Editorial

NO one can complain that evangelicals have been inarticulate concerning their reactions to the two series of alternative services which have recently been published and debated. The matter is one which has received considered attention in our pages as well as elsewhere in the religious press. Further, the Marcham Manor Press has published a collection of essays under the title *Towards a Modern Prayer Book*, edited by the Rev. R. T. Beckwith (96 pp., 5s.), and the Church Book Room Press has launched a Prayer Book Reform Series which includes *Tomorrow's Worship* by the Rev. Dr. J. I. Packer, *Services on Trial*, by the Rev. D. D. Billings, and *Revision and the Layman* by Mr. G. E. Duffield (3s. 3d. each). In these publications the evangelical assessment of the proposed new services is stated ably and forthrightly. The respective authors make it plain that evangelicals are not opposed to revision and indeed welcome many features in these new services. At the same time, the fact that their approach is analytical and critical should occasion neither surprise nor complaint. Responsible churchmanship demands such an approach to any formulation the intended effect of which is to alter the pattern of worship to which Englishmen have been accustomed for centuries. The drafters, moreover, must expect that their services will be searchingly scrutinized, not only by the Convocations and Church Assembly but also at the grass-roots of the diocesan, ruridecanal, and parochial levels. Every intelligent church member has a duty to study these services and to form a judgment on them.

It needs to be emphasized that any impression that evangelicals are in principle antipathetic to liturgical revision is mistaken, especially as the fact is sometimes overlooked that when evaluating a document it is only natural to give more attention to those matters over which there is disagreement than to those which evoke approval. It is precisely at the points of disagreement that reasoned argument is called for. Not that all evangelicals are of one mind regarding all the questions that may be raised. On certain issues there is room for legitimate divergence of opinion. The distinction between essentials and non-essentials, between things primary and things indifferent, is an important one. It may be said without equivocation, however, that evangelicals are unanimous in their opposition to any change in worship which involves or implies a change in doctrine. Some, indeed, are deeply attached to the old forms, while others are impatient to see drastically revised forms of worship introduced; but the allegiance of all is unfaltering to the *doctrine* of the Book of Common Prayer, to which they are pledged. They are united in their conviction that the true reform of the Church and its worship is to be effected neither by a shallow accommodation to the fashions of contemporary secularism nor by a return to medievalism, or even to the third and fourth centuries, but by conformity to the apostolic teaching and practice of the New Testament, adapted but not subjected to the circumstances and atmosphere of our own modern age.

The common calumny that evangelicals go back only four hundred years to the Reformation is an empty one, for our founding fathers of

the sixteenth century were determined to restore, to the utmost of their ability, the apostolicity of the first century to the Church. No one regards the Reformers as infallible or the Book of Common Prayer as incapable of improvement. But their genius, under God, was to recall the Church to the true principle of reformation, and we, like them, must submit ourselves to the criterion of Holy Scripture, which is the dominically ordained and classically acknowledged canon of the Christian Church, as well as the historic charter of Anglicanism. It was by the application of this criterion that the reservation and adoration of the consecrated sacrament and the practice of praying for the dead were rejected and eliminated from our worship in the sixteenth century. It is now clear beyond dispute that the passing of the *Prayer Book (Alternative and Other Services) Measure 1965* has opened the door for the authorization of these and other practices which were abandoned by our spiritual forefathers as unscriptural and unevangelical (an eventuality which we foretold long since).

The process as it is now unfolding has seen the sponsoring by the bishops of the First Series of Alternative Services, the design of which is in the main to legalize the hitherto illegal (though widely used with episcopal connivance) forms of the unconstitutional 1928 Book. At the time of writing, this First Series has been passed by the Convocations of both Canterbury and York. This means, amongst other things, the legitimization, whether explicit or implicit, of the concepts of purgatory, with its accompaniments of prayer for the dead and requiem eucharists, and of transubstantiation, with its accompaniments of reservation and adoration, under cover of the observance of such festivals as All Souls and Corpus Christi, and also of mariolatrous devotion under cover of days dedicated to the Mother of Jesus. The sanction of notions of "offertory" also, according to which in the holy communion there is an offering of man to God that is more than the self-dedication of response to the free grace of the Gospel, and even an identification of the worshipper with the offering of Christ for our redemption, will not only becloud the essential uniqueness of Christ's atoning sacrifice but will also serve to reverse, or at the least interrupt, the movement *à sens unique* of the grace of God in Christ to man. (Alas for Augustine, the shade of Pelagius still stalks abroad !) These things, of course, are disruptive of the biblical structure of Cranmer's majestic liturgy.

Officialdom has told us *ad nauseam* that until now nobody has known what "Lawful Authority" is, or in what or whom it resides, in the Church. A primary purpose of the *Prayer Book (Alternative and Other Services) Measure*—which enacts provisions originally introduced in the form of a draft canon with the title "Of Lawful Authority"—is, we have been assured repeatedly, to define what lawful authority is in relation to the conduct of public worship. The credulous were led to imagine that once such a measure was in force the undisciplined chaos which has disfigured the worship of the Church of England for generations would be replaced by decent order. What is in fact happening is that we are now arriving at the ludicrous situation where mutually exclusive doctrines and practices are to receive the blessing and sanction of officialdom. Modernism and medievalism are to have a

place alongside the Reformed worship of our 1662 Prayer Book. This is not the introduction of order, but the beatification of chaos. And this complacent sanction of disarray can hardly be expected to do other than add to the incoherence and irrelevance of the Church.

Whatever uncertainties there may have been about the nature of the "lawful authority" mentioned in the declaration made by a clergyman at his institution or licensing, this same declaration made it fully plain that lawful authority was embodied in the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, the Book of Common Prayer, and the Ordinal of the Church of England. The declaration reads :

> I, A.B., do solemnly make the following declaration : I assent to the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, and to the Book of Common Prayer and of the ordering of Bishops, Priests, and Deacon. I believe the doctrine of the Church of England as therein set forth to be agreeable to the Word of God ; and in Public Prayer and administration of the sacraments I will use the form in the said book prescribed, and none other, except so far as shall be ordered by lawful authority.

For centuries Prayer Book, Articles, and Ordinal have represented a fixed point of lawful authority. But no longer so, for the new measure undermines the lawful authority of our church at the most vital point of worship and doctrine. Presumably our ecclesiastical Solons are well aware that, because in important respects the forms which it is proposed to legalize under the new measure are inconsistent and incompatible with our worship as hitherto constituted, as far as lawful authority is concerned we can now expect to be in a much worse state than previously. Once again, it should be stressed that the objection is not to new forms as such, but to the authorization of alternative forms which are in radical conflict with the old.

The gibe has been made that the evangelical opposition to the proposed new services is a case of "sour grapes": evangelicals, we are told, don't want them, and so they are determined that no one else shall have them. This taunt is mean and malicious. For one thing, as already mentioned, evangelicals have made it clear that they are not opposed to the new services *in toto* but only to certain aspects of them which they find objectionable on biblical grounds. They have stated their case calmly and carefully. For another thing, evangelicals do not mind others using forms of worship which they themselves may not wish to adopt. They are not devoted to uniformity ; indeed, they regard the Act of Uniformity as a tragic mistake in the history of the English Church. They would welcome far greater flexibility in public worship. But evangelicals are concerned to preserve a true coherence, and particularly a scriptural consistency, in the doctrine of which the Church's liturgical activity is an expression. A worship compounded of incompatibilities cannot make sense. If the Reformed heritage of the Church of England is now to be abandoned in part, it would be better for it to be abandoned altogether. Then at least it would be known where the Church stands, even though evangelicals should then conclude that it was no longer their church.

As things are, evangelicals will continue to speak out, charitably, concerning their convictions. This they regard both as their right and

their duty. There is no question of party politics, which are an abomination in the Church of Christ, but of genuine concern for the purity of the Gospel as it is known through Scripture and experienced through the new birth. Evangelicals, moreover, are giving much studious and constructive thought to the subject of Prayer Book revision, and they have a positive contribution to offer which they trust will be for the enrichment and clarification of our worship. A little encouragement to them not just to state what is faulty or capable of improvement in the old or the new, but also to put forward their own patterns of worship, which they believe will meet the requirements of our age, could have beneficial consequences at this time.

Finally, we would reiterate our regret that the bishops attending the 1958 Lambeth Conference decided to abandon the wise principle of their predecessors that, in the revision of Anglican worship, " the Prayer Book of 1662 should remain as the basic pattern, and, indeed, as a bond of unity in doctrine and in worship for our Communion as a whole " (1958 Report, 2.78). As another Lambeth Conference draws near, we would urge the reconsideration of this decision and, in the interests of consistent Anglican worship, a return to the wiser counsel that prevailed prior to 1958.

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The Rev. Stephen Smalley's essay in this issue on " Architecture for Anglicans " is excerpted, with the kind permission of the publishers, Hodder and Stoughton Limited, from his forthcoming book *Building for Worship*, which is to appear in the *Christian Foundations* series. We hope that the reading of it will stimulate many not only to purchase and study the book but also henceforth to be active and intelligent in their attention to a subject which, though of great importance, has been largely neglected to our cost.

The Rev. Colin Buchanan's explanation of the reasons for his dissentient opinion which was appended to the Report of the Liturgical Commission on the new communion service as proposed in the Second Series of Alternative Services should be carefully weighed by all churchmen. We are happy to publish it in this issue, and wish to inform our readers that it is also available with a short postscript in booklet form from the Church Book Room Press at the price of 2s. a copy.

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An event of unusual interest is the exhibition of printed books and manuscripts now on view at Lambeth Palace Library. It is designed to illustrate the history of the ecumenical activity of the Church of England and other churches of the Anglican Communion from the sixteenth century to the present time. Most of the exhibits are taken from the rich collections in Lambeth Palace Library. These have been reinforced by loans from the Bodleian Library (an important letter of Gilbert Burnet), the Governing Body of Christ Church, Oxford (William Wake's famous letter to the Patriarch Chrysanthus of Jerusalem), the Trustees of the British Museum, and private collections. Among other items of historic interest is a superb letter from Archbishop Matthew Parker to the Consistory of the Reformed Church at La Rochelle. The exhibition will remain open until the end of the year and admission is free. P.E.H.