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# Editorial

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## *General Synod*

ABOUT THE TIME this number of *The Churchman* appears in print elections to the new General Synod will be taking place. It is scarcely possible to exaggerate their importance. We have written before in these columns of the dangers inherent in the much trumpeted Synodical Government. Whilst claiming to bring the laity in, it is in fact in grave danger of enthroning the bureaucrats and a few of their immediate entourage so that they are totally impregnable from criticism of any sort. The Bishops' power is increased. The other two Houses (Clergy and Laity) are scaled down drastically, whilst the Bishops remain the same and of course all ex officio. In our last number Mr. Craig, who is probably the leading Evangelical expert on central structures, warned about the trends likely in the new synod structure. The elections therefore are absolutely crucial, and the more so after the second Methodist Conference vote in favour of the union scheme (this time by about 79½%, a slight increase\* on the last Methodist Conference vote) and the Archbishop's known determination to give the scheme another try in the Church of England. The numbers of the clergy and laity to be elected will be reduced, and that is bound to affect any minority groups adversely. The strain on those elected, especially the laity of working age, will be greatly increased, for with numbers down but committees and commissions tending if anything to proliferate, fewer members will have to shoulder a greater and greater burden in terms of work and time. For laity, and particularly the younger layman who has not yet climbed sufficiently far up his business ladder to

\*Since writing the editorial we have been informed that this figure is seriously misleading, that the voting in favour of the scheme was in fact substantially less than last year, and that the misleading figure was arrived at by excluding the abstentions which numbered no less than 80, a figure much more significant than any other. If abstentions are reckoned at least not in favour of proceeding with the scheme, the percentage vote went down this year.

be master of his own time and is thus entirely dependent on his boss' yea or nay whether he can attend some gathering or other in the week, the strain will be colossal. The likely effect is obvious: a diminution in attendance by these working laity, and a proportionate domination by the bureaucrats and the clergy who whilst they too do not find it easy to take time from their parishes are at least their own masters in this matter unlike most young laity.

We are concerned about two things. First, that the Church of England should not get like the Methodist Church, totally dominated by a few all powerful bureaucrats at the top, who can by a wave of the bureaucratic wand turn very close voting at local level into overwhelming majorities at Conference level. There is something very unhealthy about a church which can regularly behave like that, and God forbid that the Church of England should get into that position. Second, the Church of England is a comprehensive church, and the days have long since gone when one section of that church regarded itself as the only section with the implication that the others were deviationists and to be brought back into line or turfed out. A comprehensive church must act responsibly towards those to be comprehended, and that means paying heed to minority views. Can the new synodical structure cope with that? It remains to be seen, but danger signals are certainly out, and if the Rochester Report had been accepted, the bureaucrats would have been enthroned supreme. Fortunately, perhaps we should say providentially, that report had the unique experience of being quite literally driven from the debating chamber by all but universal acclaim, something very rare in so sober and restrained a body as Church Assembly. So if the danger signals are there, signs are also present that some at least have seen them.

Here we ought to make clear exactly what we mean by the bureaucrats, for sociologists and others have been apt to accuse churchmen of using the phrase loosely to condemn vaguely. By bureaucrats we emphatically do not mean Sir John Scott and his noble band of helpers in Church House. The editor can testify from considerable personal experience to the selfless devotion and many long hours these men and women have worked. They exercise some influence of course, but we have always found them to be entirely fair and very willing to consider legitimate criticism and complaint. By bureaucrats we mean rather what some might call the 'establishment', those who shape policies behind the scenes, those who arrange priorities and try to push official proposals through at all costs. We are not naming names, because naturally such people change from time to time, but a fairly high proportion of such people are regularly to be met round Lambeth and Church House. (We do not call them 'establishment' because in a Church of England context that tends to suggest some sort of relationship with the State, the other meaning of the word Establishment.)

A word ought perhaps to be added about the Church Commissioners.

There was a time when they were almost exclusively trustees for the Church's heritage from the past in cash and kind, but one of the unanticipated and probably unwanted results of Synodical Government and other recent legislation is to bring the Commissioners into church politics more and more. There have always been those who disliked the role of the Commissioners. Usually they were the radicals who complained that the Church Commissioners would not support (quite properly as trustees acting within strict terms of reference) some 'bright' new radical scheme, or a few clergy of left wing views who disliked their participation in some de luxe and expensive property scheme but who were quite prepared to accept as part of their salary the proceeds from such a scheme! But now others who previously admired and respected the Commissioners are beginning to wonder if their newer roles are quite so desirable. We say no more for the present, but once again warning signals are present.

### *The Elections Themselves*

THE great importance of these has been stressed, but a little more needs to be said about that mystery which is proportional representation. We say mystery because we have actually witnessed a vote count at which the official representative of a proportional representation society had to be helped by others present to understand his own system. Small wonder then that the system baffles others! The Synodical Government Measure enshrines proportional representation, and this was almost universally supported on the grounds of fairness to minority groups, but a late addition to the measure, the implications of which were never properly thought out, allowed dioceses the option to divide into smaller units. The argument was of course for the local man, though it was hard not to see ulterior motives in certain speeches such as those of the late Archdeacon of Lindisfarne who lectured the laity on what was best for them. Now a number of dioceses have divided into *single* member constituencies, and that means of course the total destruction of any meaningful proportional representation, the straight Parliamentary system of one man for one area, and militates against any minority representation at all. The consequences of this are very serious, and must be looked at forthwith by the new Synod.

Aware of the mysterious nature of proportional representation, two adventurous spirits, both *Churchman* contributors, Peter Dawes and Colin Buchanan, have written a *Falcon* booklet **Proportional Representation in Church Elections**. It carries the virtual imprimatur of the Electoral Reform Society, and as such it is unlikely to be faulted on the technicalities. But that is not the whole story; indeed it is the less important part of it. Neither of these two young clergymen has ever been in Convocation (though they may be in the new one perhaps),

though Mr. Buchanan fought a London diocese by-election on which he bases much of his case. Whether Mr. Buchanan is aware of it or not, London is very much a special case, and all the signs are that other Home County dioceses are progressively, though slowly, following this development. The voting on the Methodist union scheme in London diocese, despite, and against, the prominent involvement of the bishop, showed how well organised High Churchmen and Evangelicals were there. In other words to a greater extent than anywhere else in England London voting is inclined to be more party-organised and more rigidly on party lines. We are not decrying this but simply stating it as a fact.

There are a number of criticisms which can be levelled at the Buchanan-Dawes case such as the psychological effect of putting up as many Evangelical candidates as one likes simply because it can be theoretically demonstrated that a single transferable vote means that none will suffer at the expense of each other. Is there really virtue in occupying the last twenty places in some dioceses? But we want to concentrate on one particular criticism, because we have been appalled by the way in which groups of clergy (and sometimes others) have been literally mesmerised by the booklet's case so that they treat as if it were an infallible election bible and fiercely (the right word!) defend it against any criticism. (There is a much wider question as to the new style mass evangelical conferences in which every subject under the sun is discussed very superficially and which have replaced older and more scholarly affairs like the Oxford Conference. Changes of conferences are in themselves not significant, but what worries some observers is the way in which dogmatic statements of eloquent and apparently expert individuals are accepted with alarming naivety, and sometimes voted on at breakneck speed with the vast majority of voters quite ignorant of what they are voting about and its implications. This kind of set up has all the ingredients of a party machine ordering its troops what to do and, most disturbing, with a totally uncritical acceptance. But this is another issue which we cannot tackle now.)

The root objection to the Buchanan-Dawes case is that people do not vote on strict party lines, not always in clerical elections though the clergy are much more conscious of their ecclesiastical divisions and outlooks, and certainly not often in lay elections where laity rarely vote on such lines at all. Once the implications of this are grasped, the case for strict party transference of proportional representation's single transferable vote falls to the ground completely. Voters should vote not for keen party men, but for those who will best serve the Church of England as a whole. There are some in every sector of the Church who will do this well, and others in each sector who will not. Evangelicals will sometimes vote for Evangelicals and sometimes for non-Evangelicals, and the same is true of others, and so it should be. Of course issues of Evangelical principle come into this, but they are only one component. A few, not many, Evangelicals think they can square

Evangelical principles with the Methodist union scheme. An Evangelical voter faced with a choice between such an 'Evangelical unionist' and a fine Anglo-Catholic with a certain sympathy for Evangelicals and an appreciation of the failings of the union scheme might well vote for the Anglo-Catholic. If voters were computers who could be programmed to vote strictly in accord with party principles and in no other way, the Buchanan-Dawes case might stand up, though even then some voters and some candidates would have great difficulty in fitting into party slots. But voters are human beings, not computers, who weigh many factors. Voters up and down the country do not stand to party manifestoes as in political elections. They stand as individuals, of course with various shades of churchmanship, but overwhelmingly using their own informed judgment as to how best to serve the Church of England as a whole.

This booklet by Dawes and Buchanan is well intended, and fine for a world of party machines where voters act like computers and all fit exactly into preconceived slots, but it is totally and dangerously misleading when applied to the forthcoming elections by well intentioned people who only half know what they are talking about. Voters and candidates need to look at the booklet with a very critical mind, in the light of the whole picture, not just in the aftermath of a few speeches which sound persuasive to those who half understand the issues at stake.

### *Reprints*

THE increase in offset lithography printing has meant a number of important reprints. Two particularly fine ones come from the USA. The University of Wisconsin Press has made a superb job of the 1560 *Geneva Bible* (\$29.50 and \$50 in morocco). There is a short introduction by Lloyd E. Berry which covers earlier versions, the background of the Geneva Bible itself, the abilities of its translators, and its subsequent history and influence. The quality of the litho is high but one cannot help wishing that some of the spots and smudge marks away from the type had been touched out. The only change from the original is the reduction of the map of the Temple to about four-fifths to fit this handsome volume.

Yale University Press have done a rather different facsimile of *Thomas More's Prayer Book* (xlv + 206 pp., 112s. 6d.). Here the method is to use Yale Library's unique copy of a Latin Book of Hours and a Latin Psalter, bound together, which More annotated in the Tower before his execution. Each page is photocopied separately and superimposed on the book page, which does give a slightly better impression than the Wisconsin volume. The Book of Hours is in two colour. The transcription and translation are done by L. L. Martz and R. S. Sylvester.

The introduction provides all the bibliographical details together with comments on the marginalia. Here are two works essential to any major library.

### *Bible History*

THE publication of *The Cambridge History of the Bible* is an important event, for the three volume set seems likely to become a definitive work. Publication is proceeding backwards, and now volume two is to hand (*The West from the Fathers to the Reformation* edited by Professor G. W. H. Lampe, 566 pp., with 48 plates, 70s.). The first three chapters form a kind of summary of what will appear in the first volume (the third to be published), and they are included on the grounds that without them a proper understanding of subsequent developments would be difficult for readers primarily interested in the medieval period. Professor B. J. Roberts draws attention to the proven authenticity of the Massoretic text and the growth in Hebrew and cognate linguistics, things which together make more and more improbable the free emendations of earlier scholars. The late C. S. C. Williams surveys the text and development of the canon. And T. C. Skeat explains early Christian book production. These chapters form the background.

A Jesuit, the late E. F. Sutcliffe, writes on Jerome showing his attitude to the deuterocanonical books, his concern as an exegete 'to discuss what is obscure, to touch on the obvious, to dwell at length on what is doubtful', and his translation of what we now call the Vulgate. The core of the book is chapter six on exposition and exegesis, divided into five subsections. The editor provides a masterly survey of interpretation up to Gregory. The Alexandrians, especially Origen and Clement, are influenced by the Gnostics, with Origen writing his commentary on John to defeat the unorthodoxy of Herakleon's by his own allegorising methods. These Alexandrians influenced later theologians like Hilary and Ambrose. The Antiochenes are severe on allegory, Theodore of Mopsuestia pointedly commenting that allegorisers will not let history be history. Antiochenes did not however rule out a spiritual sense of Scripture. The Donatist Tyconius sought to lay down strict rules for interpretation but Augustine thought him too optimistic, though he used some of his methods. Augustine's exposition shows allegorical ingenuity, a fact which made the Reformers, who thought so much of Augustine as a theologian, recoil with horror at some of his exegesis. Dom Leclerc takes the story up to Bernard showing how renewal of interest in the Bible coincided with ecclesiastical, and especially monastic, reform. After S. J. P. van Dijk's survey of medieval liturgical use, E. I. J. Rosenthal shows how medieval Jews stressed the *peshat* or literal meaning of the text, some-

times polemically, against the Christian spiritual interpretation. Saadya Gaon (d.942) pioneered grammatical and lexicographical studies and provided the basis for the subsequent scholarly flowering among Jews in Spain, especially Ibn Ezra, and Kimhi both of whose commentaries were studied by the Reformers. Rashi before them paved the way and was frequently quoted by Nicholas of Lyra and probably through him by the Reformers. Exegetical questions also centred round the controversial figure of Maimonides.

Apart from chapters on illustrators, the other main part of this volume centres on vernacular bibles, a section of Wycliffite versions, and then assessments of pre-Reformation vernacular bibles by countries, England, Germany and the Low Countries, France, Italy and Spain. The plates are what we should expect from CUP. The importance of this book is that it spans a little known period of history of the Bible from the Fathers to the Reformation, thus enabling us to see what tradition the Reformers inherited, how much they accepted it or reacted against it, and also the tail end of the early traditions to which Reformation scholars believed they were returning.

### *Irish Development*

NEWS has reached us from Ireland of a new Irish School of Ecumenics. The location is Dublin, and the director the Jesuit ecumenical writer Michael Hurley. The School is not an official body, though various churches involved have been consulted about it. This seems a wise move, for officialdom has a way of laying a heavy hand on enterprising young ventures. The hope is to have a student body roughly half Roman Catholic and half Protestant, and the staff will come from various churches. The School has an impressive array of lecturers lined up for the coming academic year, though it is sad to note no evangelical amongst them. It claims to be different from all other ecumenical institutes in that it will concentrate exclusively on ecumenics in all its aspects. If such a vision can really be fulfilled, the School will be a remarkable place. The great danger is that ecumenics will be interpreted as what is fashionable in 'official' ecumenical circles. Another institute to study that would be otiose, but if this new School can study and find out why so many Christians are disillusioned with ecumenism, and why many others who believe in the idea of united churches find what actually happens so distressing and at times even nauseating, and why some well known scholars like the late Ian Henderson felt the whole movement misguided and even perverted, the School will be a splendid pioneering venture. The range of lecturers will certainly have to be extended to achieve this; we hope that the School will be able to rise to the occasion.



*Allegro Sensationalism*

THE publication of J. M. Allegro's *The Sacred Mushroom and the Cross*, Hodders, 347 pp., 63s. has been accompanied by the sort of publicity that might be expected from a book purporting to prove that Christianity stemmed from a mushroom myth sexually conceived. The work is beautifully produced, far better than any Hodder religious book we can recall, with a coloured mushroom frontpiece, elegant endpapers, and a welter of semantic material at the end—Greek, Hebrew, Arabic, etc. The thesis is that Christianity is a fertility cult, that things like singing and dancing are part of its ritual, that the sacred mushroom was behind all the Near Eastern fertility cults, and that this is the mighty divine penis, and then come the supporting linguistic arguments in which Sumerian is seen as the key. Allegro lectures at Manchester University, and has worked extensively on the Dead Sea Scrolls. He has been known for his eccentric academic views for some time, and was earlier disavowed in *The Times* correspondence columns by a group of scholars for some of his conclusions deduced from the Scrolls about the New Testament. With this book the same thing has happened, and a group of linguistic experts including such household names as Chadwick and Driver have disowned Allegro's semantics. The anonymous reviewer in so sober a journal as the *Times Literary Supplement* concludes 'Well, enough is enough. The book is one long gush of phallic drivel'. The content then is not to be taken seriously on the academic level.

But two further things can be said. First, for whom is the book intended? Academics do not take it seriously, yet it is costly, contains just a hundred pages of notes in the manner of learned academic discourses, and copious indices for various languages. That hardly argues for popular consumption even when we get the book in paperback form. The only conclusion we can reach is that it is intended to cash in on the current love for the sensational (especially in a much changing religious publishing market), and to mesmerise the gullible by a parade of what scholars have already stated to be pseudo-learning. The fact that the same publishers have obtained John King, former editor of the *Church of England Newspaper* and an excellent journalist but without any expertise in Near Eastern studies rather shows the level at which they intend to treat the debate! And this leads to the second point, the curious affair of the press conference and what lay behind it. A press conference for a sensational book is quite normal, but hardly so when Edward England, who is in charge of the Hodder religious publications, hands round a statement politely regretting the action of his superiors in publishing the book and deeming it misguided. Mr. England has not resigned, and apparently did this with the blessing of the directors. The *Church Times* commenting on all this praised the past service of Hodders in the religious field (quite justly in our view)

but expressed astonishment at the new development. To us the matter seems rather different. It was pure commercialism. Hodders are a company out to make money, and we rather doubt if their articles or memoranda say anything about serving the church. The field of religious publishing is getting more and more tricky financially, especially with a firm like Hodders operating mainly at the popular end of that market. The market is already greatly overpopulated with books many of which just repeat each other. Quality writers are hard to come by. Well known names like Wurmbbrand or Cliff Richard will sell (to be honest, to large extent regardless of real content, once they are established), but inflation is making the rest of the market very precarious, especially with a somewhat declining Christian reading public, especially at the popular end. The temptation for a commercial company to go for a money-spinning gimmick in such circumstances is considerable, especially if it creates a market for the antidote to the gimmick (cf. the New Zealander Lloyd Geering and the Blaiklock reply, though those two men were on an academic par unlike Allegro and King). In our view it is quite legitimate commercialism, provided that it is seen as this—making money out of books, but to those who think of it in terms of service to the church, it is likely to remain a disturbing and unfathomable mystery. In what we write we cast no aspersions on the publisher in question; we simply seek to interpret what has happened. Whether this particular gimmick comes off remains to be seen, but on the academic front the Allegro challenge to the Christian faith can safely be ignored.