

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/robbadshaw>

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

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

The French movement makes a great point of emphasizing the identification of the priest with his people. I am sure we have a lot to learn from that. We ought to be living among our people. In the central area deanery of one of our large cities, there is not a single resident incumbent. How can the people capture this spirit of fellowship if the incumbent is living in a house in a pleasant district two or three miles away? He must be amongst them, sharing their problems with them. He need not necessarily agree with their general political outlook, but he must have a sympathetic understanding of it. It is worse than useless—as we ought by now to have realized—to try to win a working-class district for Christ unless there is a team attempt to win a whole community.

We sometimes hear people say we ought to abandon the 'down town' areas, as they cannot be worked properly. They certainly can not be worked by non-resident, single-handed incumbents who are tied to an archaic system, and who have predominantly middle-class outlooks. But they can be worked by teams of clergy who can identify themselves with their people, understand the spirit of togetherness, and live and preach a Gospel that transforms both lives and communities.

Industrial England is in the Christian front line. It must be won for Christ now, or the chance may not still be ours in the next generation. It is not being won. But it can be won—provided the Church will not retreat to the suburbs.

Contemporary Commentary

A Quarterly Review of Church Affairs and Theological Trends

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

REVOLT AGAINST EUROPE

IN the opening days of the twentieth century Europe enjoyed a prestige at once political, economic, military and cultural which was without precedent in the history of the world. It was confidently assumed that western civilization was the herald of innumerable blessings for the peoples of Asia and Africa, and that the dissemination of European culture all over the world was the responsibility and privilege of Western man. There were few to question this conclusion or to doubt that progress was assured if the primitive cultures of the East gave place to a civilization which was both humanist and technological. In less than two generations Europe has lost this position of world leadership and is itself threatened with political and social disintegration. Its military and economic power, so overwhelming half a century ago, has declined to such an extent that it cannot any longer control the policies of the world. The virtual partition of Europe into two rival spheres of influence under the dominance of two great non-European power systems, symbolizes the sudden and catastrophic decline of what was once the embodiment of the idea of

Christendom. The cause of Christian civilization is thus gravely imperilled and no one can contemplate without dismay the fact that "the great movement of Western man to transform the world has somehow gone astray".

This change in the world position of European culture, so rapid and so unforeseen, has been described and analysed by Mr. Christopher Dawson in a book¹ which ought to be read, marked and inwardly digested by all considering churchmen who realize that the Christian Church cannot abdicate from its responsibility to society. The book lays bare the unique factor in the contemporary eclipse of Europe in that criticism of its social traditions and cultural values which proceeds from non-European sources is allied to a grave loss of faith on the part of Europe in its own traditions and values. Asia and Africa, while anxious to appropriate the secrets of those technical developments by which Europe was able to inaugurate a vast development of material resources, of luxury for the masses and of power in the hands of rulers, are in revolt against the cultural hegemony of Europe. The imported values of Western civilization, imperfectly assimilated, are being rejected in vigorous nationalist movements which seek to re-assert the values of traditional oriental cultures, or to impose the communist pattern of life upon their peoples. There are many Americans who are not only convinced of the superiority of the "American way of life" but who also have come to regard Europe as a backward area in need of American cultural leadership. These external critics of European culture have found powerful supporters within European society. "Indeed these critics have been the disciples of the internal critics of the European tradition, so that to a very great extent Europe has been her own greatest enemy. This is something new in history."² The humanist criticism of life which was characteristic of the Renaissance was in the course of time replaced by a rationalist criticism of the beliefs and institutions of the Christian and European past. This critical revolution, though consciously rationalist, liberated irrational, instinctive forces in the nationalist struggle against revolutionary France and so destroyed the old unity of Europe. No common European democratic culture has come to take the place of the old aristocratic society. Much of the responsibility for this terrible result of the decline of modern culture "from humanity through nationality to bestiality",³ must be laid at the doors of the temporal and ecclesiastical leaders of the old régime who resisted historical development in the name of the past.

Three conclusions seem to emerge from this penetrating study of the development of modern Europe. First, despite the evil consequences of the modern disease of nationalism, nationality has played an important part in the development of European culture. The richness and variety of the several national traditions have been responsible for the unique values of European civilization. Secondly, until the inauguration in 1789 of the revolutionary era, with its consequent

¹ *Understanding Europe*, by Christopher Dawson (Sheed, Ward (1952), pp. 261-16*i*-).

² Op. cit., p. 205.

³ Quoted from Grillparzer on p. 215.

nationalistic and cultural rivalries which have torn into shreds the fabric of European unity, there was a common faith and common spiritual principles which made of Europe a spiritual reality and not a mere collection of nations which happened to exist in physical proximity to one another. This cultural unity was not destroyed by the great ecclesiastical division of the sixteenth century, nor can the blame for its disintegration be placed upon Protestants to any greater extent than upon Papists. Thirdly, if Europe is not to surrender to the inhuman ideal of a mass society as a mere instrument of the will to power of a handful of ambitious men, some way must be found to reverse the direction of recent history and to recover a lost spiritual unity. It is impossible to suppose that this aim can be achieved by a recovery of the old hegemony of Rome. But Protestants in the modern era have been slow to acknowledge the organic relation between religion and culture which is so prominent a part of the witness of Rome. A renewed concern for culture as a necessary expression of the life of the Christian community should be regarded as a priority in contemporary Protestant strategy. The alternative is to acquiesce in the emergence of a completely secularized civilization, "inhuman in the absolute sense—hostile to human life and irreconcilable with human nature itself".¹

ASPIRATION AND ACHIEVEMENT

PATIENCE can be both a cardinal Christian virtue and a habit of mind which induces contentment with things as they are. There have been since the Lund conference marked signs of impatience with the proceedings and conclusions of this latest inter-confessional debate on Faith and Order. It may be that too great expectations were raised in certain quarters before the opening of the conference. It may also be that this conference procedure as at present planned has reached the limit of its usefulness in drawing Christians closer together, and that the next decade will witness other ways of dealing with the hard core of disunity. The missionary conference at Willingen which met under the auspices of the International Missionary Council shortly before Lund has been subjected to criticisms of the same sort for its failure, or apparent failure, to exhibit a fresh creative understanding of the task of the Christian Mission. The words uttered by Bishop Newbiggin of the Church of South India in one of the sessions of the conference that "the mission to the ends of the earth seems to have got bogged down in the trenches", express a sense of frustration at the slow progress of Christian unity and mission which is widespread at the present time.

Perhaps these delays and the spirit of caution manifested by so many European church leaders are the inevitable consequences of the moral and spiritual exhaustion of Europe after two devastating wars, with their social upheavals and economic impoverishment. The eager hopes of the survivors of the first world war, finely expressed in the eloquent language of the Lambeth Appeal of 1920, have given place to an excessive emphasis upon the difficulties and dangers of any proposals designed to set forward closer relationships between separated

¹ Op. cit., p. 252.

Christians. Observers of the contemporary scene have more than once commented on a certain hardening of the arteries among Anglicans in respect of this urgent problem during the last decade. A divine impatience, if it arises from a knowledge of what has so far been achieved and of the stubborn difficulties which still remain to be treated in the field of church relations, can be of immense importance at this moment in our history. There is constant need for the most rigorous self-examination directed towards our cherished assumptions and the principles which we claim to hold in trust for 'the coming great church'.

It would nevertheless be foolish to refuse such encouragement as may be offered to us from a candid consideration of the present stage in the modern history of inter-church relationships. A document which was prepared for the instruction of the delegates to the Lund conference¹ does offer solid grounds for the conclusion that the trend towards Christian unity has found expression in decisive action as well as in high level conference debate. Bishop Stephen Neill was asked to prepare a statement on church union movements during the fifteen years between the Faith and Order conference at Edinburgh in 1937 and the meeting at Lund in 1952. The survey was deliberately restricted to a record of movements for the union or re-union of churches and took no account of the rapid growth of common action in the lands of the younger churches and the great amount of Christian co-operation which has become a feature of church life in many parts of the world since 1937.

The results of the survey are enlightening and encouraging. The movement towards Christian unity exists in every continent, and all the great confessions (with the exception of the Roman and the Orthodox) have been affected by it. Neither Romans nor Orthodox have been entirely uninfluenced by these developments, for they have taken some share in the movement of Christian co-operation and mutual understanding. The report chronicles thirty-nine instances of union achieved between independent churches or of negotiations for union still in active progress. Seven intra-confessional unions have already been achieved and several trans-confessional unions now exist, of which the most important are the Church of South India, the Church of Central Africa in Rhodesia, and the United Church of Christ in the Philippines. Negotiations for church union which involve several different traditions are well advanced in Ceylon, India and Pakistan, Iran, Madagascar and Nigeria. Intercommunion between the Protestant Episcopal Church of America and the Polish National Catholic Church has been achieved and a more limited intercommunion exists between the Church of India, Pakistan, Burma and Ceylon and the Mar Thoma Church of Malabar. Though divisions have usually been quickly made, movements for the recovery of a lost unity take a long time to reach fulfilment. In Neuchâtel a division which arose from a dispute about the relationship of the church to the state lasted forty-five years, and another twenty-five years passed in the efforts, which were ultimately successful, to restore the lost unity. In the

¹ *Towards Church Union, 1937-1952*, by Stephen Neill. (S.C.M. Press. 1952. pp. viii. + 96. 6/-.)

unions achieved there have been inevitable tensions and difficulties of adjustment in the process of learning to live together in one house ; but not one of the unions has been dissolved, while the majority of church members involved are quick to affirm that they could in no circumstances contemplate a return to the previous state of division.

The evidence cited in this document justifies a sober confidence in the integrity of the aims and methods of the Ecumenical Movement. Its contents ought to be widely known, for as Bishop Neill justly observes,¹ the experiences of one group in its journey towards fuller unity may be of the greatest value to a different group engaged in a similar struggle in another part of the world, and "no church in the world has a right to remain indifferent to the yearnings and strivings recorded in this book".

CHINESE TRAGEDY

AMONG the small band of distinguished Christians whose witness and service has been known beyond the borders of their own communion and country was to be included, until recently, the name of Dr. T. C. Chao. In 1948 he was elected one of the presidents of the World Council of Churches at the Amsterdam Assembly. His abilities as an interpreter of the gospel to thoughtful Chinese and of China to Western Christians, were widely recognized. In 1949 when communist rule was established in all China, Dr. Chao welcomed the Communists into Pekin where he held the office of dean of the theological school in Yenching University. Like many other Chinese Christians he believed that Christianity and the new Chinese democracy were not incompatible. His conviction that it was possible to be both a Christian and a Communist in China undoubtedly influenced many students to draw the same conclusion. His prestige in the sphere of education led to his appointment by the communist leaders to serve on the People's Political Consultative Council, the chief organ of political consciousness and debate in the new China. It is clear that some of the best minds in the Chinese Church, far from opposing the communist drive, were ready in a spirit of responsible patriotism to welcome the new order and believed it to be a nearer approximation to social justice than the corrupt and effete régime which it replaced.

Subsequent events have demonstrated how difficult it is for Christians to act responsibly in communist China. Dr. Chao, although he had resigned his office in the World Council in 1950 because of disagreement with the Toronto declaration on the Korean war, has been accused of preaching about the World Council, of collaborating with American imperialists and of using evasive language about the harm caused by American imperialism. He has been dismissed from his post as head of the theological school, stripped of all his offices in the North China diocese, and the house of bishops has been ordered to deprive him of his orders. The most tragic feature of this story is the evidence it affords of the emergence of a new and formidable barrier to Christian unity. The division of the world into East and West, Communist and non-Communist, Russian and American spheres of influence, involves a parallel division in the churches. In America

¹ Op. cit., p. viii.

in the middle of last century, civil strife promoted Christian disunity within existing denominational boundaries, so that the world was faced with the spectacle of the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church South. The political and sociological struggle overcame the force of common membership in Christ. We appear to be entering upon an era of world history in which similar divisions are being thrust upon the church by militant communism. The price of survival in a communist order is undeviating loyalty to the aims and standards of the state—a price which requires the sacrifice of prophetic liberty and of participation in the fellowship of the ecumenical movement. Can the church pay this price and still survive as the authentic church of Christ?

REVIVAL IN SOUTH AMERICA

THE immense power and influence which was exercised by the Roman Church in the countries of Latin America during the colonial period have been strictly limited since the links which bound these territories to Spain and Portugal were broken in the nineteenth century. Strong anti-clerical and anti-Christian movements, particularly in Mexico between 1910 and 1917, drove the church out of the arena of public affairs and sought to confine it within the pinched confines of personal piety. Readers of Mr. Graham Greene's powerful novel, *The Power and the Glory*, will recall his effective presentation of the underground existence of the church during this epoch. But it would be a mistake to assume that Roman Christianity is still a declining force in Latin America. On the contrary there are marked signs of recovery and even of revival, which deserve a close examination.

A familiar aspect of any Roman Catholic revival is the recovery of lost political influence or the acquisition of such influence where it had not previously been enjoyed. In Argentina the anti-American Peron régime was helped into power by the Roman Church, although the alliance is now being subjected to increasing strain which may end in its disruption. In Mexico, where a generation ago the church was proscribed, the hierarchy is working overtime in the attempt to ingratiate the church with public officials and to plant its influence in public positions of strategic importance. The Archbishop of Mexico is frequently in the company of the President, to whose support he has publicly summoned all good catholics. In recent years he has been a distinguished and much courted guest at certain public functions and diplomatic parties where he appears in full regalia, a sight unknown for several decades. The authority and influence of the church in Latin America have been greatly strengthened by its skilful exploitation of the fear of communism.

There are three directions in which this political recovery is most marked. In the first place, determined efforts are being made to win control of labour movements. Catholic labour unions have been formed wherever possible and even in the most radical unions cells pledged in loyalty to the church are being created. The directors of Roman Catholic policy have little to learn from communists in the art of infiltration. In Costa Rica the new policy of fraternization with

radical labour unions reached a climax when the archbishop rode in the same car with the local communist chief at a labour day parade. In Mexico, where modern secular movements have roused agricultural labourers from the poverty and ignorance that was their lot for centuries when the church itself was the chief landowner, the interest of the church in the welfare of the agricultural community is now being widely publicized. At a recent 'Catholic Agricultural Week' held in Mexico, bishops drove tractors in the demonstration of new agricultural machinery. Secondly, the Roman Church is working hard to recover its lost authority in the field of education. Many states in the liberal era had established a non-religious public system of education, from which clerical participation was banned. In 1951 Chile passed a law which made provision for Catholic instruction in all government supported schools. In Mexico and Puerto Rico the attempts to restore catholic religious teaching to the public schools have so far been defeated by a combination of radical and Protestant opinion. But the existence of large catholic majorities in most Latin American countries suggests that the day is not far distant when the church will again secure a dominant position in public education. Thirdly, there has been a recrudescence of religious persecution. Mob violence, murder, arson and plunder have been experienced by Protestants in Peru, Bolivia and Columbia. Full religious freedom is not yet granted to dissenters in several states where the existing government depends upon the support of the church. The hierarchy does little or nothing to restrain the violence of its followers beyond the occasional publication of innocuous reminders of the need to exercise patience and charity.

Nevertheless there are some aspects of the catholic revival which do not fit into this familiar pattern. The French layman, M. Jacques Maritain, through his writings and public addresses has exercised a creative influence in theological circles and begun to vitalize catholic thought in South America. The era of stagnation in theology which prevailed after the close of the sixteenth century seems to have come to an end. It is not easy to forecaste how these new beginnings will develop, but it is of great significance that within the Roman communion, Maritain is the most effective and forceful defender of human rights and the freedom of conscience. He stands for the idea of a non-political church and for fraternal love between Christians of different traditions. A new interest in the Bible is already apparent, for in many churches the scriptures of the day are read aloud in Spanish while mass is being said, and afterwards they are distributed in printed form to the worshippers. Two new Spanish translations made from the Hebrew and Greek originals have been published in recent years, and the official church publishing house has made available a French Roman Catholic book entitled *What is the Bible and How to Study It*. This book opens with the significant claim, "the Bible is not a Protestant book", and is devoted to the object of encouraging the faithful to engage in regular study of the Bible. Big 'moralization' campaigns have been launched by various catholic organizations against such social evils as gambling, prostitution and pornographic literature. In these ways the revival seems to offer the

prospect of new patterns of Christian obedience in lands where freedom and toleration, access to the Bible and a high standard of personal ethics have not previously been characteristic of church life. The question that remains in the mind of the non-Roman observer of this scene is whether the biblical, theological and ethical elements in the revival will have sufficient vitality to overcome the drive to recover the traditional pattern of Roman church life, with its totalitarian control of the religious, political and cultural life of man.

Book Reviews

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. MARK. THE GREEK TEXT,
WITH INTRODUCTION, NOTES, AND INDEXES.

By *Vincent Taylor*. *Macmillan*. 50/-.

The Macmillan series of New Testament commentaries is a series of distinction. It goes back to the great commentaries of Lightfoot on the Pauline Epistles—commentaries which are still invaluable to students of the New Testament, though obviously outdated in some respects. The most recent addition to the series, apart from the book under review, is the Dean of Winchester's volume on 1 Peter (1946), which has been widely acclaimed as a definitive work. Now comes Dr. Vincent Taylor's long awaited commentary on St. Mark. If we grumble at the high price, we may console ourselves that in its nearly 700 pages is packed a wealth of scholarship. The book is a mine, the biggest British commentary on this Gospel since the publication of H. B. Swete's work in 1898.

Some 150 pages are given to Introduction, and the best part of 500 pages to the Greek text and commentary (interspersed with 14 Detached Notes). The book is rounded off with 11 Additional Notes, and Indexes of Greek words, Proper Names, and Subjects. This is a commentary on the grand scale, and almost any page will provide the discerning reader with food for thought and stimulation for the mind and spirit.

It is interesting to contrast this latest work with such a book as Swete's. The contrast only serves to show how much water has flowed under the bridge of New Testament scholarship during the last half-century. Researches in the field of ostraca and papyri (as evidenced by the work, for example, of Moulton and Milligan) are available to the modern scholar and demand his careful attention, while the considerable work of the Form Critical school cannot be by-passed.

Taking an over-all view of Dr. Taylor's work, it may be said that he is cautious and balanced in his judgments. We discern that theological sanity which we have learned to respect in his many other works, and especially in his great trilogy. If he is not as cautious in his approach to the miracles as is Canon Alan Richardson in his *Miracle Stories of the Gospels*, we find him exercising a shrewd approach to the strength and weakness of the theories of the Form Critics—as