Editorial

AS 1962 draws to its close and we take another look at the events of 300 years ago, it is opportune for us to consider whether we have not now a great chance—possibly a last chance—to repair some of the damage which the Church suffered in the seventeenth century. It is with this end in view that the symposium entitled *From Uniformity to Unity*—certainly one of the most important of this year's publications—has been produced, under the joint editorship of Dr. Geoffrey F. Nuttall and Professor Owen Chadwick (*From Uniformity to Unity* : 1662-1962, S.P.C.K., 423 pp., 35s.). The two editors, together with Dr. Anne Whiteman, Professor E. C. Ratcliff, Mr. Roger Thomas, Dr. Ernest A. Payne, Canon Edward Carpenter, the Bishop of Bristol, and the Rev. John Huxtable, form an imposing team of symposiasts. In his introduction to the volume, Professor Chadwick expresses the judgment that " much has altered, in three hundred years, but not the foundations of the problem ". He rightly reminds us that, despite their objections and disappointments, " most of the ministers who accepted Presbyterian principles never ceased, before 1662, to regard themselves as members of the Church of England ", and that " there was more flexibility than sometimes appeared in their demands to abolish the surplice or the sign of the cross in baptism ". Indeed, " perhaps most of them would have continued to serve the Church of England after 1662 if they had not been compelled, first, to declare their ' unfeigned assent and consent to all and everything ' contained in the Book of Common Prayer ; and secondly, still more, if those ordained by presbyteries under the Commonwealth and Protectorate had not been compelled to receive episcopal ordination before St. Bartholomew's Day, 1662. By this second provision they were being asked, or appeared to be asked, to renounce their previous ministry, which might have been already exercised for many years in English parishes ".

Seen in the perspective of Christian unity, the Oxford Movement of last century can only be regretted as adding very seriously to the disruption of English ecclesiastical life. " Upon the religious plane," says Dr. Chadwick, " the Oxford movement, and the growing strength of high churchmanship, broadened the gulf between Anglican opinion and Dissenting opinion." The Tractarians and their successors are mainly responsible for the misrepresentation, which has gained wide currency, to the effect that the Elizabethan church was designed to comprehend within its borders both Roman and Genevan beliefs—that is, opposing and irreconcilable views and doctrines. Dr. Chadwick very properly points out, however, that the nearest parallel to the Elizabethan reconstruction " is not a Church containing Roman Catholic and Protestant, but a Church containing Lutheran and Calvinist harmoniously "—in other words, a church theologically Reformed, but leaving room for a measure of flexibility in secondary issues of conscience and liturgy. So, too, in an outstanding chapter on " The Restoration of the Church of England ", Dr. Whiteman calls our attention to the fact that in the seventeenth century " in reality members of the right wing were almost without exception highly critical of Roman Catholicism, and proudly conscious that they belonged to a reformed Church ".

Ecclesiastical fortunes in the seventeenth century were bedevilled by politics. Under the Commonwealth not only did numbers of Anglican clergy suffer deprivation, but the episcopal succession in the Church of England came very close to dying out. As Dr. Whiteman observes, these proceedings " formed a precedent and, albeit in an unworthy sense, gave an excuse for the ejections of Puritans between 1660 and 1662 ". There were, of course, some the rigidity of whose views meant that they virtually ejected themselves. But the great majority of those who departed were lost, quite unnecessarily, to the Church of England because of the rigidity of the outlook that prevailed through parliament and found shocking expression on the ill-starred St. Bartholomew's Day, 1662. There were schemes and negotiations for a comprehensive church, with a modified episcopacy, reasonable liturgical flexibility, and the requirement of assent only to those of the Thirty-Nine Articles concerned with doctrine, both before and after 1662. But they all came to nothing—to the great spiritual harm of our country.

The controversies of the time were not over doctrinal issues—the Presbyterians could speak of themselves as " taking it for granted that there is a firm agreement between our brethren and us in the doctrinal truths of the reformed religion, and in the substantial parts of divine worship "—and it was the triumph of Laudian intolerance that prevented the realization of a church whose comprehension would have embraced satisfactorily nearly the whole range of English Protestantism. Instead, the way of disruption and sectarianism was chosen, with the consequence that the Church of England ceased in reality to be the national church which its title implied. " It was the bitter fate of the Puritans not only to lose their preferments," writes Dr. Whiteman, " but to feel that nothing they had fought for so single-mindedly would come to fruition within the framework of a national comprehensive Church, in which most of them believed as firmly as their Anglican opponents. Men like Calamy and Baxter, Manton and Bates had no desire to found a sect, and only the witness they felt they must make, and their responsibility to their congregations, led them to carry on their ministry outside the Church." The faults, however, were not all on one side, and it is doubly deplorable that " both Anglicans and Puritans, in the prolonged controversies, had difficulty in hearing the voice of charity and the arguments of reason ".

In retrospect, one may regret that the King's promise of " liberty to tender consciences " made in the Declaration of Breda was made void by Parliament, that Archbishop Ussher's irenical scheme for the " reduction of episopacy unto the form of synodical government received in the ancient Church " failed to be adopted, and that Richard Baxter refused the bishopric of Hereford offered him in 1660. Professor Ratcliff seems more optimistic with respect to our contemporary stituation when he says that " in 1962 the Book of Common Prayer is not a wall of division, as it was in 1662 ". In this judgment he may be right, though it should be affirmed that it was not the Book of Common Prayer that was a wall of division in 1662 so much as the inflexibility of the Act of Uniformity.

Even after 1662 there remained some prospect of retrieving the unhappy situation that had been brought about by the rigidity of the

Act of Uniformity. But, as things turned out, the best that could be achieved was the Toleration Act of 1689. Even so, nonconformists were not offically treated as outside the pale of the established church, as the practice of occasional conformity and the requirements of the Test Act of 1673 show. " Had comprehension proposals accompanied the Toleration Act, English history—secular and religious—would have been very different," declares Dr. Payne. " The Presbyterians and most of the Independents would almost certainly have entered the new National Church." In describing subsequent endeavours to bring about a reunion of English Christians, Dr. Payne explains that in the end Anglicans and nonconformists " have come to accept and respect one another and now co-operate in the search for the manifestation of a deeper Christian unity ". Canon Carpenter traces the fortunes of the aspirations for the reintroduction of a genuinely national church. We find Archbishop Tenison championing the principle of Reformed national churches at the beginning of the eighteenth century, holding that " a common protestantism was more important than a common episcopacy ". During the same century, Bishop Warburton maintained that to establish episcopacy in England and presbyterianism in Scotland was perfectly right and proper ; and Archdeacon Paley judged that " the wisest and safest system which a state can adopt is a comprehensive national religion." Among the prominent figures who advocated the same concept in the last century were Thomas Arnold and F. D. Maurice ; while, in 1852, the Convocation of Canterbury, revived after some 150 years, recorded its " earnest hope and trust " that all its deliberations might " prepare the way for gathering to the the bosom of the Church those who are now not of her communion ".

Our own century has seen the significant rise of the ecumenical movement (the story of which is sketched by the Bishop of Bristol). Up to the present, however, so far from solving the problems of reunion, this movement has accentuated them. This does not mean that much has not been accomplished, particularly in the way of mutual encounter and conversation. It is important, also, that the obstacles to reunion, scandalous though some of them may be, should be clearly discerned. Mr. Huxtable, for example, in adverting to " the scandal of Christ's people being unable to be at one at the Holy Table ", remarks that " many Free Churchmen believe that the Anglican refusal of intercommunion does, in fact, imply some sort of adverse judgment on the churchly character of the non-episcopal bodies ", and very rightly sees this as " a major obstacle to reunion in this country ". He reminds us that Bishop Headlam was prepared not only to accept the validity of non-episcopal ministeries, provided that they were appointed with prayer and the laying on of hands, but also to dispense with reordination in a reunited church. He stresses anew the fact, so clearly proclaimed by P. T. Forsyth, that the prolongation of the Apostolate and the legatee of its unique authority is the New Testament, that the apostolic succession was at first a succession of truth, and that there is but one thing that regularizes the ministry, namely, the Gospel and a church of the Gospel ; and he pleads for a recognition of the truth that *episcopé* is " a feature of the life of every church, whether it be exercised by an individual, a presbytery, or a local church meeting ". These are sentiments with which many, probably a majority, in the Church of England today concur.

Another recently published and, in some respects, complementary volume, which may, with advantage, be read in conjunction with this symposium, is Carl Bridenbaugh's *Mitre and Sceptre : Transatlantic Faiths, Ideas, Personalities, and Policies*, 1689-1775 (Oxford University Press, 354 pp., 52s. 6d.). This noteworthy work by a distinguished American historian is a full account, based on a thorough study of the contemporary documents, of the prolonged conflict between Anglicans and Dissenters over the question of the introduction of episcopacy into North America. For the non-Anglicans, situated as they were on Crown territory and with the march of events in England during the 1660's as a vivid memory or tradition, episcopacy was synonymous with tyranny, and they were determined to oppose with every means at their disposal the sending of a bishop or bishops to the settlements they had formed. The warfare was conducted in the main in the pages of New England newspapers and by the publication of blasts and counterblasts in the form of pamphlets. The pulpit was also pressed into service as an engine of war, and there was much political manœuvring in England by the friends of the two parties. The battle swayed to and fro between the demand, made with importunate frequency, of the S.P.G. " missionaries " in America for a resident bishop of their own, on the one hand, and, on the other, the sustained and determined opposition of the nonconformist churches to the meeting of this demand. This struggle was significant as a prelude to the War of Independence.

As Dr. Bridenbaugh indicates, in the communities which settled in New England religion, politics, and economics were one and inseparable. Moreover, the descendants of the Puritans were not " dissenters " in the accepted sense. Indeed, in 1690 it was only in Boston that a Church of England congregation existed and it was the Anglicans who could, with more propriety, be described as dissenters in such a society. The attitude of the settlers is conveyed in a statement issuing from the House of Representatives of Massachusetts Bay in 1768, which, in typical manner, expressed the great fear of the New England colonies : " The establishment of a Protestant Episcopate in America . . . is very alarming to a people whose fathers, from the hardships they suffered under such an establishment, were obliged to fly their native country into a wilderness, in order peaceably to enjoy their privileges, civil and religious : Their being threatened with the loss of both at once, must throw them into a very disagreeable situation. We hope in God such an establishment will never take place in America. . . ." The opposition was not to the Church of England as such but to the *establishment* of a particular form of religion, the imposition of a monarchical type of episcopacy, and the insistence on a narrow doctrine of ministerial adequacy which would have had the effect of unchurching the majority of the colonists.

In Dr. Bridenbaugh's judgment, there is " little doubt that if the American rebellion had been suppressed, not only the dispatch of bishops but the establishment of the Church of England in the colonies would have ensued ". As is almost inevitable in a struggle involving such intensity of feeling, on both sides there were misconceptions and imputations of motive that were not always accurate. It was, after all, only natural that episcopalian congregations should have wanted the appointment of a bishop (although the Anglican congregations in the southern territories appear to have had no such desire). Equally natural was the fear of the others lest they should be subjected to an authoritarian establishment—the very thing they, or their forefathers, had crossed the Atlantic to escape from. It was during these years of struggle that the outlook which has become distinctive of the American way of life was forged—namely, universal religious freedom and toleration, and complete separation of church and state. Today episcopalians (with their bishops—the first American bishop, Samuel Seabury, was appointed in 1785) and non-episcopalians live happily side by side, each respecting the other. Dissent and nonconformity are anachronistic terms in the U.S.A.

American history has obvious lessons for us in England, though it does not follow that we should take the course that they have taken. The way ahead is that of a comprehensive Protestant national church rather than disestablishment and sectarianism.

* * *

A new edition of *Crockford's Clerical Directory* (1961-1962) has appeared. The publishers are the Oxford University Press and the price is nine guineas. Forthrightness is expected of the Preface, and so also is mordancy ; but on the whole the latter quality is lacking. Among the good things which the anonymous author of the Preface has to offer is the following admonition on the subject of unity : " There is a disposition to treat unity as of such high importance that it takes precedence of all other considerations, and to assume that any movement towards unity must be inspired by the Holy Spirit. We believe this to be far from self-evident. The claims of unity have to be balanced against the claims of truth and when that is done the latter must surely prevail ". This is something of which the Archbishop of Canterbury has reminded us on more than one occasion, and it is good Reformed teaching into the bargain !

Less happy is an assault on the Church of England in South Africa, and the announcement of the intention to omit from *Crockford* in future the names of clergy serving in the Church of England in South Africa calls for strong protest. At this point, at least, of the Preface the writer seems to be governed by prejudice rather than truth. Nor does the repetition of damaging statements make them true. It is simply not true that the Church of England in South Africa " consists of a few extremely low Church congregations "—unless the one who makes this charge is so blinded by colour prejudice as to refuse to countenance the existence of some hundreds of African congregations. And it is simply not true that these congregations are " a survival of the Colenso schism " (a schism for which Bishop Gray, who subsequently formed the separatist Church of the Province of South Africa, must be held responsible). They are, rather, a survival of the original Church of England in that land. Giving them the cold shoulder has had serious consequences. It should not be too much to hope that the whole sorry situation may receive a thorough and impartial investigation without undue delay. P.E.H.