

# Editorial

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## *Keeping up to Date*

WHEN THE CHURCH is going through a period of change as great as the present one, it is most important that there should be reliable guides available to explain what is the state of the game in any given area. The series of *Grove Booklets* which have poured off the presses in the last few months have done much to maintain the momentum of change. Now it is good to have from Colin Buchanan, who is the proprietor and editor of Grove Books, a summary of what has been happening since the passing of the 'Alternative Services Measure' in *Recent Liturgical Revision in the Church of England* (Grove Books, 36 pp., £0.20). He claims to write, not as a dispassionate historian, but as a journalist who has himself been heavily engaged in the work of revision. His intention is to be descriptive rather than critical and everyone who wishes to be well informed in this field will find the main facts of the situation clearly set out with a very useful table on the last page. Such is the pace of change that this booklet itself will no doubt require bringing up to date in a year's time, but it will meet a pressing contemporary need at the moment.

*Headings for the Scripture Readings* by David J. Cooke (Mowbrays, 112 pp., £1.25), is another attempt to help people to keep up to date. It provides a brief introduction, usually of one or two sentences, for the lessons of the newly approved lectionary. It is really quite difficult to write such headings. Mr. Cooke plays for safety rather than for striking effect. What he gives us, if sometimes rather trite, should do something to help people to concentrate on the passages to be read. The lectionary, with its permission for the use of different versions of the Bible, has brought into the open again discussion on the merits of the various translations. Professor H. F. D. Sparks in the Ethel M. Wood Lecture of 1972 entitled *On Translations of the Bible* (Athlone Press, 20 pp., £0.45), makes some useful observations. He shows how,

in the past, out of a profusion of different versions one has in the end made its way to general acceptance. He does not prophesy which of our current versions will succeed and he stresses that choice is governed often by the need which is to be met. He is over-optimistic about the continuing use of the AV and of the RV. He thinks relatively little of the RSV and he reaches the somewhat surprising conclusion that 'when we are choosing a Church version, accuracy (as it is customarily understood) is a less important consideration than it is when we are choosing one for the Bible student, or even when we are choosing one just to read "as literature".'

Marcham Manor Press has done a useful service in starting a series of Study Guides dealing with contemporary problems. It is good to welcome two more. In *On the Job* (8 pp., £0.10) John Poulton gives some helpful guidance on the principles and practice of local evangelism. In *Male and Female* (8 pp., £0.10) the cases for and against the ordination of women to the priesthood are fairly presented. It is sponsored by the Bishops of Chester, St. Edmundsbury and Ipswich, Peterborough and Willesden, Professor Lampe, Mr. Duffield and Mrs. Ridley. They hold different views on the subject but agree that the leaflet provides a fair summary. Both these study guides are available in bulk at greatly reduced rates. Marcham has also reprinted C. S. Lewis' article 'The Humanitarian Theory of Punishment' to which reference was made by Dr. Babbage in the Spring number.

### *Living with Each Other*

THE preface to *Crockford's Clerical Directory* is rightly relished by those who like to read penetrating and sometimes devastating comments on the church scene by an independent and anonymous churchman. The complexities involved in producing *Crockford* are now so great that the directory itself (dated 1971-72) was not published until March 1973 and the preface was written in July 1972. The preface writer has again a number of important things to say in a wide range of fields and those to whom they apply would do well to heed many of them.

On one matter however it might not seem out of place for *The Churchman* to comment. When discussing Anglican Methodist Unity the writer states that 'the most solid and best organised group in the opposition was the Conservative Evangelical'. This may well be true, though there were people bearing that label who were in favour of the scheme. The reasons which he gives for that opposition are much less convincing to anyone who knows the situation better. First he suggests that they were not really interested in reunion: 'Loud as were their expressions of desire for reunion it had become very obvious that their opposition to the scheme was a matter of the internal politics of

the Church of England.' The great majority of those Evangelicals who voted against the scheme did so with a heavy heart. But they did so out of a genuine theological conviction that the scheme was dated and wrong, that it would not bring full union with the Methodists as soon as a one-stage scheme and that it would jeopardise future reunion schemes. There are very few among Evangelical leaders today who do not desire a reunited church, and even if the practical proposals of *Growing into Union* are not the answer, the production of that book alone shows the desire of Evangelicals to see the people of God in this country as far as possible made visibly one and to do it on terms acceptable to Catholic opinion if that is possible. The earlier volume *All in Each Place* (Marcham, 1965) provides another token of that desire.

An equally serious and unjustified charge is that there is an attempt by Conservative Evangelicals to take over the Church of England by gaining majorities in Synod. 'Their leaders have said: "Hold the position until the big battalions come up".' While this presents an intriguing picture of military strategy it is very far from the truth. Everyone knows that Evangelicals have in the past been under-represented in the councils of the church. This may have been largely their own fault due to a defensive aloofness. Now that they form a considerable part of the church and have gained the confidence necessary for involvement, it is hardly fair to complain if they let their views be known and vote according to their convictions. If this means something of a change of direction for the Church of England this is a fact which has to be faced. After all the Church of England changed its direction very markedly as a result of the Oxford Movement and in so far as it is in some respects a democratic church, this sort of thing is inevitable. It should however be said that recent changes in the church seem to have been caused more by the radical than the Evangelical movement.

What does not follow from this is that Evangelicals are so irresponsible that they will try to impose their will upon other churchmen regardless of the consciences of the latter. There is plenty of evidence from recent Assembly and Synod debates that Evangelicals are willing to allow for the differing views of others where these seem to represent a genuine part of the comprehensiveness of the Church of England. To suggest that this is simply being done until there is an Evangelical majority is nothing short of nonsense. This whole section displays a sad ignorance of post-Keele Evangelicalism. It is a pity that the writer must remain anonymous for he might have had his eyes opened by the free and frank discussions of issues for example at the Church of England Evangelical Council, had it been possible to invite him to one of its meetings, as has been the case with other non-Evangelicals. The only action which can be taken is to give him a free subscription to *The Churchman* in the hope that when next he criticises Evangelicals,

as he is fully entitled to do, he does so from a position of greater knowledge. Evangelicals have been learning in the last decade to live with others in the church. There are still some, but far fewer than there were, who have to learn to live with Evangelicals.

### *The Church in South America*

IT is hoped that we shall be able to publish from time to time articles of theological interest related to the situation in churches outside England. We are pleased to welcome Mr. Sinclair's article in this issue. It should be pointed out that he writes from Argentina where the situation is different from that elsewhere in Latin America. There is greater trust between denominations in Argentina than there is in some other parts of the continent and the charismatic movement there is on the whole a uniting influence. It has been suggested that in Latin America as a whole there is some parallel with the situation in parts of Western Europe before the Reformation. With the growth of interest in Bible reading and the new more friendly attitude towards Protestants, there may emerge something like a reformed Catholic church with an evangelical message. We have no right to dictate to God how he reunites and revives his church but our prayers and actions should be in expectation that he will do something on a far bigger scale than we may have ever really allowed ourselves to believe.

We should welcome other similar articles which would help to keep our readership in touch with items of theological interest in all parts of the world. Overseas correspondents have been appointed and the Board is to consider how the fullest use can be made of them so that *The Churchman* can be more fully a journal serving the worldwide church.

R.E.N.