

# 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](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php)

for more theology, less class privilege, language more relevant and meaningful; more use of the laity; a more honest recognition of the sinfulness of war. One admirable *bon mot* must be repeated: "The times demand a forward movement of the *whole* Church, knowing that the vanguard of the attack must be Christian youth, who, at any rate, are in closest contact with other young people. The vanguard indeed, for we know that behind us are the prayers and guidance of our elders. When the constitution of the Youth Department was in process of debate here someone stated that youth could be the explosive element in the Church. Very true. But we are reminded of the words of a sage Bishop who, when called a 'back number', retorted, 'Yes, I am a back number. But, remember, you take back numbers to light the fire.' In the wintry cold of the present day unfaith, the Pentecostal fire for which the Church is expectant can only come when we actively recognise each other as fellow-witnesses in God's design."

A careful account of the Constitution of the World Council, and its rules, closes the main part of the book. The Constitution comprises: an Assembly meeting every five years; a Central Committee; and Commissions (e.g. on Faith and Order, and International Affairs). Appendices give lists of all who were members, "alternates," accredited visitors, consultants and youth delegates.

Clergy who buy this Report will find here much material for sermons and discussion groups: e.g. on the work of the Church, the use and responsibility of the laity, evangelism, Communism. It is to be hoped that the subject of worship will loom larger in the next Assembly.

The index is not complete: "Communism," "Capitalism," "Bible," "Witness," "Kingdom of God," find no place in it, though these subjects are among the many on which fresh light is thrown.

---

## Contemporary Commentary

### A Quarterly Review of Church Affairs and Theological Trends

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

#### ROME AND AMSTERDAM

IT is a matter of common knowledge that Rome refuses to be associated with the World Council of Churches, for such association would have the appearance of a tacit admission that she is one among a number of churches and not the one true Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church which she believes herself to be. But individual Roman priests and leading laymen have shown considerable sympathy with the ecumenical movement, and numbers of them desired to be present at Amsterdam as observers. The general secretariat of the World Council issued the necessary invitations, but the Holy See ruled that these invitations could not be accepted without its permission, which it refused to grant to any Roman Catholic. This refusal caused considerable surprise and some distress in Roman Catholic circles and had

to be explained as due to the desire of the Holy See not to allow unfounded hopes to be aroused or wrong conclusions to be drawn from the presence of Roman observers at an assembly of non-Roman churches. It has also been alleged that an important factor in the decision was the unexpectedly large number of requests from both priests and laymen for permission to attend.

Despite the absence of Roman Catholics in any official capacity, considerable attention has been devoted by Roman writers to the proceedings at Amsterdam. Several writers have emphasised their concern and even delight at "non-Catholics taking up the question of union," finding in this development signs of the working of the grace of God. Father Congar asserted emphatically that there was no question of the Roman Church taking up a haughty, isolationist attitude. Other writers said that Rome followed with love and great hope the work of the Assembly, "since everything tending to partial unity is a step towards total unity." In one large church in Paris a mass was said to pray for the grace and illumination of the Holy Spirit on the labours of Amsterdam. The discussions on world problems and the attempt to give Christian guidance on great social issues, though not resulting in a united voice, were welcomed as a somewhat belated recognition on the part of Protestants that the Church has the right and the duty to judge the world.

This welcome to the aims and activities of the leaders of non-Roman Christendom has not abated one jot or tittle of the exclusive claims of Rome even on the part of the friendliest writers. Nevertheless it should be noticed that there has been a tendency to admit "that the voice and the language of the Holy Church are no longer understood by her separated children" because of abuses "which existed at the time of the schism" and "the unchristian lives of many Catholics". The pastoral letter of the Dutch bishops, read in all Roman Catholic churches in the Netherlands at the time of the Assembly, admitted that "not all Catholics are free of guiltiness in respect of the alienation which has arisen between ourselves and non-Catholic Christians". Can it be that the frank recognition on the part of Evangelical Christians in the World Council of the traditions of sanctity, missionary zeal and devotion to the central truths of the creed which still distinguish the Church of Rome, has insensibly modified its unwillingness to realise that it has not always and everywhere been in the right? If the isolation of Rome is a challenge to the World Council of Churches in its search for Christian unity, it may be that Rome is beginning to recognise that the World Council presents in a new way the essential protest of the Reformation which challenged the special claims of Rome and asserted the continuing need of corporate repentance and reformation in the life of the Church.

#### THE CHURCH'S "NO" TO COMMUNISM

**C**OMMUNISM with its world strategy, its philosophy of history and its capacity to inspire selfless devotion in all true believers, continues to be the most serious and perplexing challenge to the Christian Church in every part of the world. Rome has lately declared unmistakably her attitude in excommunicating communists and members

of communist organisations; but most other Christians, perhaps because they are haunted by the memory of their failure in the past to struggle against social injustice, are reluctant to indulge in outright and unqualified condemnation of communism lest it should appear that once more the church is on the side of the enemies of the people. To appear in that guise is much more dangerous in the middle of the twentieth century when the masses have acquired a consciousness of their political and economic power than it was a century ago at the climax of the Industrial Revolution. Nevertheless the desire not to appear unsympathetic to the just demands of labour may so darken counsel and confuse Christian minds that the church will fail as badly as it did a century ago in its duty to play the watchman and to deliver the souls of the people from the power of the enemy.

In a recent article in *World Review* Karl Barth has tried to emphasise the need for the reformed churches not to echo the pronouncements either of Rome or of the secular press in their attitude to communism. He insists that the church must not permit itself to become a tool of western politicians and so lose its independence of judgment. "Fear must not be allowed to be our counsellor in discussing the problem of East and West." He dismisses the antagonism of America and Russia as a mere power conflict between the imperial rivals of the age in which we (Reformed Christians, or Swiss, or both?) should have neither part nor lot. It is the duty of Christians to support every relaxation of tension and to realise that there is good and evil on both sides. The way of the community of Jesus Christ is "a third way—its own way"; but this distinctive way is not expounded in any detail. Such a weighty pronouncement merits the most careful attention of every reader and is a necessary reminder that the church has a distinctive function to discharge which must be something other than a reflection of the social prejudices of a majority of its members.

Professor Brunner, who both at Amsterdam and in subsequent papers (*Communism, Capitalism and Christianity*, Lutterworth Press) has challenged the judgment of Barth, has agreed that it is a fundamental Christian duty "not to be corrupted by the false alternative which confronts a world which has forgotten God: either capitalism or communism". He has set himself to answer in some detail the ingenious arguments of Barth and others and to expose the terrible menace of political communism. Neither past guilt nor present failure can absolve the Christian from making a decision about communism, or from concluding that a relatively greater justice is embodied in western civilisation compared with Soviet tyranny. "There is scarcely anywhere in the whole world where there is such misery from poverty and complete injustice as in totalitarian communism, which treats the mass of the people as slaves of the state and erects at their expense a frightful apparatus of power." Totalitarianism, which is only fully manifested in political communism, "is the most reactionary force in the world to-day and necessarily connected with atheism." The Church of Rome may have its own particular reasons, which we cannot approve, for opposing communism, but that must not induce us to leave the struggle against "the greatest devilry of our era" entirely to Rome.

Brunner is equally emphatic on the prophetic duty of the church in so-called capitalist states. Any economic system which repudiates personal liberty and destroys true community is a denial of Christian belief about the nature and destiny of man and must be resisted in the name of Christ. The dominant feature of modern political and economic development has been the depersonalizing of the life of men, and the church is called to witness to the integrity of human personality. It can only do this if it is a church which knows true personal community. "A church which preaches well but lets nothing be seen of true brotherly fellowship has no recruiting power." In a concluding section on capitalism, Brunner points to the changes taking place in socialist thought at the present time, which he characterizes as "a retreat from Marxism". This is apparent in two ways: (i) in second thoughts about nationalisation due to an awareness that once the whole economy is state-controlled there is "no stopping at any point short of the total state"; (ii) in the growing realisation that worker and employer are appointed for one another and that "the well-being of the one is also the well-being of the other". With the approach of a general election in this country and the inevitable confusing of issues by party propaganda, this pamphlet, with its realistic and penetrating analysis of the contemporary scene, ought to be studied carefully and in good time by all responsible Churchmen.

#### EPISCOPACY IN THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

THE recently published memoir of Neville Talbot,<sup>1</sup> with its account of his years of frustration at Nottingham and the admission by the Bishop of Southwell at the memorial service that "the Church of England had never used him properly, nor given him an adequate scope for his abilities," raises the question of what qualities the Church of England really desires to see manifested by its Fathers in God. Does it need good or great bishops, pastors and teachers, or administrators and managing directors? This issue must be faced whatever mode of appointment may prevail at any moment in history. It is now generally agreed that in the last three quarters of a century, prime ministers and their advisers have in their nominations sought to consult the best interests of the church. But what are the real interests of the church in such an important matter as the appointment of its chief pastors? Does it require men who, in Benson's familiar phrase, will be primarily 'Bishops of England'—national figures whose pronouncements will be heeded by the nation and whose leadership will be effective far beyond the limits of active Anglican membership? Or is the outlook of the Church of England, despite the publicity of its claim to catholicity, more denominational than it was half a century ago?

It is still required of a bishop that he shall, in the words of the ordinal, so far as possible "maintain and set forward quietness, love and peace among all men". Is it possible that the church over which a bishop is called to preside can be true to its vocation and yet come to terms with the social order within which it works so that there is a

<sup>1</sup> *Neville Stuart Talbot: A Memoir.* By F. H. Brabant. S.C.M. Press, 8/6.

notable absence of friction? Neville Talbot speedily found that loyalty to the Gospel required of him, as the appointed leader and shepherd of his people, action directed against the denial of the truth about God and man in the treatment of the native by the South African government. He certainly did not appear to that government to be a man of peace. "I hope," said a South African M.P. on one occasion, "it will not be long before we shall be able to chase people like the Bishop of Pretoria overseas". Again, as this memoir indicates, the authorities ecclesiastical as well as temporal were afraid to contemplate what might happen if Talbot were appointed to one of the more important posts in the church. He might have rocked the boat just at a time when caution and steadiness were required. He certainly did not regard it as a first charge on his energy to preserve and strengthen the administrative machinery of the church or to defend the existing order. On the contrary there was an adventurous quality about his work and leadership to which the youth of England might have responded when it had come to despair of effective Christian leadership.

There was a genuine prophetic strain in many of his utterances (he sympathized deeply with the perplexities and doubts of ordinary people in a bewildering scientific age), and he sought to express what was in him and not what people wanted to hear. His vehemence and exaggeration might be a sore trial to those in authority, yet it was often in this way that some truth penetrated the defences of conventional or prejudiced minds. Will there not be inevitably an unpredictable quality about a leader who fulfils his function in the power of the Spirit? "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." It seems as though the Church of England needs to do some realistic thinking about the essential qualities required in a modern bishop before it attempts the difficult and dangerous task of improving the present method of appointment.

#### EVANGELISM IN FINLAND

**D**URING the last ten years the life of the people of Finland has been dominated by war and its aftermath of reparations, which has imposed a severe strain on the national economy. Many church buildings were destroyed, and the young manhood of the country suffered heavy losses in the fighting. The cession of the Carelian peninsula to Russia has involved the country in the heavy task of resettling half a million people. This has only been accomplished by an extensive project of land reform which has deprived both the Lutheran and Orthodox churches of most of their resources, so that it is impossible to rebuild shattered parochial life or pay the stipends that the clergy ought to have. The prolonged war and the constant Russian threat have had serious effects on the moral and spiritual condition of the nation. Many came back from the war bewildered and disappointed, and there was a serious increase in drinking and immorality even after the end of the war. Despite the fact that virtually everyone in Finland has received religious instruction in school and been baptized and confirmed, large numbers of people in recent years have had little more than a formal connection with the church, which, however,

reckons 96% of the population amongst its members and adherents.

It is encouraging to find, with so much that is forbidding in the general scene and so many grave difficulties in the way of advance, that the Church of Finland seems to be awake to its responsibility for the life of the nation and ready to seize every opportunity that is presented. The hard times and the sombre aspect of any future that can be anticipated has opened many doors previously closed to the Gospel. "We might almost say that there is no heart in Finland which cannot be approached by the good tidings if only the right approach is found," is the verdict of the Bishop of Tampere. The spiritual readiness of the church to meet the needs of the hour is largely due to the influence of the revival movements in the past hundred years. Most of these movements sprang up and developed within the framework of the church, so that the Free Churches, though quite influential through their leaders, only count about 12,000 adults in their membership. It is said that most members of the Salvation Army still belong to the Church of Finland and receive the Holy Communion in its churches.

Several points in this report<sup>1</sup> are worthy of careful consideration by other churches. First, there is a strong emphasis upon the reality of the priesthood of all believers in the encouragement given to lay initiative in all parts of the church's life. The Church Assembly has a majority of lay members, and there is a movement to allow the voice of the laymen to be heard in the election of bishops. The Evangelical Society has over 11,000 lay members, with 200 lay preachers, mostly farmers, teachers and factory workers who give up their spare time to preaching in town and country. "Home evenings" appear to be the Finnish equivalent of cottage meetings or squashes where most of the speaking is done by laymen. Secondly, a vigorous united evangelistic effort is maintained by the Street Mission, which goes out after the destitute, drunks and ex-convicts. Most of this work is carried on by voluntary lay workers of all ecclesiastical allegiances who visit public houses, night clubs, prisons, hospitals and work colonies to deliver addresses and engage in personal work. The Home Mission Society and the People's Bible Society help to keep evangelistic endeavour on the conscience of the ordinary church member. Thirdly, there is a remarkably good production of Christian literature. In addition to three established religious weekly papers, a new weekly paper has been published which emphasises the need for the co-operation of all Christians in evangelism. One periodical, "*Sana*", appears to have achieved considerable success in its object of reaching those workers who otherwise would have no contact with the church, for it is widely read. Fourthly, since the war resolute efforts have been made to discover new forms of evangelism adapted to the needs of contemporary society. A religious radio programme is maintained, and in 1945 a Christian Film Union was inaugurated for the production and importing of good films. The attempt to bridge the gulf between the church and worker has met with some success: the president of the Christian Social Democratic Union (a leading theologian) is also

<sup>1</sup> Issued by the World Council of Churches (Geneva) on *Evangelism in Finland*.

president of the socialist parliamentary group. The Bishop of Tampere has shown considerable skill in approaching the communists and in talking a language they understand. One local branch of the communist party is reported to open its meetings with prayer. Fifthly, women are making a great contribution to the ministry of the church in the present time of hardship. Since 1943 the constitution of the church has required that each parish must have at least one woman worker, and over 1,300 deaconesses and parish sisters are at work all over the country. Some of them are employed as women pastors for religious instruction and youth work and lead parish groups and Bible study circles. Altogether the Church of Finland is striving to discharge its responsibility to the people at every level of national life.

### LITURGICAL PROBLEMS AND PRINCIPLES

**I**T was inevitable that the four hundredth anniversary of the publication and enforcement of the first English Prayer Book in 1549 should have been made the occasion of formal services of thanksgiving in the Church of England and throughout the Anglican Communion. The Prayer Book in the vernacular has been, next to the Bible, the most important factor in the shaping of English Christianity both here and overseas since the sixteenth century. It has translated into the idiom of liturgy the essential truth that worship is a congregational act in which every participant has a priestly function to fulfil. It has implemented by its extensive use of scripture the Reformation insight that the church is constituted by the Gospel and must in all things submit to the sovereign rule of Christ: and that in practice means worship which is in spirit and in truth. It has preserved for each generation the ordered whole of Christian truth by the continued use, in a reformed calendar, of the Christian year. It has sought to sanctify the great occasions of public and private life by the provision of forms of service adapted to the moods of such moments. It has stamped upon many generations of worshippers the conviction that praise without sincerity of mind or purity of heart is an empty formality. Indeed, this characteristic emphasis upon the high ethical quality of true worship may have contributed to the rise of the twentieth century heresy that worship is an optional addition to the good life. The celebrations of this year, while acknowledging the benefits bestowed upon the whole Anglican Communion by its Prayer Books, have been distinguished not by uncritical encomiums upon what an earlier age regarded as 'our incomparable liturgy', but by realistic attempts to take stock of the exact state of our heritage.

Three comments may be allowed upon the significance of this celebration. It was in 1549 that the principle of uniformity was formally introduced into the Church of England. Every succeeding revision of the Prayer Book retained this principle until 1927-28, when the existence of two authoritative rites within the church was contemplated. The principle of uniformity is not regarded with much favour at the present time and has been described by Gregory Dix as an impossible and—by implication also—an undesirable ideal. Nevertheless, adherence to the principle that the church in its public worship

prays in a certain way is bound up with its catholicity and helps to make the smallest and meanest act of worship a part of the total offering of the whole church. Further, it is a protection for the worshipper against the vagaries of any individual minister. Dr. Oscar Hardman, however, while admitting that diversity of rites within the Anglican Communion is entirely proper, has reasserted the necessity of adherence to a single use for the whole realm. It is evident that the time has come when the Church of England must make up its mind about the value of uniformity in the light of the experience of the last four centuries, or face a grace accentuation of its internal disunity. The substance of uniformity is not in a meticulous observance of every rubrical detail but in an unwavering loyalty to the central tradition of Christian worship as received in the Church of England, with a measure of freedom and flexibility in detail.

Secondly, more voices have been raised in criticism than in praise, and the liturgical deficiencies of the Prayer Book have been widely proclaimed. The official Church Union sermon preached to mark the occasion was nothing more than a sustained attack on the liturgical ineptitude of Cranmer and an insistence on the need of correcting his work. It is disturbing to observe that the result of a century of intensive study of early liturgical forms has led to a profound dissatisfaction with the liturgy provided for public use in the Church of England and to a practical repudiation of its authority against the background of a supposed liturgical correctness of earlier pre-reformation times or the authority of primitive practice. The result has been apparent in the long period of liturgical confusion through which the Church of England has been passing. In his sermon before the Convocation of Canterbury the Archbishop of Canterbury referred to this confusion in the following words: "Some have found what they regard as liturgical blemishes or doctrinal weaknesses in it (the Anglican rite). Some have been so little content with it that they have changed its order or supplemented it from other rites. Some have wished to regard the communion of the people as detachable, whereas it is interwoven with the whole structure of the liturgy and is integral to it. Some have been ready to decry the value or even the sufficiency of the order of their church."

It is evident that what is at issue is the liturgical authority of the Church of England as asserted in the 34th Article of Religion and at present embodied in the Prayer Book. For more than half a century the liturgical practice of the church has become ever more protestant since many people have either regarded themselves as possessed of a *jus liturgicum* to revise and adapt the Prayer Book as seemed good to them, and have erected an imaginary authority called 'catholic order' or 'apostolic tradition' which has allowed them with a good conscience to overthrow the Prayer Book order. Dom Gregory Dix and those who think with him have abandoned the attempt to demonstrate the catholic sufficiency even of the 1549 rite and openly repudiate it as virtually a Zwinglian rite which expresses not catholic theology but the eucharistic opinions of Thomas Cranmer. What is not so clear is the order which is to replace the present rite, still accepted by a majority of Anglican churchmen who are not swayed by nice

liturgical considerations. Is it to be based upon the work of Hippolytus, now in some circles given almost a canonical authority? If so, the Eucharist will then bear the aspect of a simple reformed rite rather than a developed catholic celebration. Or will it be a standard formed out of the eclectic tastes of liturgical scholars with no more authority for the church than their own learning? The Archbishop of Canterbury expressed to his convocation the hope that this period of liturgical confusion, which has brought gains as well as losses, might now be drawing to a close; but it must be confessed that the prospect for this is not very bright unless the clergy of the Church of England repent of their inherited liturgical individualism. Indeed, such a renewed loyalty to the order of the Prayer Book, as distinct from a painful insistence on regard for the small points of liturgical procedure, seems to be not only a crying need of the moment but also an essential preliminary to any measure of Prayer Book reform.

Thirdly, a summons to loyalty to the Prayer Book does not mean a denial of the need for its revision in this generation. The history of the Church of England is bound up with the claim to possess the authority to 'reform' rites and ceremonies in accordance with the needs of the hour and the testimony of Scripture. The passage of time has revealed the need for adjustments, additions and variations in the existing book, though it should be remembered that most congregations are intensely conservative and do not take kindly to innovations in worship, even when these innovations are in fact restorations. Probably the need for revision is felt more keenly by the clergy, many of whom have some technical liturgical knowledge, than by the great majority of ordinary churchmen; so that great care must be taken to prevent the recurrence of the notion that worship is primarily the concern of a professional caste and the layman has nothing to do save to accept what is offered to him. Further, even when there is widespread agreement on the need for revision, there are profound differences within the church about the doctrine to be embodied in any revised liturgy. There can be nothing but approval for the candour of Gregory Dix when he admits that the present Anglican liturgy is an effective expression of reformation insights. But he must be well aware that there are still many churchmen resolved to defend to the uttermost the liturgical expression of those insights in the Prayer Book. Two years ago Dr. Oscar Hardman pleaded for the establishment of a Liturgical Commission, fully representative of all traditions in the Church and able to undertake the important preliminary work of revision. There is no doubt that such a commission could be of immense value to the church, both as the authoritative body for the compilation of special services and also as the appropriate organ for the supervision of such changes and experiments as are being made at the moment. Revision of forms of service there must be in a living church, but there is need for guidance from an informed and experienced group. The discussions which would form a considerable part of the work of the commission would show whether an agreed revision of the Prayer Book is a practicable measure in the Church of England. The formation of such a Commission could be a realistic way of marking the commemoration of this year.