

In this article the Rev. G. L. MAY, Vicar of St Matthew's Church, Elburton, Plymouth, discusses some of the issues raised by the Leslie Paul Report and a recent reply, *The Paul Report Considered*.

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND is certainly going through the mill at the present time. What with 'South Bank Religion', the Anglican-Methodist *Conversations*, and the *Mutual Responsibility* document from Toronto, one hardly knows which way to turn. Add to this Mr Leslie Paul's report on *The Deployment and Payment of the Clergy* (Church Information Office, 1964. 311pp. 12s. 6d.), and our cup is full.

Is this significant? Obviously it is. On the very lowest level it suggests a reappraisal of all that has hitherto been accepted or taken for granted in the Church of England. The problem is how we are to view all these new ideas and developments. For the average minister this is no academic matter. If one tenth of what is now suggested were to be approved and accepted his position (together with that of the whole Church of England) would be radically altered.

It is therefore perhaps as well that the wheels of the Church of England grind slow and small, though one might wish it were not so on all occasions. But in considering the Paul Report this process is not only wise but necessary. For what is put forward here is virtually a blue-print for the future of the Anglican ministry.

In *The Paul Report Considered* (edited by Gervase Duffield, Marcham Manor Press, 1964. 94pp. 7s. 6d.) thirteen essayists of a wide range of churchmanship take a good, hard look at the proposals. (Incidentally, it is a good thing to see a leading evangelical layman taking the initiative in producing a symposium of this nature, and making it as representative as possible.) Mr Duffield makes the point that there is a need for a careful, balanced assessment of the Report by people with special knowledge and experience. Its aim is to make a contribution to the debate, seeking to raise issues and point ways forward rather than foreclose discussion with

some final 'solution'. By these self-admitted standards the symposium should be judged.

In the first chapter, Bishop Treacy examines the Paul Report in broad outline. Our reactions to it, he suggests, will largely depend on our prejudices and how good we are at hiding the truth about the Church of England and its ministry from ourselves. This is a telling point, about which we need to be honest. He then points out that it is the replies of the clergy themselves that have formed the basis of Mr Paul's comments and suggestions.

VALIDITY

Not the least disturbing thing about the Paul Report are the doubts that have been raised about its value as a piece of scientific sociology. The essay by Dr Margaret Hewitt, herself like Mr Paul a professional sociologist, does not help to remove these doubts. She holds that on the basis of the evidence obtained several of Mr Paul's conclusions are unwarrantable. Viewed as a sociological document, Mr Paul has gone beyond his brief. It is the duty of the sociologist to present and sift the evidence, but not to moralize and draw conclusions as Mr Paul does.

This goes to the very heart of the Report. How far can one man's assessment of what is by any standards a vast and most complex matter be the basis of the far-reaching proposals put forward? Part of the answer to this may be to remember Mr Paul's original brief from CACTM (the Central Advisory Council for the Ministry) which originally commissioned the work. It was this board which suggested that a single man be responsible for the work. It was this board which asked him to collate evidence and draw conclusions. Therefore, in the last resort responsibility for the Report and its conclusions must lie with CACTM.

But this still does not get round the basic point. Can one man's report be enough to go on? Further, how far can one man obtain, by whatever means he uses, a realistic and fair assessment of

the situation? It may be granted, for instance, that he was not asked to take into account the different shades of churchmanship in the Church of England. But to fail to do so is to bury one's head in the sand. If the blame for this is to be laid at CACTM's door, then they are guilty either of wishful thinking or downright dishonesty. There is a half-hearted attempt to deal with this matter in one of the recommendations that CACTM makes on the Report to the Church Assembly. But this is hardly enough. The omission is not a matter of raising purely party issues; it is typical of some of the basic inadequacies of the Report and the assumptions it makes.

THE CHURCH'S PURPOSE

Another basic inadequacy revealed in Bishop Treacy's article is the obvious but crucial point that Mr Paul does not seem to have understood what the Church is for. Organization and statistics have a rightful place within the Church and there can be no place for muddle, but ultimately the Church is a divine body. If it is to be truly itself, it must be controlled by the Spirit of God, who can make all reports by Mr Paul or anyone else so much nonsense, since spiritual matters cannot be measured in purely human terms.

This raises the equally crucial point that, when considering the ministry of the Church, it is not possible to do so without considering the nature and purpose of the Church as a whole. Again this is obvious, but there seems to be little appreciation of this in the Report. It is perhaps not without significance that there is virtually no quotation of Scripture in the whole of the Paul Report, and incidentally little in the symposium (though it is not fair to draw any conclusions from the latter fact since it is primarily concerned with the Report).

Now it is not wholesale quotation of Scripture texts which is going to solve the problems of the Church of England and its ministry, but this lack suggests a failure to grasp the real problem in the Church of England today, namely a departure generally from first principles and particularly from being a Church of and under the Word. To be this is not to say that discussion of the issues of the Paul Report is not needed. But it must be carried on with the right priorities in mind, for instance, a proper understanding of the nature of the

Church and its ministry.

In the symposium this point is dealt with by two contributors. The Rev. W. A. Bretherton insists that no clergyman should ever consider himself 'single-handed' while there are two members in the congregation. The basic team ministry is that of the minister and his congregation. This, he also suggests, is a basic answer to the problem of the loneliness of the clergy which was highlighted by Leslie Paul. It is also an answer to a view of the clergy which sets them at the centre of the stage with the congregation scattered on the periphery.

P. H. C. Walker, a layman, explores the possibilities of the lay ministry. In view of the various suggestions in the Paul Report about supplementary clergy of some sort, this is pertinent. Why is ordination necessary? The Anglo-Catholic answer is well known. But is this to determine future policy in these matters?

The true character of the Church of England should be that of a national church, the expression of God's people in England, based on God's Word. An important aspect of English Christianity in the past has been the relationship between parson and people. In his essay on 'Paul among the Country Parsons' the Rev. Dr A. Tindal Hart warns against destroying it, and prophesies that 'the drab, bureaucratic, impersonal, uniform Pauline ministry of experts would fail utterly and completely in the rural areas'.

THE FREEHOLD

Dr Hart has also something to say about Mr Paul's proposal to abolish the parson's freehold, the minister's right to minister the gospel in his parish, free from the fear of being removed by the bishop or party factions. The Paul Report proposes to replace the freehold by a leasehold which would permit a vicar to remain in his parish for a period of ten years (with the possibility of renewal for a further five). Abuses of the freehold are well known. But Dr Hart is in no doubt that the proposed alternative is worse. It would lead to the virtual extinction of all but safe central churchmen. 'When Methodism stank in the nostrils of the Establishment, and its allies the evangelicals were regarded as little better than traitors or quislings within the Church's gates, men like William Grimshaw of Haworth, Henry Venn of Huddersfield and John Berridge of Everton would not have retained their livings except for the freehold.'

TEAM MINISTRIES

Several essayists touch on the proposal to divide the church into 'major' and 'minor' parishes. The latter will be parishes more or less as we know them, served by a vicar. The former will be more like Methodist circuits, run by a team of clergy pooling their labours and talents.

But for whose benefit are these ministries, the clergy or the parish? In all honesty, one is compelled to feel that the former are the main consideration. (Incidentally, the prospect of housing a team of clergy and their families under one roof, with a communal dining room for all, is distinctly chilling. The thought of all being gathered together for breakfast on a wet Monday morning in February is too awful to contemplate!)

There is, however, a very important point behind these suggestions, and that is the attempt to cope with the problems confronting clergy in tough industrial areas with vast parishes. In other words, consideration of all the suggestions about team ministries, *etc.* must begin with the question: Will they really help forward the work of proclaiming the gospel and building up the Church? Much as one is attached to the Church of England and its peculiar 'character', it must not blind us to the real position or stop progress. It may be small consolation to a single-handed, overworked vicar in the middle of Bolton to be told that suggestions to help his sort of situation as put forward in the Report should be ruled out because they are against the ethos of the Church of England! If there is a criticism of the symposium, it is that it perhaps fails to give a picture of things as seen by such a minister.

PATRONAGE AND DIRECTION

Of the other articles in the symposium, Dr G. C. B. Davies on patronage is helpful, especially in his obvious but vital point that any change here must not result in a monochrome ministry of dull uniformity. It must allow for proper diversity and take care not to place too much power into the hands of bishops or bureaucratic regional boards.

Admittedly, too much diversity can be a bad thing, and if we who are Evangelicals are anxious about patronage because of what might happen to us, we must also realize that Anglo-Catholics may feel the same thing. Patronage can be a safeguard to truth and to oddities.

But to dispense with it may well bring a worse evil.

This argument can also be applied to the matter of the direction of ordinands, and it is interesting to note that CACTM disagrees here with Mr Paul in its pamphlet, *A Study of the Paul Report on the Deployment and Payment of the Clergy* (Church Assembly. 1s. 6d.). Whereas Mr Paul would direct ordinands for the first five years of their ministries, CACTM prefer to drop the word 'direction' and speak in terms of 'making every effort to secure that a man is placed where his training and his work will be most effective in meeting the Church's need'. The important issue here is the training of newly-ordained clergy, and this is best effected by a good and helpful relationship between curate and vicar, as the present reviewer would testify, and as John Tiller in his essay on 'Curate Recruits' seems to imply.

The Bishop of Taunton has some excellent things to say in his article on the country clergy today, stressing so rightly the opportunities and work provided by the few as opposed to the many, and also the basic contentedness of many country clergy in their work. On this point, it is interesting to note that country clergy are as mobile as any. In this reviewer's deanery, there are only four clergy who have been in their cures longer than he, and he has only been here six-and-a-half years. And this is out of twenty-three clergy.

To sum up, *The Paul Report Considered* is a good symposium, though perhaps rather slight in its treatment of some aspects of the Report. Perhaps this was inevitable. But it does provide a reasonably balanced view of the Report and its background, and it succeeds in its aim of providing a jumping-off point for much further discussion. It is to be hoped that Evangelicals in the Church of England will not be too reactionary in considering the whole matter. The Report provides for us a chance to offer constructive criticism and suggestions, and these can only come from considered thought on the problem which the Report poses. The symposium is a real help in this direction. We need, however, to return all the time to first principles, and to base our argument and suggestions soundly and fearlessly on Scripture. It is as we are loyal to Scripture that we shall be able to discern the real issue and to see where the remedy lies.