

THE REFORMATION IN LIFE : CORPORATE.

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IN approaching this subject I think we shall find it helpful to begin by a brief consideration of three terms which we hear very often mentioned together nowadays : Community, State, Church. The corporate life of man finds expression in these three forms.

In the following paragraphs I am greatly indebted to a very clear and illuminating essay by Professor Ernest Barker in Volume V of the Report of the recent Conference at Oxford.

We find ourselves born into a community, let us say a Nation. The *community*, or nation, must be distinguished from the *legal* association of the *state* which is erected upon it. In a community there is conscious and purposive sharing in the general business of life.

The *state* is a *legal* association constituted by a Constitution and acting in the mode of legal activity. The state is recognized as legally exercising control over its members through an adequate power of enforcing legal sanctions.

The Christian Church is a Society which has in its custody the Word of God, and the duty of a universal mission incumbent upon it under the Word. It is further a Society permeated and made organic by the continuing and indwelling presence of a personal God in whose service all its members live and have their being. Thus the Church is unique among other forms or varieties of Society. To it more than to any other the metaphor of organism applies. It is an organism growing in Christ—"holding the Head" (Col. ii. 19).

In the early days of Christianity the Church was confronted by a great empire united by the common worship of the Emperor. State and community were one. The conduct of Emperor worship was a legal duty of legal officials, and the worship itself was a civic obligation. In the Fourth Century when the Church made its peace with the old system it made the existing world of the community-state a single integrated community-state-and-Church. The community-state, having become a community-state-and-Church, had henceforth, as Gelasius I put it, about A.D. 500, two governments : a secular government in things temporal, and an ecclesiastical government in things spiritual.

Thus identified with the community-state, the Church, in its outward form, ceased to be a pure body bearing the custody of the Word and knit organically to its Head. It is true that its own inner life did not cease. The Word by which it was inspired, and its guiding Spirit

were never without influence in determining its outward form and order. But at the same time it was necessarily affected by the changes in the life of the community-state. When the community-state divided into two parts, Eastern and Western, there arose an Eastern and a Western Church. "Then, many centuries later, in the era of the Reformation, there came another historical fissure; and Protestantism emerged. This was partly produced by the working of the Word and the Spirit (we should be blind if we did not see that working); but it was also produced, in part, by a change of the community-state." The general designation of Protestantism cannot conceal the fact of a plurality of Protestant Churches; and when we study this plurality, we have to remember not only the different doctrines (or different interpretations of the Word) on which it was based, but also the emergence of a new and plural conception and practice of the community-state.

When a region seceded from Rome, and adopted the principle of a Reformed Church, it assumed that this Church, in its outward form, must be identified and coterminous with itself. Lutherans and Calvinists would have been in full agreement with Hooker when he wrote, "in a . . . Christian State or kingdom . . . one and the self-same people are the Church and the commonwealth."

The Tudor age of the sixteenth century was an age of one commonwealth, one State, one Church, and everything unified. Soon, however, the Church, which, as a society of the Word and a community in the Spirit, had always been in essence distinct from the community-state, began to distinguish itself from the latter, and in doing so helped to distinguish the community from the State. This is true both of the Reformed Catholic Church of the counter-Reformation, and of the new Protestant Churches. The regional principle began to be challenged by the "collegial." The seventeenth century marks a new advance of free community-action. In the English Independents and in English Nonconformity generally, the doctrine of the collegial Church becomes fundamental. The "Free Churches" are conscious of themselves as societies of the Word and communities in the Spirit, distinct from the community-state. They are societies within the community in many respects analogous to other societies in the community, e.g. educational societies and Trade Unions. The different Free Churches in England help to constitute the English community. None of them professes to embrace the whole of it; all of them acknowledge and respect one another's boundaries. By their side stands the Church of England whose relation to the English community is, as Professor Ernest Barker says, "far from simple. In one sense it seeks, like the Presbyterian Church of Scotland, to be a national Church, embracing the whole community, and bringing the ordinances of religion to the people of England in every parish. In another sense, less formal and more real, it is content, like the Free Churches in England, to recruit its own particular circle of adherents; and like them it helps to constitute the English community without claiming (otherwise than in form) to cover the whole of it. In still a third sense—when we take the State into account as well as the community—the

Church of England has a peculiar relation to the State. It is 'established' by it—that is to say, it is given certain legal rights and subjected to certain legal duties which may be regarded as the corollary of its rights."^{*}

Such then has been the actual historical development in England, and perhaps a development on some such lines as these was inevitable. For when the authority of the Bible, as interpreted by sound learning under the guidance, as it was believed, of the Holy Spirit, took the place of ecclesiastical authority, many questions naturally arose. Sound scholars were found to differ in some of their interpretations of Holy Scripture. And further, while it was clear that the New Testament describes far simpler forms of worship and organization than those of the medieval Church, it was arguable how far it would be wise to try to bring the Church back to exactly those primitive models. All the Reformers were agreed, for instance, that "dark and dumb ceremonies" should cease, but they were not all agreed about the retaining of those "which do serve to a decent order and godly discipline, and such as be apt to stir up the dull mind of man to the remembrance of his duty to God, by some notable and special signification, whereby he might be edified."

Only experience perhaps, could prove convincingly which these profitable usages were. By this year of grace, 1938, we have had centuries of experience. We are in a much better position now to judge what is really valuable in the way of organization or forms of worship. Moreover, we are becoming more tolerant of variety within the same society. If Christians within the same Church differ to-day with regard to details of procedure, or indeed, with regard to unessentials of any kind, they are not likely to split into a number of separate Churches on those accounts. The old centrifugal tendency of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries has happily been succeeded by a distinct and growing centripetal tendency in the twentieth. The Reformation is not yet finished. As George Santayana has said, Protestantism has not yet fully found itself.

"In the forms which it has taken hitherto," writes Dean Inge, in his brilliant essay on Protestantism, "it is scarcely worthy of the vigorous nations in which it has been the dominant faith. There has been a confusion in the spiritual life of the Western peoples, a want of clarity in estimating the values of life, a lack of disciplined thought which has often made the struggles of Protestantism against Catholicism like the tactics and strategy of untrained troops. There is also, at least in England and the United States, a downright silliness in many of the religious fads and crazes which find adherents, to which there is no parallel in Southern Europe. To erect Anglo-Israelitism, prohibition of alcohol, and prohibition of tobacco . . . into religious dogmas shows a very crude mentality. Nevertheless, these are the vagaries of a young and half-formed civilization rather than symptoms of senile decay."

^{*}p. 53.

But to return to the more immediate effects of the Reformation in the sixteenth century on corporate life. The word Reformation as used in this connection properly refers to the changes in religion which then took place. The movement in religion was, of course, part of a wider movement affecting almost every department of human life. Changes in culture and in social and commercial life were coming anyhow, and it is not always easy to estimate the exact effect of the changes in religion upon these other changes, and vice versa.

In England the Reformation was mainly the work of the new middle class which was springing up under the Tudors : and in religion the middle class tends to be democratic and independent.

Henry VIII, as Dr. R. H. Murray has pointed out, had no means of compelling his subjects to obey him. He had only one castle in London, defended by a hundred Yeomen of the Guard. Except this Guard and a few gentlemen pensioners he had no standing army. He allowed his people to keep arms and encouraged them to have them ready for use. In breaking loose from Rome he was acting in accordance with the wishes of his subjects, and he could not have done it if the people had been against him.

On his death it became clear that the people wished "to Protestantize the Church further than he had allowed," and the English Reformation resumed the work which Wycliffe had begun. Then, after an interval of five years during which England was exposed "to the fanaticism of an embittered woman," came the Elizabethan settlement. In this the country as a whole readily acquiesced. Only 200 priests were deprived in 1559. Kitchin was actually Bishop of Llandaff without interruption from 1545 to 1563. During the remaining years of the sixteenth century the English people became steadily more Puritan. Earnest men in towns and villages all over the country, of whom the parson was sometimes but not always one, gradually trained their neighbours in the habits of Bible-reading and private prayer.

A good example of a Puritan home is that of the Milton family. John Milton's father was an accomplished musician. The boy himself often sat up till midnight studying Greek, Latin, French and Italian. "The Puritans," Dean Inge reminds us, "dressed plainly, but well and carefully ; they were very cleanly in their persons, more so than their opponents. Their dislike of ornament and symbolism in divine worship was due to their fear that doctrines which they wished to exclude might so be reintroduced."

At the same time we must note that Elizabeth and Archbishop Parker were sagacious enough to perceive that the wave of Puritanism would eventually ebb, and that the Church of England must not be remodelled, as many devout people wished, on Puritan lines.

As we have touched on the question of the effect of the Reformation on the Arts, another word had better be said before we leave it. In estimating that effect we must, of course, have first and foremost in our minds the wonderful outburst in English literature during the period. Spenser, Shakespeare, Bacon, the Book of Common Prayer, the

Authorized Version of the English Bible give amazing evidence of a great liberation of the human spirit.

It is true that no more churches were built : but there had been in the previous period rather over-building of churches—an over-building from which most of our cathedral cities are still suffering to-day. But Tudor domestic architecture was beautiful—witness the second Court of Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, the foundation stone of which was laid on Saturday, May 5th, 1565, at 4 a.m. Nor must we forget the fair proportions and pleasing designs of Elizabethan Communion plate, of which a great deal happily is still in use. In the Truro diocese, for instance, we have nearly 100 pieces.

In passing we may recall a remark of Benjamin Jowett's to the effect that if it had not been for the Reformation we should probably have had little Norman or Early English left in our Cathedrals ; for it came just at a time when earlier styles were being pulled down fast to make way for the later.

In this short paper it is, of course, impossible to deal exhaustively with the changes in corporate life which accompanied the Reformation. We must be content with a few illustrations of them. It is sometimes more than hinted that the Reformation is responsible for the rise of Capitalism. But that is a mistake.

In the fourteenth century Italy was full of banking houses doing foreign exchange business in every commercial centre from Constantinople to London. The Popes regularly employed them, took them under their special protection, and sometimes even enforced the payment of debts by threat of excommunication.*

The strict rule of the Church against usury had been for a long time gradually modified. It is, for instance, distinctly relaxed in the writings of St. Antoninus of Florence, who died in 1459. Great financial houses like that of the Fuggers operated in Spain and Italy and above all in Antwerp. The Fuggers advanced the money which made Albrecht of Brandenburg Archbishop of Mainz and obtained repayment by sending their agent to accompany Tetzels on his campaign to raise money by indulgences and taking half the proceeds. "The head of the firm," says Dr. R. H. Tawney,† "built a church and endowed an almshouse for the aged poor in his native town of Augsburg. He died in the odour of sanctity, a good Catholic and a Count of the Empire, having seen his firm pay 54 per cent for the preceding sixteen years."

The fact is that in this sphere as in others the pre-Reformation Church had drifted into unreality. The gulf between profession and practice had widened and the rift was only concealed by a fog of pretence. The Reformers, whether Anglicans, Lutherans or Calvinists, recognize as fully as the Roman Catholics that economic problems such as those connected with the land question, the rise in prices, capital and interest, are to be solved in the light of Christian morality. But it was the Reformers who led the way back to practical

* R. H. Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, pp. 44, 45.

† *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, p. 79.

consistency. Luther said that it was time to put a bit in the mouths of the holy company of the Fuggers. Calvin sought "to renew society by penetrating every department of life, public as well as private, with the influence of religion." All work is taken up into the religious sphere ; there is no distinction between sacred and profane. Calvin taught that steady industry in profitable enterprise is eminently pleasing to God. He preferred capitalism to feudalism, because the former, when regulated as he desired, assures a reward to hard work and thrift.

Calvin was too uncompromising a theologian to find much favour with Elizabeth, and he was not at all happy about the state of the English Church in her reign. Yet no one can read the *Thirty-Nine Articles* without being reminded of the great influence he exerted in the Established Church of this country, and, through such men as Cartwright his impress on the foundations of Nonconformity is more apparent still.

The Christian Church has always held that ethical principles must be applied to the economic system. In the later Middle Ages this application had been growing less and less successful. The Church had become an immense vested interest, the greatest of landowners, unable therefore to grapple seriously with such defects of the feudal structure as serfdom or villeinage. Still less was the mediæval Church able effectively to control the situation as feudal institutions decayed and the new middle class emerged. Calvinism was a notable attempt to permeate the new system of trade and industrialism with the Christian spirit. It had, of course, serious defects, but as Dean Inge puts it, "No system was ever so effectual in promoting that kind of progress which is measured by statistics. If you can convince a nation that steady industry in profitable enterprise is eminently pleasing to God, but that almost all ways of spending money unproductively are wrong, that nation is likely to become very rich."

Dr. Tawney has shown how later on, after the Civil War in England, political theory became secularized. Economists came to believe that such practical questions as "the just price" were not to be discussed in Church. Prices would find their own natural level under the operation of economic laws. But it is not till the eighteenth century that we find the great exponents of this new science of Political Arithmetic : Dr. Josiah Tucker, Dean of Gloucester, 1758—1799, and Dr. Adam Smith, who died in 1790.

But to return to the sixteenth century : as a further illustration of the social effects of the Reformation let us briefly examine some of the results of the dissolution of the monasteries.

A good deal of research has been done in recent years on this subject. Mr. A. L. Rowse, for example, Fellow of All Souls, the great authority on Tudor Cornwall, has traced all the monastic lands in that county. He has found who bought them in Henry VIII's reign and how much was paid for them. For—be it noticed in passing—only a very small proportion of the grants of monastic land made during this King's reign were gifts : the rest were sales or exchanges. According

to a table constructed by Professor Savine, of 1593 such grants not more than one in forty were gifts.*

After the thirteenth century hardly any religious houses were founded in England except a few for the Carthusians. The re-building of parish churches and the erection of colleges, schools and almshouses took the place of the founding of monasteries as objects of fashionable devotion. A movement towards the suppression of the monasteries can be discerned all through the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

Bishop Alcock of Ely got a licence dated 12th June, 1497 for expelling the prioress and nuns of St. Rhadegunde's at Cambridge, and the result was the founding of Jesus College. Wolsey obtained authority from Pope and King to suppress twenty-one monasteries whose revenues were to go towards the endowment of the Cardinal's Colleges at Oxford and Ipswich.

Let us briefly enquire what was the effect of the suppressions of 1536 and 1539 on charitable relief and on education. Professor Savine has calculated that not more than 3 per cent. of monastic revenues was spent on charity, and Miss E. M. Leonard in her *History of English Poor Relief* goes so far as to say that the system of monastic charity did nearly as much to increase beggars as to relieve them. Mr. Baskerville sums up thus : "On the whole it may be reckoned that though a great deal of promiscuous almsgiving disappeared as a result of the suppression, that event made no great difference to the problem of the deserving poor as a whole."

On the other hand there can be little doubt that the disappearance of the monasteries was a cause of great inconvenience to many travellers, rich and poor. The duty of hospitality passed to some extent to the beneficed clergy. Thus in Archbishop Parker's questionnaire one of the questions with regard to incumbents is : Is he hospitable ?

How far were the monasteries centres of education ? Rich boys were brought up in them under the care of the abbot, and poor boys were housed in the almonry or the choir school. It has been calculated that there were about 1,500 such poor boys ; and a considerable number of these must have lost some form of education when the monasteries were suppressed. But the general education of the religious themselves was low, and of the secular clergy lower still. The figures revealed by Bishop Hooper's visitation of his diocese of Gloucester in 1551 are often quoted. Of 111 Clergy, 71 were unable to repeat the Ten Commandments, 10 could not repeat the Lord's Prayer, and 27 could not tell who was its author. Not more than 3 or 4 had ever preached or could preach. The moral influence of the clergy was low and there was a strong anti-clerical feeling in many parts of the country. Noteworthy also was the growing scepticism about images and relics which were part of the clerical stock-in-trade. These were very numerous : some of them of an out of the way kind, such as that which a Bishop of Dover said he found preserved by friars in Wales, namely, "Malchus' ear that Peter stroke off."

* Most of the following facts are taken from a book published last year (1937) by Mr. G. Baskerville on *English Monks and the Suppression of the Monasteries*.

Very confusing to the lay mind, too, must have been the unofficial marriages which were frequent among the secular clergy and not unknown among the regulars. A certain Abbot Barrington who wrote letters to Cromwell, for instance, was married to Mistress Bures, a nun—he quaintly calls her his “remedy.” Of the two Cardinals who tried Henry VIII’s case, the English one had a son who was a clergyman, and a daughter who was a nun, while the Italian brought his son with him to England. Old Parson Savage who held the family living of Davenham had a large family, one of whom became an Archdeacon, another a Chancellor, and a third, Edmund Bonner, Bishop of London. All this flagrant inconsistency between profession and practice must have been very bad for public morality in general, and thoughtful people must have heartily welcomed the abandonment of such pretences.

Henry had inherited some of his grandmother’s zeal for education. Regius Professorships were founded at Oxford and Cambridge, Trinity College at Cambridge, and a number of schools up and down the country. A scheme for new bishoprics was drawn up in 1539 and if it had been carried out there would have been a bishop for nearly every shire. Unfortunately, money was needed for strengthening coastal defences and other warlike purposes, and social reforms had to give way to rearmament. This is a factor which should not be forgotten, though it must be confessed that extravagance and private greed were larger factors still.

I think we have now had illustrations sufficient. I will close with two or three reflections. The first is that whatever be the established form of a religious institution it is liable to internal corruptions. Vigilance must never be relaxed, and reform will be necessary from time to time. What happened to the Church in the sixteenth century is, with all its regrettable crudeness, rightly called a Reformation and Reformation must recur from time to time. And that leads to my second reflection, viz., that, as Benjamin Jowett used to say, we must think now of a new epoch in the history of Christianity bearing the same relation to the Christianity of the last three centuries which the Reformation did to the ages which preceded.

This new epoch will, we hope, be characterized by two things : first deeper unity and secondly stronger, simpler, more practical, belief.

The unity must not be the enforced unity of a totalitarian state. It must be the voluntary intelligent co-operation of free men. The Reformation of the sixteenth century saved us from a totalitarian Church, and opened the way for the Church of the future, which shall combine Catholic unity with Evangelical freedom.

Benjamin Jowett saw signs of its approach. It seemed to him, seventy years ago, that the old animosities were dying out, and men of different opinions were working together as they had not hitherto, recognizing the accidental nature of their separation and the reality of the bond which united them. “These,” he went on to say, “are a few of the signs of greater harmony prevailing in the world, and of the Spirit of Christ being more diffused among men.”

Protestantism has in the past been over-individualistic. It must recover, and there are many signs that it is beginning to recover, a

more vital corporate feeling, an enthusiasm for the Great Church, Christ's One Church Universal.

And the other characteristic of the new epoch is emphasized both by Jowett and by F. D. Maurice. In 1870 Maurice, referring to his expectation of a reformation more deep and searching than that of the sixteenth century, said, "The Reformation that we want is the same rise out of assents into faith as in the sixteenth century: only it must be into faith in a God who has redeemed mankind, in whom I may trust."

Jowett, nine years later (in 1879), in a letter to Lady Abercromby, wrote: "People must believe more strongly in a few truths which we all acknowledge, and they must apply them more vigorously to practical life."

MEMBERSHIP IN THE CHURCH. By the Rev. J. W. Augur, M.A.
Marshall, Morgan & Scott, Ltd. 2s. net.

The Vicar of St. Giles, Northampton, has had experience in the preparation of candidates for Confirmation in several parishes, and in this book of "Further Instruction to Confirmation Candidates," he extends to a wider circle the benefits of his personal dealings with the problems of young people. In a series of practical chapters he sets out the main features of true membership of the Church in belief and work. The demands of the new loyalty to Christ with the importance of the decisions involved are explained in simple and impressive terms. An account is given of the meaning of Holy Communion. The call to work is indicated as a missionary obligation. The practical expression of thanksgiving as a duty and a privilege is shown, and an ideal of the nature of the Church is set up. Many points are aptly illustrated by incidents from life. The clergy will be glad of such a book to place in the hands of those who have been confirmed. The Provost of Bradford commends the book as giving a practical and spiritual message.

FIRST-BORN SONS. THEIR RIGHTS AND RISKS. By G. H. Lang.
S. E. Roberts. 1s. 6d. Cloth and 1s. Paper Boards.

This is an enquiry as to the Privileges and Perils of the Members of the Church of God, and it is published from the office of the *Morning Star*. The book was written in Egypt in 1914. It aims at answering the question: "Is it worth while to follow Christ?" The author believes that the personal coming to earth and reign of the Lord Jesus Christ are absolutely indispensable to the fulfilment of God's programme. There is much about the Interaction of the Will of God and the Will of Man in relation to sharing in the Millennial Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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