power to delegate some of its functions to sub-committees. Rules will also be laid down by the Diocesan Council for the care of financial and administrative work by the Pastorate Committee. It is suggested (Section VIII, A 3) that "provision should also be made in the diocesan constitution for purposes to be defined by the Diocesan Council."

To the Scheme is contributed the Wesleyan institution of lay assistants possessing pastoral and spiritual functions. "To the whole Church and to every member of it belongs the duty and privilege of spreading the good news of the Kingdom of God and the message of salvation through Jesus Christ" (Section VII, Part II, 1).

In addition to the diaconate, in which a minister may pass his whole life if desirable, the Scheme arranges a "ministry of the laity" in three grades. Firstly as Elders who, after being "set apart at" a "solemn service," assist the pastor in spiritual and administrative work. The Elder is set apart for life, but only functions when called upon to do so by the Pastorate Committee or some other authorized body. Secondly as Leaders or Pastoral Assistants, who may be appointed to the pastoral care of village congregations or groups of Church members in a town pastorate. They may be appointed by the Presbyter and the Pastorate Committee, though without the "solemn service" which sets apart the Elder, and it is recommended that the office should be renewed annually. Thirdly as Lay Preachers, who like the other lay assistants must be communicants. They must possess the necessary gifts, and be authorized by the Pastorate Committee on the recommendation of the Pastor to preach in the public services of the church.

Lay men and women will also be selected to serve as stewards of Church funds and administrators or trustees of Church property; as deaconesses or women workers; as representatives on Church Committees and members of disciplinary Courts.

In all these and other matters the Scheme shows that they who contend that it represents the combination of valuable con-

tributory elements, and not a series of mutual concessions to meet old prejudices, are fully justified in their contention. This is no less than we should expect after the history of the negotiations. Twenty years of quiet conference, prayer and thought lie behind this scheme, and the fruit of that slow and patient process is a programme which promises enrichment in the spiritual life and organization of the whole Church in South India. Exactly how it has come about we know not, nor what the future holds for it, but even as when the Spirit of God cometh and goeth we know not how, while spiritual grace is left behind—new birth, new inspiration—so the negotiators find in their hands an instrument of marvellous minute and delicate structure, big with potential forces for continuing the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in South India, and for the organization of the thousands who are to be won for Him.

Let us now glance at the actual state of the negotiations so far as they refer to the Anglican Church. The Scheme was considered at the beginning of this year by the General Council of the Church of India, Burma and Ceylon, sitting at Calcutta, under the chairmanship of the Metropolitan. When the reports of its resolutions first reached this country a certain attempt was made to convey the impression that the General Council had courteously but definitely bowed it out of court, as if saying, "These matters are too high for us, go with them to Lambeth." But since the arrival of the full report of the resolutions, it is clear that the bishops and clergy and laity assembled at Calcutta, while making certain recommendations, none the less quite definitely gave approval to the Scheme, and blessed its future progress on the way towards final adoption in South India. There is a notion in some quarters that the Calcutta Council was expected to give complete and final approval to the Scheme, which would then possess complete authority so far as Anglicans were concerned. But this was never contemplated. The Scheme, at present, represents the proposals of the Joint Committee, consisting of Anglican and Free Church delegates, charged with its construction. It has yet to secure the sanction of the existing South India United Church (Presbyterians and Congregationalists) and of the Wesleyans in that area. Thus the reference of the Scheme to Calcutta, and in due time to Lambeth, is part of an orderly course pursued by the Joint Committee to secure amendment leading on to final approval by the authorities which constituted the Committee.

That the General Council at Calcutta fully realized the part it was asked to play is revealed in the Prefatory Note to its Resolutions, which states that

"the Council was deeply conscious that the Holy Spirit, by inspiring the Joint Committee with mutual trust and common desire to learn the truth as God should reveal it, had enabled its members, who started with many and great divergencies of thought and tradition, to arrive at agreement on a great many important points; and therefore wished to shew by the terms of its resolutions its belief that *the continuance of such discussions is the surest*

and quickest way to ensure that the uniting Churches shall reach such real agreement upon all essential points as is necessary for a true and stable union."

The Prefatory Note of the Episcopal Synod concludes by referring the Scheme to Lambeth for advice, both on the Scheme itself and on the Resolutions passed on it by the Calcutta Council, and states the intention of the Synod to consult the Lambeth Conference on certain technical points. Then follow the two Resolutions.

The first resolution sends a greeting to the contracting bodies in South India ; expresses the desire of the General Council to promote unity ; shows a " spirit of sympathy and mutual trust while earnestly exploring every approach to unity, to bring into the United Church whatever of truth they have inherited " ; and calls for prayer on behalf of the Lambeth Conference and on behalf of the Councils in England and America which may consider the Scheme. This resolution was passed unanimously.

The second resolution expresses thankfulness that the doctrinal basis of the Scheme is the Trinity and the Incarnation, the authority of Holy Scriptures, the Creeds, the two sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion and Christ's gift of the ministry of His Church. It expresses gratitude for the " adoption of the rule of episcopal ordination " as a means of " unifying the ministry " ; and continues :

" The Council believes that the Committee has been led to produce a situation in which it is possible to proceed towards the realization of that union which our Blessed Lord desires His people to have without passing judgment upon any particular form of ministry or view of the ministry. It believes that the Committee has thus been enabled to bring the negotiations into an atmosphere of mutual love and trust in which all can be sensible that the things which they accept and hold in common outweigh all differences that still remain."

The Resolution concludes by directing the delegates of the General Council on the Joint Committee to continue their work ; instructs them on some of the suggestions ; and offers " some statements of opinion on certain important points."

Of these points the chief are that in the opinion of the General Council not all ministries are equally certainly valid, but it agrees that the other uniting churches shall not be considered to have endorsed any particular theory of the ministry. While agreeing that the Church in South India should have sufficient autonomy to carry through the Scheme, the General Council urges that the Church in the North be kept informed of future procedure through the medium of a common Consultative Council on which the northern dioceses shall be represented. It urges that the practice of Confirmation should be adopted by the United Church " as early as possible," " not meaning thereby that the Anglican rite need be followed in detail." The rest of the " instructions " and " opinions " are concerned with minor points, confined mostly to matters of drafting.

This important resolution was passed with only two dissentients on "one small item." That the attitude of the General Council representing the Church of India, Burma and Ceylon towards the Scheme is one of ardent sympathy is clear ; that it approves the work already done is equally clear ; but what is most significant is the fact that obviously it desires the negotiations to proceed along the lines which they have hitherto followed, and in that cordial spirit of approval the General Council has handed on the Scheme to Lambeth.

THE REPLY TO FATHER VERNON.

ONE GOD AND FATHER OF ALL. By Eric Milner-White and Wilfred L. Knox. *Mowbray*. 2s. 6d.

From many points of view this is a remarkable book. It proves that there is a strong vein of Protestantism among a section of Anglo-Catholics and shows that positions adopted by many of them have been thrown overboard in the light of historical fact. We naturally find many things with which we disagree and many that we wholeheartedly accept. There is a frank acknowledgement of the fruits of the Spirit among Nonconformists, but are they quite right when they assert that the joining of Nonconformists to the Church of England is not talked of as their "conversion." The authors may not do so, but their friends do. It may be due to some congenital defect in our character, but we must look upon the attitude of "Father Vernon" in the presence of the relics of St. Thérèse of Lisieux as unintelligible to us. We have no doubt of her piety, but the sentimentalism with which he surrounded the relics is not what we expect from a virile personality. In fact, as we read his books we are impressed by a strain of emotionalism, which subordinates reason and common sense to the desire to feel as he thinks he ought to feel.

The chapters that deal with St. Peter and the Papacy put the Protestant position with a clarity and emphasis that surprise us, and when we come to the Authority of the Church we wonder how our authors find themselves in the face of the contentions of many of their friends able to write: "Do not let us pretend that we need an Infallible Living Voice when this only means that we shall find it more comfortable to believe that we have one, when we have really nothing of the kind. And do not let us pretend that it is necessary, when the real truth is only that it will save us a certain amount of worry. After all, our Lord never promised His disciples that faith in Him would save them a certain amount of worry." We commend the book as a whole to those who wish to know how some Anglo-Catholics face what are difficulties to their friends.