

Editorial

“ I AM, and profess myself to be, a member of the Church of England. . . . I keep close to the Articles and Homilies, which, if my opposers did, we should not have so many dissenters from her. But it is most notorious, that for the iniquity of the priests the land mourns. We have *preached* and *lived* many sincere persons out of our communion. I have now conversed with several of the best of all denominations; many of them solemnly protest that they went from the Church, because they could not find food for their souls. They stayed among us till they were starved out.” So wrote George Whitefield in his Journal of 1739 when he was twenty-four years old. Even at this early age Whitefield who was never other than a loyal and punctilious member of the Church of England, was the remarkable evangelist and expounder of God’s Word that he was to remain till the end of his life. Undoubtedly the greatest preacher our Church has ever had, and very probably the greatest preacher since the Apostolic Age, this young clergyman, indefatigable in the zeal and single-mindedness of his evangelical labours both in the homeland and in the new territories across the Atlantic, already knew what it was to meet with fierce opposition, not least from dignitaries and fellow-ministers of the Church of England, from whom he might more reasonably have expected support and co-operation because of the divine blessing and power which so indisputably attended his ministry. How different the present situation in our land might have been had not our ecclesiastical forefathers persecuted George Whitefield and others of the prophets sent by God; how much stronger the spiritual force of our Church had not multitudes of earnest Christians been in the past driven into dissent and non-conformity by the prejudice and unfaithfulness of men who had been appointed, not to scatter, but to shepherd the flock of Christ in the way of the everlasting Gospel. But instead today we see that flock disunited and rent asunder. The guilt of schism does not always lie at the door of those who separate. “ I love all who love the Lord Jesus,” declared Whitefield that same year; and that is the manifesto of true ecumenicity.

George Whitefield was a man raised up by God for his day. He was never made a bishop, but if ever there was a man in the true apostolic succession it was he. This must at once be evident to all who read his *Journals*, a new edition of which, admirably produced by the Banner of Truth Trust and edited by Mr. Iain Murray, has just been published. This fine volume of nearly 600 pages, with eight illustrations and a map, is priced at the astonishingly low figure of 15s, and should be procured and read by all who have a concern for pure and undefiled religion. The *Journals* cover only the first twenty-six years of Whitefield’s life, but what a picture they present of the wonderful things that God is able to do through the life of a single man—and what is more a very young man—who is fully dedicated to the cause of Jesus Christ. The *Journals* are autobiographical, but they are unmarred by any note of self-esteem or egocentricity. The temptation to pride was of course felt: “ Had it not been for my

compassionate High Priest, popularity would have destroyed me", we find him writing in 1737. "I used to plead with Him, to take me by the hand and lead me unhurt through this fiery furnace. He heard my request, and gave me to see the vanity of all commendations but His own." Few men, indeed perhaps no others since the first century, have been permitted to see so phenomenal a response to their preaching; yet these pages present, in a completely unaffected manner, a portrait of a man who was filled with the grace, power, joy, humility, and maturity of the Holy Spirit. They do not possess, nor do they pretend to, literary distinction, but are simply a plain record of God's dealings with and through one man who presented himself as a living sacrifice for the sake of his Master and Saviour.

It is indeed an amazing story. Whitefield was like a magnet who attracted people in vast numbers to hear the Gospel and bound them to Christ, and inevitably to himself also, in the bonds of deepest love. Attentive throngs of 20,000 and more were not unusual. Picture him preaching on June 1st, 1739, "at a place called Mayfair, near Hyde Park Corner," to a congregation of nearly eighty thousand (the whole population of London in his day was not ten times that number). He was not physically robust, nor did he enjoy the mechanical aid of microphones and amplifiers, let alone radio and television, which we take so much for granted to-day when we talk of mass communication. Such natural abilities as he had were improved to the glory of God, who enabled him to lift up his voice like a trumpet so that all might hear the Good News. With untiring application he proclaimed the Word wherever people could be found to listen—in cathedrals, in parish churches, in private houses, in taverns, in the streets, and in the open fields, to the rich and the poor, the learned and the ignorant, to soldiers, seamen, colliers, emigrants, and prisoners, at all times of the day and night, and every day of every week. He journeyed incessantly. He visited the sick, counselled the troubled, reproved the careless, and rejoiced with all who were lovers of Christ. Careless of himself, he collected constantly for the relief of the poverty-stricken, for the erection of his beloved Orphan House in New England, and for the provision of schools for under-privileged children.

The *Journals* speak to the heart of the reader, challenging all who profess the name of Christ to be more faithful and more energetic and more prayerful and joyful in letting their light shine before men. Would that Almighty God would raise up such an apostolic man as George Whitefield in the Church of England today, so that once more we might see men, women, and children in their multitudes drawn by the Holy Spirit's power to hear and respond to the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

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At last month's meeting in the University of St. Andrews of the Commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches the Archbishop of York wisely warned against the concept of unity as an end in itself and emphasized the importance of recognizing that genuine Christian unity must be unity in truth and in sanctity. The following paragraph, which occurs in the Commission's Report to the

Central Committee on the subject of the Future of Faith and Order, is significant and will be welcomed by Evangelicals :

The Commission on Faith and Order understands that the unity which is both God's will and His gift to His Church is one which brings all in each place who confess Jesus Christ as Lord into a fully committed fellowship with one another through one baptism into Him, holding the one apostolic faith, preaching the one Gospel, and breaking the one bread, and having a corporate life reaching out in witness and service to all, and which at the same time unites them with the whole Christian fellowship in all places and all ages in such wise that ministry and members are acknowledged by all, and that all can act and speak together as occasion requires for the tasks to which God calls the Church.

The Report goes on to add that "in particular we would state emphatically that the unity we seek is not one of uniformity"—a statement which will be reassuring to those who have had fears that a great monolithic world Church was the goal which filled the horizon of the WCC theologians.

Also welcome is the decision to recommend for adoption at next year's assembly to be held in New Delhi an expanded form of the present basis of membership, which will include explicit reference both to the Scriptures and to the Holy Trinity, as follows : "The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of Churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the Scriptures and therefore seek to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." This represents a very distinct improvement in that it is a declaration which is, by comparison with the present basis, more properly and adequately *Christian*.

While on the subject of ecumenicity we are pleased to call attention to Volume II of *Conflict and Agreement in the Church* by Professor T. F. Torrance of the University of Edinburgh, which has recently been published by the Lutterworth Press (213 pp., 35s.), and which is devoted to the theme of *The Ministry and the Sacraments of the Gospel*. Like the earlier volume, on *Order and Disorder*, this book is a collection of articles and essays which have previously appeared in various periodicals and symposia. The earnest ecumenical concern of Dr. Torrance, who is a member of the Faith and Order Commission, shines strongly through these pages. "How can Churches sit down separately at the Lord's Table to proclaim the death of Christ till He come," he asks in the Introduction, "when by their very separation they are acting a lie to reconciliation through the Blood of Christ?" "So soon", he says (p. 193), "as we realize that the Eucharist is charged with the real presence of the Son of Man, to whom all judgment has been committed, we realize that it is the Lord's Supper (*Kyriakon deipnon*) and not our own (*idion deipnon*) and that we cannot send any Church or any sincere baptized believer away, without sinning against the majesty and Grace of the Son of Man. That does not mean that the Church is prohibited from 'fencing the Table', by excluding from participation in the Eucharist the lapsed who have denied their Baptism or the impenitent and insincere, but it does mean that the Church must exercise its discipline *with the authority of the*

Son of Man, and not with the authority of priests and scribes and Pharisees. It is by the Word that the Son of Man exercises His authority, and by the Word that He judges and divides between men. . . . In other words, the real fencing of the Holy Table is lodged in the prophetic ministry through which the holy Majesty and Grace of the Son of Man are brought to bear upon the Church. It is when the Son of Man, Christ crucified and Christ to come, is proclaimed with power in all His saving grace and judgment, that the Table is kept holy and undefiled; and it is then when His Word and authority are glorified that it is indeed the Lord's Table and the Lord's Supper, and not a private supper owned and administered on exclusive principles by the Church." Not everyone will find Professor Torrance's style of theologizing at all times to their liking, but these are good words which deserve not only to be pondered but also to be acted upon.

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The Preface to the *Crockford Clerical Directory*, of which the 1959-60 issue was published in July (Oxford University Press, 9 guineas), has become quite an Anglican institution. It is expected to be critically incisive, outspoken, and spicy. As, however, its author's identity is conventionally concealed under the cloak of anonymity, the Preface hardly carries the weight which it might otherwise do—despite the assurance given by the publishers that the author of the Preface is "a person of distinction in the Church of England". Free criticism from within is by no means to be deprecated and can have beneficial effects. In the current issue the Preface-writer has a good deal that is critical to say about bishops. He views with disfavour, for instance, the custom of translating diocesans from one see to another. "The movement of bishops from see to see became common," he observes, "at a time when the incomes of the various sees differed widely, and it was possible to arrange a *cursus stipendiorum* which began with one of the Welsh sees or the see of Hereford, and worked upwards to plums such as Ely and Winchester." Now, however, that this disparity between episcopal incomes is much less marked, questions of prestige and "promotion" may have much to do with such shufflings of the episcopal pack. Dioceses which are comparatively small or of modern creation tend to be regarded as less important than those which are large or ancient. This conception is condemned as "objectionable". "The newer dioceses have generally come into being because there have grown up big new areas of population. In them the Church has the task of establishing itself as an integral part of the community, traditions have to be formed, local patriotism developed. None of this is likely to happen if the diocese is used as a rung on the ladder of promotion. There is need, in these dioceses above all, for bishops who will stay and devote the rest of their life's work to the development of the Church in the urban areas."

The author also focuses his monocle on suffragan bishops, rightly (in our opinion) remarking on "the anomalous character of suffragan bishops, who exist only because the Church lacks the courage to break with feudal ideas and divide its dioceses on a rational basis", and

charging that "the modern creation of suffragan bishoprics has quite outrun theological sense", and that "it is a degradation of the episcopal office that we should now have a class of episcopal curates some of whom expect in due course to become episcopal incumbents". We have long felt that of all the dignitaries of the Church the suffragan bishops are the least to be envied. Apart from their title, they have no satisfactory status, and we cannot but agree with the comment that "if there is a bishop's work to be done for which no bishop has the time, then there is a case for the creation of a new diocese rather than for the appointment of an episcopal curate who will hope to move on one day to a charge of his own".

In fulfilment of a decision of the 1958 Lambeth Conference, a new wonder has been seen in the Anglican world in the creation of an entirely novel office to which, presumably, it is intended that a man in episcopal orders should always be appointed. This is the post of Executive Officer of the Anglican Communion, for which an American bishop, the Right Reverend Stephen Bayne (a man of admirable personality), has been taken away from his diocese and brought to London. The Preface-writer expresses the hope that "he will not attempt to introduce into Anglican affairs those aspects of American organization which have been so much criticized in the affairs of the World Council of Churches", and adds that "it is perhaps important that Dr. Fisher's successor at Lambeth should be a man whose sympathies do not lie in that direction". To this we would add our own apprehension lest (with all due appreciation of our good friends from across the Atlantic) future Lambeth Conferences should increasingly be Americanized by an excess of American bishops.

We can allude only briefly to one or two of the other matters which engage the anonymous author's attention. To Evangelicals it is, of course, no blinding revelation that "with Canon Law Revision goes Liturgical Revision", but it is none the less a statement heavy with foreboding in view of the definite trend of Canon Law Revision away from the principles of our historic Reformed faith. Thanks to the Presidential Address to last year's Islington Conference, it is now at least clear to the writer of the Preface that Evangelicals will be satisfied with "nothing short of the complete prohibition of Reservation". As readers of our last issue will be aware, we are unable to share in the praise of the proposals of the Liturgical Commission in regard to the services of Baptism and Confirmation as "important and encouraging", and it is certainly not our hope that "their clarity and simplicity will eventually win acceptance". On the contrary, we trust that these proposed new forms of service will be set aside and a new start made along lines which are theologically sound. It is more than time that Conservative Evangelical scholars were invited to serve on the liturgical and theological commissions which are from time to time appointed. They have a contribution to make that is not to be underrated.

And how refreshing it would be to have a George Whitefield writing the Crockford Preface for a change!