Editorial

IT is a pity that the immediate reaction in Scotland to the Joint Report[1] on Relations between Anglicans and Presbyterians should have been unfavourable.

The Committee was remarkably representative; the Anglicans weighted, if anything, on the evangelical side and the Presbyterian list containing names noted for conservative scholarship. The theological bases which the Committee drew up are healthy: "It is the whole Church which participates in the threefold ministry of Christ as Prophet, Priest and King . . . Part of the healing of schism . . . will be in the reconciliation of diverse forms of stewardship, each party sharing with the other the authority held by itself". And commendable emphasis is placed on "the preaching and teaching of the Word".

Moreover, the Report does not envisage the setting up of a "Church of Great Britain", in which Presbyterians would be swamped, but only of full intercommunion between the two Churches, within the one Church of Christ. And since the hope of the Committee is that the matter should be considered over a long period, without hasty decision, there seems no reason for vociferous alarm.

The Scottish fears relate, of course, to the idea of an Episcopate. Yet bishops have been accepted by Presbyterians in South India, and the episcopate is to be of "Bishops-in-Presbytery". Perhaps some of the fears arise—apart from Jenny Geddes and other historical red herrings—from the fact that bishops of the Episcopal Church in Scotland are almost always high churchmen; is it too much to hope that an evangelical will ever be elected to the present Scottish bench? The canniness with which many Presbyterians approach the episcopate is also no doubt increased from the apparent trend of the Canon Law revision; and, with great respect to the Archbishop of Canterbury, it might help matters if His Grace did not appear to treat all expressions of opposition as a cross between sacrilege and stupidity, as he seemed to do in his reply to a Parochial Church Council at Reading, and on other occasions.

As the numerically larger Church it is for us to move first. The suggestion that "lay persons be solemnly 'set apart' for some measure of pastoral responsibility to their fellow-Christians, in an office akin to the Presbyterian eldership", is admirable. We should not wait for Scottish Bishops-in-Presbytery before we work out some such advance. It is demanded by far more than this hope of unity.

We have much to learn from the Presbyterian desire "that the Episcopalians lay greater stress on the parochial incumbent's prophetic office of preaching the Word". Though we do not want to surrender the Church of England incumbent's historic independence (essentially) of bishop and laity, it is high time we shed the traditional view that the parson is the dogsbody and office boy of the parish: he is the minister of the Word.

[1] *Relations between Anglican and Presbyterian Churches: A Joint Report.* S.P.C.K. pp. 40. 3/6 (paper).

Appendix 4(b) of the Report describes the work of the Presbyterian elder, who visits his district and undertakes not only business duties but pastoral. While the average Anglican parochial church council is of little consequence, the Presbyterian kirk session takes much of the routine administration off the minister. Outside the session the elder has a distinctive office, in some respects akin to that of a curate : " Elders . . . receive a warm welcome in the homes they visit, and many become friends, often life-long friends, in the homes of their district. By his visits the elder is able to bring to the notice of the minister cases of special need. . . ." And the elder, as having pastoral duties, accepts office for life.

Something of the sort has been growing up in vigorous parishes in England, but until it is part of the Church of England order there will often be the obstacle of the traditional cry " the parson is getting someone to do his job ", and ministers of the Word and sacraments will continue to waste their substance in trivialities.

The future lies in a prophetic ministry and an active laity. But if our Church is to have " elders ", and we must pray that such an advance be not long delayed, the responsibility is laid on us now to forge ahead with the building, in the power of the Holy Spirit, of a lay leadership truly born again, grounded in the Word and fruitful for every good work.

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The current number (May/June) of the London City Mission Magazine has a surprising and disturbing article about modern Paddington, where there has been, states the City Missioner, " a gradual decline of morals, more evident since the War ". Most of the area is condemned slum ; the L.C.M. Hall was destroyed in the War and the temporary hall will shortly be demolished. The London City Mission does not make appeals for money, but many readers will be prepared to help, so THE CHURCHMAN believes, when they realize that £7,000 are needed for a new hall, if the City Mission is to continue to work in that difficult area. Further enquiries, and donations, should be sent to 6 Eccleston Street, S.W.1.