

# Editorial

---

## *Current Church Affairs*

AT the time of writing the penultimate Convocation vote on the Anglican-Methodist union scheme is known, the House of Laity final vote is imminent, and the Convocation and Methodist Conference final votes will be taken simultaneously early in July. The penultimate Convocation vote showed almost exactly the 75% majority which earlier resolutions of Convocation had stipulated. A good deal of pressure is currently being exerted on voters in both Churches. Letters appear in *The Times* pleading to give the scheme a chance and not miss the opportunity. Lists of signatures are appended, the absences sometimes being more significant than the signatures. Appeals are made to loyalty to official Church minds. The clergy referendum question has been phrased in such a way as to catch every conceivable waverer, even those who plainly dislike the theology of the scheme. The question to be asked is not whether the clergyman believes the scheme and the service of reconciliation right or not, which is what the question ought to be, but whether he will go through with the scheme and take part in it. The intention is plainly to attract those who do not like the scheme but can be persuaded to swallow their scruples and go through with it. The background influences are not mentioned but are potent factors. What will happen to the clergyman who stands out against it? Will there really be no discrimination of any kind, against him in future if the scheme goes through? It is all rather sordid and unpleasant, smacking of ecclesiastical politics and the operation of ecclesiastical steamrollers. One of the most eloquent signs is the tendency of the scheme's advocates not to make their case on the grounds of theology but on the basis of all manner of opportunist and pragmatic reasons.

We have never made any secret of our belief that this scheme is misguided and theologically wrong. There is plainly a substantial body of Anglo-Catholic and Evangelical opinion which dislikes the scheme, and no doubt also a sprinkling of others in other sections of the Church of England, to say nothing of an even larger (proportionately)

group of Methodists committed to opposition to the scheme. Even on the lower pragmatic grounds, can anyone really believe that implementation of the scheme in the face of such opposition is ecumenical progress?

The fate of the 39 Articles and the whole question of clerical subscription is presently occupying much Anglican attention. The report *Subscription and Assent* (CIO 1968) seemed to indicate a fair solution to all sectors of Anglicanism, but some Evangelical Churchmen are worried that really it means the relegation of the 39 Articles to a museum. If this were so, it would be tragic. The precise legal interpretation of the new declaration is not clear yet, but what is very clear is that the report of the Church Assembly debate given in the Ecumenical Press Service (from the WCC in Geneva) was misleading in suggesting radical alterations and the virtual abandonment of assent to the Articles. That may be fashionable ecumenical thinking but in this context it is wishful thinking on the part of some rather than fact.

Attention in the Church of England at diocesan level is fast switching to pastoral reform with the agenda provided by twenty questions set out in a questionnaire based on the Fenton Morley report *Partners in Ministry*. Again opposition is widespread, this time covering the complete span of churchmanship. The Bishop of Chester has emerged as its leader. Earlier he wrote a short critique of the Morley report in *Progress in Ministry* (Faith Press). Now in conjunction with a committee of bishops, clergy and laity, he has written a popular pamphlet *Twenty Questions* (Marcham Manor Press and Faith Press jointly) summarising the issues at stake and suggesting alternatives. The pamphlet is for popular consumption at 1s. a copy; it includes the twenty questions officially asked together with comment on their implications. It will show the busy reader what the issues really are. In this number we include two articles on pastoral matters, one from Canon Quine an opponent of Morley and the other from an Evangelical working within a mixed team and group ministry.

The Church of England in the last few years has shown preoccupation with internal reform and stirring up dissension within itself. If all the many reforms advocated were really reform in the light of Scripture and equipping the Church for better evangelistic outreach and pastoral ministration, the upheaval and the effort would be worthwhile. But that is very doubtful. And the effects are not always what were anticipated. First, the secular world outside sees a Church obsessed with reorganising itself, always looking inward, and apparently tearing itself apart in the process. The publicity value of the engineered 'crises' and revolutionary proposals has now worn off, because the press are far more interested in revolutions within the Roman Church. Second, a vast amount of money and effort has been expended on these internal reforms when it might well have been better used elsewhere. Third, the reports have followed each other so fast that there are clear

signs that they are not being read and digested before answers and votes are demanded, and a general sense of unrest is building up. Clergy and laity alike realise a revolution is being proposed and just about everything is being questioned, but they are very uncertain as to what the final outcome will be, and the pressure used in the current union discussions has made many people much more cautious and even suspicious than they otherwise would have been. It should be noted in conclusion who benefits from all this and how the pace of change and the balance of ecclesiastical power are altered. The people who have the time to master all this change are the Church officials, diocesan and central, because it is part of their job. They thus become very much more powerful because they have had time to study the issues and consequently have much more knowledge and information. We have said in earlier editorials how they seem likely to emerge as the real powers behind the democratic facade of synodical government. As to *ecclesia anglicana* as a whole, has not the time come to turn its attention rather more outward? A regular measure of reform is healthy, but it is not an excuse for an obsession with it to the exclusion of all else. Would it not be healthier to devote more attention at all levels throughout the Church of England to evangelism, to social questions, to problems of religious education, to problems of industry and industrial area parishes, to the moral questions under debate in the nation (the Board of Social Responsibility has given a fine lead on many of these), in short to turn our eyes out towards God's world rather than for ever tinker with ecclesiastical matters?

### *Two Books*

DARLOW AND MOULE, as the 1903 edition of the *Historical Catalogue of the English Bible* is familiarly known, is a scholar's reference book as important as it has become rare. The reason for the rarity is that originally only 500 copies were printed. A revision of this book has now been prepared under Professor A. S. Herbert of Selly Oak and was published by the British and Foreign Bible Society last autumn. The new edition runs to 549 pages. The compilers have tried to list every edition down to 1824, and up to 1640 to locate editions in the main US and UK libraries. There is cross referencing to Darlow and Moule and to STC. The usual bibliographical descriptions are then added. There are two appendices, one of translations appearing in commentaries and the other of versions in provincial British dialects. The book is rounded off with four indices—translators, publishers, places of publishing and a general one. The whole is a labour of love, beautifully produced and sensibly laid out with wide margins for

scholarly additions as fresh information comes to light. No self-respecting library and no serious student of Bible history can be without this magnificent new book. It is an indispensable reference work continuing the worthy tradition of Darlow and Moule themselves.

SPCK have reprinted R. C. Moberly's *Ministerial Priesthood* (306pp. 21s. paper) with a short introduction by A. T. Hanson. The reprint is of the second edition less prefaces and a rather dated comment on Rome and Anglican Orders. Hanson is a Moberly supporter, and his introduction describes the origins of the original work, showing how it paralleled Gore's writings in trying to modify earlier Tractarian intransigence and bring it more into line with critical scholarship. His summary of Moberly's contentions is admirable, and he then goes on to point to the book's relevance in modern Anglican attempts to rethink the doctrine of the ministry. Of the importance of this work in current Anglican thinking there can be little doubt. R. T. Beckwith showed in his Latimer Monograph *Priesthood and Sacraments* (Marcham) how influential Moberly had been historically in providing some Anglicans with an apparent bridge between so-called Catholic and Protestant doctrines of the ministry. Beckwith also demonstrated why he believed Moberly was quite unacceptable from a biblical angle. Hanson and Beckwith agree on Moberly's importance, but to Hanson Moberly is 'something of a cordial to drooping spirits today. It should give strength and purpose to clergy (Anglican and otherwise) who fear that they are losing their identity in modern society' (p.xvii). Hanson recognises that in some respects Moberly is inevitably dated, that he uses an either/or argument too much, and that he does not ask some of the pertinent modern questions on the ministry, yet Hanson believes this book to be 'the best single work written by an Anglican on the subject of Christian priesthood' (p.xviii). Opinions will differ on the intrinsic value of Moberly's case but that he has been unusually influential is beyond dispute.

G.E.D.