

ANGLICANS AND REUNION

The Right Rev. Bendyshe Burnett^{o)}

Unless we place the question of the Reunion of Christendom in its correct context, there is very little chance of a fruitful approach to it. It is sometimes thought to be a laudable aim, worth a modicum of prayer and effort to attain, but almost certainly out of reach in our time. Others take the line: "We stay as we are because we have the fulness of Truth; others must adapt themselves to this. „They can join us on our terms if they want to, and indeed it is probably God's will that they should". This attitude is by no means the prerogative of one or two Communions, indeed it is frequently found among those who find others intransigent. Others, earnest in the pursuit of unity, think in terms of pasting together a mosaic of patterns of Churchship by pruning and dovetailing our Confessions and doing what is necessary to acquire a valid ministry. These attitudes of mind can only lead to abortive discussions on Reunion.

We need first of all to be convinced that Reunion is not simply something desirable, but that obedience to God compels us to seek unity. The Unity of the Church stems from the Nature of God to whom the Church belongs. The Unity of the Church is rooted in the Unity of God and in the action He has taken in Jesus Christ to reconcile all creatures in the Son both to Himself and to one another. No to seek unity with devotion and a loving seriousness is to be disobedient and faithless.

Unity a means of Evangelism

Secondly, unity is not only the result of an urgent missionary concern, it is a means of Evangelism. Reconciliation and unity are what the Gospel is about. Unity is a preaching of the Word. To be united is to hold up Jesus Christ as the Sign of Faith. The more diverse those are who are held together in God's gracious hand, the more He is glorified in His love and power. Unity is not only needed for Evangelism, it is Evangelism. Moreover to be disunited is to deny in deed what you preach in word. It is to bring into question the effectiveness of the Gospel to perform what we claim for it.

Unity impossible without renewal

Thirdly, Unity is impossible without the renewal of the Church in Holiness, Truth and Love. This is why the Vatican Council is so important. It seeks the renewal of the Roman obedience in order that the Church may be ready for Unity in the way God chooses. Renewal, of course requires that we no longer seek to tie the Holy Spirit down to our ordinances because we are in mortal fear of where He will drive the Church if we let Him loose! He does, in any case escape the blows through the world at present in Pentecostal movements.

Renewal involves us in considering afresh what it means to be a worshipping Community and indeed what it means to be the Church.

What are we looking for?

This in turn involves a thorough examination of what Unity in the Church means. What kind of unity does God give to His people in the Church. What precisely are we looking for in our search for Unity. When we think about Reunion in terms of the renewal of the Church it is bound

to mean changes for both Communions involved in negotiations. Consider Episcopacy, and the ministry for example. It is clear that any united Church must have a ministry recognised and accepted by the uniting Churches. If one considers the whole of Christendom it becomes obvious that this must be an Episcopal Ministry because the greater part of Christendom has this ministry. But Episcopacy has changed a good deal during the centuries and as long as certain essential features of the Episcopal Ministry are retained there seems to be no reason why it should not be changed again. For example, Dioceses could be reduced in size and the work of Bishops allowed to become a more effective pastoral ministry with permanent Deacons largely responsible for administration. But before this can happen, we need to consider afresh what is essential to the ministry of the Church.

Applied to situation in Africa

When one considers what all this means in relation to Anglicans and Methodists in South Africa, there are a number of relevant observations. There is little conviction, I believe, among either Anglicans or Methodists that our Communions either could or should be united, and indeed there is little conviction about reunion at all. It is my impression that Methodists are frequently even more reluctant than Anglicans to seek closer fellowship.

Reasons for reluctance

This lack of a pressing concern for unity reflects among other things an inadequate and impoverished theology of the nature of the Church, and

an insensitivity to the Father's longing that all should be reconciled in Jesus Christ. Our prejudices and our ignorance about one another add to our reluctance to seek closer union. Our conceptions of one another are often caricatures of the reality, and this despite our common origin. The Methodist thinks he sees in the Anglican Communion, a Church ruled by proud authoritarian Prelates, and, for the most part, in the grip of a dead formalism or neo-Romanism. Anglicans shudder at what they consider to be Methodism's lack of a robust theology. They think that Methodist preaching is a wishy-washy humanism. They fear that in Methodism, Baptism has lost much of its meaning, and the Eucharist its centrality. They fear that what they think of as Methodism's lack of an effective theological "bone-structure" and a Godward theology of the Sacraments and of the Ministry, would seriously weaken their own witness to the Truth.

Now, until we get close enough at the parish level to see the reality and get to know and trust one another, it is a waste of time to discuss Episcopacy or inter-communion, or Sacramental theology. The Truth is obviously not merely propositional or intellectual. It is concerned with relationships through which men are blessed by God and sanctified. Therefore by seeking to experience something of the meaning of our Baptismal unity through prayer together and common acts of service, and by attempting to seek together what the renewal of the Church means for each of us, we may well begin to see again the Bride of Christ as she stands whole and entire offering her worship to God in the Beauty of Holiness.

^{o)} Bishop Burnett is Bishop of the Church of the Province in Bloemfontein.

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Out of Darkness - Light!

to himself and his throne of mercy. The answer to that prayer was twofold. First were Mrs. Thompson's words "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." Second was a letter from the Session Clerk of the African Presbyterian congregation in Adelaide, which I read during the service. This letter was as follows:

"Dear Mr. Lund,

With much grief our congregation received the sad news of the murder at Bashee Bridge.

The congregation, which is deeply touched and shocked at such a terrible onslaught, when innocent people were butchered to death, remembered the Thompson family in their prayer meeting last night, particularly well-known and accepted in this area as ever so generous to the Bantu people.

Without reservation, the Bantus in Adelaide and district condemn such brutal actions, no matter what motivated them. We sympathise with the bereaved families and we condemn and disassociate ourselves from such disgraceful elements.

In prayer we join with you. In His service,"

It was with a full heart that I was able to say to them "Brethren in Christ, do not be afraid. Here is no resentment in these hearts. Here is no bitterness. Here, if forgiveness

is needed, is forgiveness. Here are hearts that will love you all our days. Rise, and lift your eyes to Christ and believe." Not only did the congregation send a letter, but messages, verbal and written, came from many African people, high and low, in the area, reflecting the wave of shock, agony, sympathy and love for the Thompson family. Undoubtedly God used that funeral service to purge the bitterness out of the hearts of many who attended.

Perhaps the most eloquent expression of grief came from one of the Thompson's customers. As soon as Mr Thompson felt able to carry on his business, she came into the store to express her sympathy with her revered friends. But she was so overcome that all she could do was to stand in the corner of the shop for many minutes, weeping silently. Unable to find words, she put her money down on the counter, pointed dumbly to the article she wanted, and walked silently out of the shop.

FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPALS INVOLVED

The service had done much to turn the hearts and minds of people away from bitterness to the forgiving mercy and love of God. Yet there were some who were not convinced, who said "But they did know what they were doing! How can we forgive them, how can

God forgive them?" And many added "If you go on forgiving this kind of thing, it will go on happening." So it seemed necessary to say something further to the people, and I myself had to come to grips with the fundamental Christian principles involved. In our parish magazine, I grappled with the question, under the title "Forgive the Murderers?" In answer to those whose hearts still nursed thoughts of unforgiving vengeance, I said:

"(1) "Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord". Revenge is a terrible thing for man to play with.

(2) God has appointed the state... for the purpose of punishing evil-doers and hindering them in their evil purposes (1 Peter 2 : 13-14).

(3) The state... and the people who give it power are... also under the judgment of God. There must be constant heartsearching as to whether in fact full justice is being done and whether these is real care for all people... or whether justifiable grievances are being caused and fertile soil for disturbance and insurrection being created.

(4) Thus there falls to the Church the task, not always popular, of warning the State... when justice is not being done. Such warning may not always be palatable.

(5) Did they know what they were doing? In a way, yes! So did the people who crucified Jesus. But they were blind to what God was doing... in Christ. Their blindness was caused by sin, their own sin and the sin of their leaders. But... after Pentecost the Gospel of God's judgment and

forgiving, saving mercy... was preached to them... So the Church calls upon all Christian people to labour and pray that the Gospel of Christ be preached, not only in word but by our lives, our character, our example, to all our people in South Africa.

(6) ... the deep Christian truth remains that Christians must forgive, else they will not be forgiven their sins. The Son of God said it. And we Christians and indeed all... Christians would be guilty of

terrible treachery if we encouraged the building up of resentment and the spirit of revenge... But the wonderful thing has been to see this spirit of forgiveness avising quite spontaneously in the lives of our beloved brethren in their sorrow."

The comment with which I ended this article also serves to illuminate the whole of this tragic yet grace-filled affair. "This surely is the doing of God and wonderful in our eyes." ★

ISLAM en Christendom

Die Moslemgeloof bedreig die Christendom soos nog nooit tevore in die geskiedenis nie, so skryf dr. J. A. Schutte in „My Volk" van Maart 1963. Die Moslemgeloof het Suid-Afrika binnegekom met die Maleise slawe wat hierheen ingevoer is en wat vir die grootste gedeelte die Islam aangehang het. Sedertdien is baie bekeerlinge gemaak, veral onder die nie-blanke mense in ons land. Die groei van die Islam is verbasend. Hulle is baie aktief en fanatiek. Die getalle in Afrika het in die loop van twaalf jaar van 45 miljoen tot 85 miljoen in 1962 gestyg.

Dit lê soos 'n groot reus oor die wêreld met sy hart in Mekka, sy hoof in Konstantinopel en sy arms in Afrika en Asië. In Johannesburg is daar ongeveer 385 Moslemgeminne in die Kleurlingvoorstad Albertville, terwyl Bosmont, 'n ander deel van die stad waar Kleurlinge saamgetrek is, vir die grootste gedeelte Mohammedaan is. Onder die Moslems is daar nie alleen Maleiers nie maar duisende Kleurlingmense. Die Koran, hulle heilige boek, is selfs in Afrikaans vertaal. Ongeveer 150,000 eksemplare daarvan is versprei, veral ook om die Kleurlingmense te bereik.