

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php

Contemporary Commentary

A Quarterly Review of Church Affairs and Theological Trends

BY THE REV. F. J. TAYLOR, M.A.

LAMBETH AND UNITY

THE meeting of several hundred bishops of the Anglican communion at Lambeth for the first time since 1930 has stimulated the production of a good deal of literature designed to make an impression on the judgments of the assembled prelates. The many grave difficulties confronting the Christian enterprise in all parts of the world with the realisation that no one church can hope to meet the challenge of the hour, as also the inauguration in South India of the newly united church, made it inevitable that the problems of reunion and the conditions of fellowship between churches would demand close and careful scrutiny from the members of the conference.

The publication of *The Apostolic Ministry* by a number of scholars under the leadership of the Bishop of Oxford, expounding with an impressive display of theological and historical learning the thesis of an essential apostolic ministry embodied in the episcopate alone, has been matched with the appearance of the essay by Professor Norman Sykes on *The Church of England and Non-Episcopal Churches in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, and the Olaus Petri lectures at Upsala by the Bishop of Chichester entitled *Christian Unity: The Anglican Position*. The thesis of *The Apostolic Ministry* has not yet won widespread Anglican assent. Perhaps it is unlikely that it will ever succeed in this endeavour, for there are still too many difficulties about certain links in the argument. But one conclusion can already be stated. If this thesis is accepted, it will involve the rejection of the traditional Anglican attitude to other reformed churches, the discontinuance of widespread Anglican habits, and a frank admission that the first three centuries of Anglican life after the Reformation were marked by ill-advised activities based on inadmissible principles.

Professor Sykes and the Bishop of Chichester have had no difficulty in showing that classical Anglicanism, while confessing a positive value in episcopacy derived from its links with the earliest church, nevertheless refused to assert that the church was constituted by its ministry, and so maintained a measure of communion with the other reformation churches of the continent. This communion was not impaired by the commonly accepted view that non-episcopal churches lacked the integrity of full Catholic Christianity. The best Evangelical tradition in the Church of England has identified itself with the main lines of Anglican thought on this topic as set out both in the formularies of the church and in the writings of representative theologians.

Nevertheless, this conclusion can give no grounds for Evangelical self-justification in the contemporary debate on the ministry. An increasing number of Anglicans does, in fact, hold the view expounded in *The Apostolic Ministry* or something very like it, so that it becomes necessary to enquire whether a rehearsal of classical Anglican teaching is an adequate answer to such novel claims. Certain difficulties still remain which obstinately refuse to be settled by a judicious survey of past history. For one thing, most of the classical Anglican apologetic was based upon a distinction between continental reformers whose church order was what that particular realm (France, Germany or Switzerland) had agreed to allow, and Evangelical Christians at home who dissented from the order this church and realm had deliberately taken. It was not until after 1662 that there came into existence in England large non-episcopal bodies separated from the Church of England. Unlike most of their continental brethren, these dissenters had a positive aversion to episcopacy and had rejected it on theological grounds.

Can the traditional Anglican attitude to the continental reformed churches be made to include dissenters at home whose separate existence was not recognized in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries? Can it be said that the Anglican fathers were justified in assuming that the lack of bishops among the continental reformed was of necessity and not of choice? There were some prominent persons (including bishops) who adhered to the reforming parties. Why was no serious attempt made to continue the episcopal order, or, when as sometimes happened, the lack of bishops was openly admitted, why was no attempt made to secure from England the re-introduction of episcopacy after a reformed pattern? Why did not the English episcopate press this upon continental churchmen, since most of them believed that the absence of bishops involved the loss of "the integrity or perfection of a church"? Did the necessity of a common ecclesiastical and political front against Rome prohibit the raising of these questions? Was the position in the seventeenth century still regarded as an emergency, so that it was not until Protestantism had demonstrated its ability to survive that these issues could be raised in the nineteenth century? Did the classical Anglican writers contemplate the long continued existence of non-episcopal bodies which would ultimately acquire a vested interest in a non-episcopal ministry and seek theological justification for its continuance?

Thirdly, valuable as it is to have set down in convenient form this account and vindication of earlier Anglican practice, there still remains the need for a sustained discussion of the relevance and weight to be ascribed to precedents of this kind. It is one thing to cite precedents, it is another to assert or even to imply that the church is bound for all time by such precedents. The Anglican position does, in fact, in Articles XIX and XXI contemplate the possibility of error in every church, and therefore the possibility that long continued practice in the Church of England may yet have been mistaken. A careful examination of the authority to be allowed to distinctive Anglican tradition in this vital issue (as well as in other matters) is plainly required. Meanwhile the debate on ministerial order goes on.

THE TRAGEDY OF PALESTINE

THE British public has been bewildered by the way in which first the Arabs and then the Jews in Palestine have treated the mandatory power as their chief enemy, so that for many years the Holy Land has been subjected to violence and terror. In a recent pamphlet entitled *Is this the Way?* Walter Zander has addressed a moving appeal to his fellow Jews to re-consider their attitude to Palestine. He reminds them that sixty years ago when modern Zionism was beginning its historic role, a great Jewish thinker Ahad Ha'am gave a solemn warning against certain features of the movement and urged the paramount need for a "revival of the heart." He criticises the Zionist leaders in the years after 1917 for their failure to teach their followers the exact terms and implications of the Balfour declaration. The British government has never been committed to more than the promise of the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine and refused the demand for the "re-establishment of Palestine as the Jewish national home." The deliberate fostering of excessive hopes by Zionist leaders has led inevitably to despair at their non-fulfilment, turning to violence and terrorism in the effort to achieve what diplomacy could not secure since the mandatory power had refused in advance to approve the original Jewish demand.

The crux of the argument so movingly presented by Zander is that Jews have refused to acknowledge their share of the blame for the deterioration of relations both with Britain and with the Arabs because they have refused to face the facts. Jews have never considered that the establishment of a national home in Palestine—even on a smaller scale than they demanded—required from the Arab a great sacrifice and that some compensation to him was needed. "We ourselves have made the position of the moderate Arab intolerable, and that of the Mufti almost unassailable." "This failure to show esteem for the Arab springs from lack of moral courage." Whatever outside factors have complicated the situation, the conflict in Palestine has been the outcome of the unsolved problem of Jewish-Arab relations. Violence and terror have as a result become the essential elements in the present struggle.

The initiative for a change in the existing situation must come from the Jews, and in addition to the summons to acknowledge their guilt, the pamphlet makes three suggestions. First, within the new Jewish State Arabs must be assured of their position as full members of the State, sharing in all the benefits of health and social services, not on sufferance but by right. Secondly, in external policy the Jewish State must seek peace with the Arabs and disavow the attempt to prosper by exploiting the rivalries and jealousies of Arab leaders. Only in those ways can Arab hostility be overcome and "the heart of the Arab be won." Thirdly, "to deal with the Jewish question without regarding the things of the spirit is to ignore the very essence of the issue." The return to Palestine is the precondition of a new era in religious development in which the present spiritual frustration will be ended. The closing paragraphs of the pamphlet present an inescapable challenge to Christians to find new ways of sharing with the Jew the treasure they hold in earthen vessels.

DIVIDED EUROPE

THE year 1848 witnessed the publication of a document which all too few Christian people have read but which has been as a Bible to millions in the last hundred years. *The Communist Manifesto* issued a stirring summons to the oppressed people of Europe to rise against their masters and to cast off their chains. The revolutionary movements of 1848, disturbing though they were to the bourgeoisie of the day, achieved very little. Nevertheless the message of the *Manifesto* was not forgotten, and now in 1948, just a century later, communism is no longer a mere matter of inflammatory pamphlets and exiled leaders, but is the most dynamic political movement of the hour. Half of Europe is under communist or near-communist control, and in each of the other four continents there are disciplined and influential communist minorities.

Western Europe has been driven to attempt the organization of its life on such a basis that resistance to further communist advance may be successfully accomplished. The Christian Church has a vital interest in the preservation of those rights and values which have been among the greatest gifts to man of Christian civilization in Europe. Must the Church now line up with Western Union and take an active share in the cold war against Moscow? Is it the duty of the Church to prophesy against the communist regime and to take a determined stand against appeasement on the Munich pattern? Should it strive to expose the illusions of those who think that communism is a fair economic expression of the truth of the Gospel? Must it not be made clear that totalitarianism is always and necessarily the enemy of the Gospel and that there is very little difference between Russian and German forms of totalitarianism? Ought not the Church to warn the people of the dangers which confront them if they dally with the temptation to make some compromise with communist forms?

No doubt the answers to all these questions seem obvious. The present anti-communist mood in Britain and America shows no sign of slackening, and both countries have witnessed the intensely distasteful activity of political witch-hunting. Has the Church nothing else to say at this critical moment than to echo the editorials of the great daily papers or the speeches of members of Parliament? This issue has been raised by the publication in the Swiss papers in June of some correspondence between Barth and Brunner. Barth paid a visit to the Reformed Church in Hungary and there found a church behind the Iron Curtain which was not in such a state of nervousness and uncertainty about the people's democracy as gripped the people of Switzerland. Brunner took him to task for his failure to lead opposition against communism as he had done against the Brown Terror from 1933. Barth admits the godlessness and the dangers of communism (he does not share the illusions of the Dean of Canterbury), but argues that since all Western Europe is antagonistic, communism does not present the seductive temptation which Nazism did. It is better for the Church to keep silent until the moment to speak arrives, rather than to echo other voices.

All the eastern European countries behind the Iron Curtain contain large Christian communities, and it is necessary to be ready to listen

to what they may have to say to Western Christians at this time. They cannot forget the ignominious part played by Western churches (especially in Britain) before 1939, nor that Western voices were scarcely ever raised against the political and economic tyranny under which they lived until the "Russian epoch." To many of them, even of the wisdom and standing of Professor Joseph Hromadka of Prague, the new communist orders seem to have a certain historical necessity about them and bring the promise of a greater measure of justice than they have ever enjoyed before. One thing at least seems clear. The Church must not allow itself to be so identified with Western society that it becomes a tool to be exploited in the ideological struggle between East and West. By all possible means contact must be maintained between the churches of the West and of Eastern Europe and Russia, and the West must learn to listen to the East so that the voice of Christian prophecy may not be stifled or prostituted to political ends.

A COMMON MINISTRY

THE deadlock in reunion discussions has driven many Christians to despair of further progress beyond the present degree of co-operation. Others have refused to be discouraged and have persisted in seeking new ways of advance which would enable Christians of various traditions to draw yet closer. From Australia has come a proposal which has close affinities with the 1946 report of the Canadian Committee (the United Church of Canada and the Church of England in Canada) and the sermon of the Archbishop of Canterbury at Cambridge in November, 1946. Several points of importance emerge from a study of the pamphlet, recently issued by S.P.C.K. for the Bishop of Newcastle, N.S.W.

Bishop Leslie Newbigin in his recent exposition of the South India scheme of reunion has emphasized the fact that the impulse to reunion has come out of the missionary obedience of the churches in the last century and a half. In most areas the principle of comity has been loyally observed, so that the Church has borne the aspect of visible oneness in many places. Difficulties arise when (as is likely to occur ever more frequently in coming years) through mobility of labour or for some other cause, there is considerable movement of population. In Papua, the chief Australian mission-field, difficulties appeared when Anglican missionaries began to follow their converts into non-Anglican territories, to give them the Sacraments. The problem was discussed at a missionary conference in Sydney in April, 1937, and a small group, representative of Anglicans, Methodists and Congregationalists, met later in the same month to begin discussion.

From the first the group set before itself a limited objective, partly because it had no mandate to commit the churches represented in its membership to a scheme of reunion and partly because it considered that success was more likely to be achieved if attention were concentrated on a specific objective. The difficulty about any scheme of reunion in any particular territory, however urgent the need in that place, is that the participating churches are integral parts of ecclesiastical organizations which are virtually world-wide. A certain

reluctance to take steps which would weaken or even interrupt altogether the long established unity with Christians in other parts of the world, in favour of closer unity with Christians of other traditions in the locality, is at least understandable and may be justifiable. Moreover, the Australian group was concerned with the one problem of the pastoral care of Papuans and therefore concentrated attention on the need to find some way of preventing the appearance in Papua of that competitive denominationalism familiar in Australia and in Britain.

The question debated was not reunion or federation, but the provision of a ministry in all the churches working in Papua which would be mutually acceptable, so that the Sacraments celebrated by such ministries would, without violating any scruples, be acceptable to all. The chief obstacle to free mutual access to the Lord's Supper is the difficulty which many Anglicans feel in receiving the Sacrament at the hands of a minister who has not himself received episcopal ordination. This may seem indefensible in view of the Lambeth admission that non-episcopal ministries are genuine ministries of Word and Sacraments, but it has behind it the warrant of the Prayer Book. Moreover, until such scruples can be removed, they must be met, lest reunion endeavours lead to fresh schisms. It does not seem likely that those scruples will be removed by theological argument or historical research since scholars continue to differ in their interpretation of the evidence.

A way forward was indicated by the 1920 Lambeth Conference, which admitted that divisions implied some deficiency in every ministry and suggested that without repudiating existing ministries, Anglicans and non-Anglicans should be ready to accept a form of commission or recognition which would commend their respective ministries to all congregations. The Canadian proposals sought to implement the suggestion by providing that each church shall give its commission in the forms used at the ordination of its own ministers, subject to the reading of an agreed declaration which openly recognized the ministry previously possessed by the candidate. This was based on the assumption that the ministries of the Church of England and the United Church of Canada were to be regarded as parallel rather than identical. Nevertheless, despite the statement to be read at each ordination service, the use of the existing ordinals for the bestowal of an extended commission would inevitably suggest a doubt if not a repudiation of the existing ministry.

The Australian attempt to find a Common and Mutual Formula seems the more hopeful way of making progress. After public confession by the candidate of his belief in the divine will to unity, the laying on of hands by at least two duly accredited ministers of each communion is to be accompanied by the words, "Receive the Holy Ghost for the wider exercise of thy ministry in the Church, take thou authority to preach . . . to minister Christ's Sacraments." Such a formula explicitly recognises the ministry already possessed, conveys a wider commission and yet meets the scruples of those who can only conscientiously accept the ministrations of an episcopally ordained

(Concluded on page 160)