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Editorial

IT is perhaps somewhat surprising that the Holy Communion should not have been chosen before as the particular theme of an issue of *The Churchman*. An attempt is made in the present number to rectify that omission and the four articles that immediately follow deal with the subject under various aspects. In the first article Bishop Alston approaches the theme from the biblical and doctrinal point of view, interpreting the sacrament in the light of our Lord's words and actions in the upper room and stressing its relation to the new covenant. In the second article Mr. Rogers provides an historical study, showing in convincing fashion the place which the Lord's Supper occupied in the teaching and practice of the early Evangelicals. The third article is concerned with modern eucharistic practice and pleads for the restoration of the Holy Communion as a central and corporate act of worship in the life of the evangelical parish. The fourth article is of a liturgical character and faces the question of the revision of the Communion service, more especially in the light of the recent Canadian proposals and the new liturgy of the Church of South India.

It is perhaps hardly necessary to make clear that the views expressed by Canon Vicary in this latter article are his own and do not represent any official pronouncement on the part of the publishers of this journal. But one thing more may be added, and that is that it is high time that evangelical churchmen got to grips with this question of Prayer Book revision in general instead of evading the issue by holding on tenaciously to the 1662 book, as though it were incapable of improvement and were wholly adequate for modern needs. Until such time as new forms of service are duly approved and have legal authority, it is highly desirable that there should be consistent and conscientious adherence to our present Book of Common Prayer; and in this respect Evangelicals are, generally speaking, the most loyal of churchmen. One does not find on the "altars" of evangelical churches that illegal and un-Anglican liturgical concoction known as the "English Missal", against which the Bishop of Chichester has so rightly and strongly protested. Nevertheless the time cannot be long delayed when the matter of Prayer Book revision once again comes before the Church, and it is important that in the meantime Evangelicals should do some hard thinking and serious study and be in a position to make a positive contribution to the subject. It may well be that the Canadian revision will serve as a guide in this matter, for the proposals therein put forward are of a distinctly conservative nature and would in all probability be acceptable to English churchmen who cherish their reformed and catholic heritage.

Dr. W. K. Lowther Clarke's *Concise Bible Commentary*¹ is something of an achievement, for it is a commentary on the whole of the Bible (including the Apocrypha) and is the work of one man. In this respect

¹ Published by S.P.C.K., 30/-.

it differs from the various one-volume Bible commentaries already in existence. Of these the best known are the commentaries edited by Gore, Peake and Dummelow respectively—all of them composite productions to which various distinguished scholars have contributed. Of them, Dummelow's is the most conservative in its outlook and the most likely to be acceptable to the Evangelical who is—rightly or wrongly—suspicious of the 'critical' approach to the scriptures. The Gore and Peake commentaries freely adopt the findings of modern biblical criticism, and so does this new work by Dr. Clarke. Its one-man authorship gives it a certain advantage over the other works from the point of view of unity and consistency; it also has the merit of being excellently produced and reasonably priced; but its chief limitation lies in the extreme brevity of its exegesis of the sacred text.

This is due, no doubt, partly to the attempt to confine the work to a thousand pages, and partly to the fact that a considerable amount of the space (a third of the whole) is devoted to a series of introductory articles dealing with such subjects as the history of Israel, biblical geography and archaeology, Hebrew religion, life and laws, the Jewish and Gentile background of the New Testament, the life and teaching of our Lord, St. Paul's life and letters, the sacraments, miracles, biblical criticism and interpretation, etc. No doubt such articles have a value in a commentary covering the entire Bible; but in the present instance they do severely restrict the amount of space available for the commentary itself.

For example, the entire commentary on St. Mark's gospel is confined to seventeen pages, including the introduction. This permits of only the most cursory sort of treatment as compared with C. H. Turner's much more useful exposition of the same gospel in the *New Commentary*, occupying more than eighty pages. The commentary on Hebrews—another key book of the New Testament—is a mere seven pages, apart from two pages of introduction. In the Old Testament the treatment is even more skimpy, and several of the minor prophets (the kind of books the average Bible student finds the most difficulty in understanding) have barely a page apiece.

Perhaps the chief value of the work is to be found in the preliminary essays and the introductions to the several books. Here the reader will at least find in handy form an appraisal of the latest views of biblical scholarship from a critical point of view; but for an adequate commentary on the text of scripture he will in many cases be compelled to look elsewhere.