

1.

APARTHEID AND THE ARCHBISHOP

Alan Paton: *Apartheid and the Archbishop: The Life and Times of Geoffrey Clayton*
(David Philip, Cape Town 1973).

by Edgar Brookes

Alan has done it again. What Dr Johnson wrote of Oliver Goldsmith "Nullum fere scribendi genus non tetigit, nullum quod tetigit non ornavit." ("He left scarcely any kind of writing untouched, and touched nothing which he did not adorn") is true of Alan Paton. Here we have him in the new field of ecclesiastical biography, and it is a biography, not the prolonged sneer which Lytton Strachey would have made it, nor the tasteless hagiography which it might easily have become in the wrong hands.

The author moves freely in the world of the organised Church. He is at home there, as he was in the world of Parliament when he wrote his life of Hofmeyr; and of course as a practising Anglican Christian he is at home. But this is no facile quality. This reviewer, equally at home in such surroundings, is impressed by the accuracy, the fullness and the understanding of the book. Thoroughness of research is one of Alan Paton's merits as an author. Genius is more than "an infinite capacity for taking pains", but it is that among other things, and Alan possesses it.

Perhaps he is not to be overpraised for not making Geoffrey Clayton a saint. The Archbishop himself told a congregation not long before his death that he was "a shopsoiled sinner". That he was a misogynist might be explained away as an idiosyncrasy. That he was irascible might be forgiven to anyone living in such a land of fools as South Africa so often is. But that he was generally irritable until he had had his breakfast, and irritable even after a service of Holy Communion, is something that cannot be explained away or justified: it must simply be noted, not without regret. Alan calls him "this great, strange, extraordinary man", not "this spotless saint"!

Many Liberals would condemn Clayton out of hand because

he did not approve of Trevor Huddleston or Michael Scott, for there is no orthodoxy so pitiless or so self-righteous as the orthodoxy of the heterodox. Clayton would have been an even better man had he recognised the greatness and the Christlikeness of these two courageous and turbulent Priests. To Clayton it seemed inexcusable that Michael Scott, licensed to the cure of souls at St Alban's Coloured Church, Johannesburg should, without the permission of his Bishop, be camping with Indian passive resisters in Durban, and should be paid by the Diocese of Johannesburg for doing so. Edward Paget would perhaps have said of Michael Scott as he said of Arthur Shearly Cripps: "I leave him alone: I know a Saint when I see one." Geoffrey Clayton was not cast in that mould. But the compassion of Alan Paton can reach out to understand Clayton, Scott and Huddleston alike. This is assuredly Alan Paton's greatest gift. From "Cry, the Beloved Country" onwards it shines through all his writings, illuminating all with the springtime beauty of sun after rain.

All the faults of Geoffrey Clayton notwithstanding, he remains a great man. He was not always right but he was always honest. He had at times a voice like a trumpet call. It gave forth no uncertain sound and bade his troops prepare themselves for battle. He made his Cathedrals in Johannesburg and Cape Town great interracial centres. He fought a good fight, and, finishing his course, he kept the faith. On Ash Wednesday, 1957, he signed, on behalf of all the Bishops of the Church of the Province of South Africa, a letter to the Prime Minister refusing to obey and refusing to counsel his people to obey, the provisions of section 29(c) of the Native Laws Amendment Act. This Act would have forced apartheid in all Christian congregations.

"We should ourselves be unable to obey this Law or to counsel our clergy and people to do so.

"We therefore appeal to you, Sir, not to put us in a position in which we have to choose between obeying our conscience and obeying the law of the land."

Clayton knew what he was doing. He took one of his Bishops by the arm and said, "I don't want to go to prison, I am an old man. I don't want to end my days in prison. But I'll go if I have to."

On Thursday afternoon, the day after the drawing up of the letter of protest, he was found dead of heart failure on his study floor. Alan deliberately refrains from overdramatizing this incident, but it speaks for itself. In his restrained handling of the matter Alan reminds me of the Presbyterian elder of whom it was said that "he was so upright that he bent backwards".

Here, then, is available for all our reading the magnificently

written life of this "great, strange, extraordinary man".

Perhaps the reviewer may be allowed to break the conventions of reviewing and give a personal reminiscence of Archbishop Clayton. Very troubled by a Christian book which seemed to make nonsense of the fight which he and others were putting up in Parliament, he rang up the Archbishop to ask if he could see him and talk things over. The response was warm and immediate. He went out to "Bishopscourt". The Archbishop gave him dinner, then sat with him in an alcove and talked in the moonlight. He gave him a bed for the night and the hospitality of the Holy Communion in the Archbishop's Chapel the next morning. I do not know that a solution was found of all the intellectual difficulties involved, but the strain had all gone and had been replaced by peace.

The book is aptly dedicated to David Russell.

The publisher, David Philip, has made a splendid job of the set up of the book.□

2.

THE FINAL SPRO-CAS REPORT

Peter Randall: *A Taste of Power* (Spro-cas publication No. 11)

by Marie Dyer

A Taste of Power is the final, co-ordinated Spro-cas report written by the Director. Part One brings together the detailed conclusions of the six special Spro-cas reports and some Black Community Programme documents into an elaboration of two central themes. The first is "that the South African social system is in urgent need of radical change, in the sense of a fundamental redistribution of power and resources. The aim must be to re-allocate power so that the black majority can exercise an effective role in the decision-making processes of the society and gain a more equitable share of the land's resources."

This proposition is seen as not only morally imperative but also practically necessary for future stability and peace.

The second theme is that these major changes will be initiated by blacks; that we have entered a new historical phase in South Africa in which blacks have begun to have

the 'Taste of Power' of the title, and that whites are not going to be able indefinitely to prevent them enjoying the full meal.

The special Spro-cas reports are substantial, concentrated and heavily documented works; and it is a considerable achievement to have produced a final summary as cogent and fluent as this report. In the account and indictment of the Apartheid society which develops the first theme, the combination of carefully selected details with confident and uncompromising general assertions is strikingly persuasive.

The opening section gives the Basic Patterns:

... "Every institution in our society reflects the basic patterns of enforced racial segregation, discrimination in favour of whites, inequality in the provision of resources