

Editorial

THE Archdeacon of Hastings belongs to that nearly extinct species of men in the Church of England who speak with the voice and see with the vision of a prophet. His new book (Guy Mayfield: *Like Nothing on Earth**—the title is taken from a description of the Church of England by Bishop F. R. Barry), in which the Church of England as it is today is subjected to a searching scrutiny, will not disappoint those who look to him for prophetic wisdom and warning.

To the observer, says Archdeacon Mayfield, there appear to be at least two churches of England: "One has for its task the redemption of men. The other is deemed to exist to give them inner strength when necessary and to add a blessing to the glories of materialism". This may be explained as one of the fruits of Hooker's ideal, "which itself has been a fiction for centuries", of an identity between membership of Church and State, so that every citizen was *ipso facto* a churchman (though of course this concept had long been in existence when Hooker took it over). It is always important to emphasize that every churchman is a citizen, with all that such a relationship implies of responsibility and involvement; but the converse, that every citizen is a churchman, has never been true in the history of society and will only be true hereafter of the citizenship of the community of heaven. Today it is becoming customary for the secular world to turn to the Church when it requires a witchdoctor to protect by his incantations its achievements from the malign possibilities of misfortune. "The sanction of God is sought," says Archdeacon Mayfield, "with the simplicity of almost pagan superstition, on purely human activities unenlightened by Christian moralities". Increasingly the Church's service to the world seems to be conceived in terms of the "blessing" of our "dumb friends", such as pigs and donkeys and white mice, and of inanimate objects, such as supermarkets and computers and tractors and lethal weapons and lucky charms.

In all this sort of thing we are confronted with a travesty of authentic Christianity. Again, the spirit of commerce and big business reaches the heights of religious fervour at the time of the great festivals of the Christian year when it is presented with heaven-sent opportunities for bringing pressure to bear on the consumer market and cashing in on the sentimentality of the public. "The festival of Christmas," comments Archdeacon Mayfield, "was given its present date so that the excesses of the old Saturnalia could be overlaid. The turn of history has come. A modern Saturnalia now masks Christmas. An orgy of spending, drinking, and eating now reaches its climax on the eve of Christ's obscure birth. The nativity is reduced on Christmas cards to legendary terms. Many cards now portray it in the same fairy-tale style with which they draw Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs". Accordingly, the Church finds itself in a position of dualism,

* Darton, Longman, & Todd, 211 pp., 12s. 6d., paperbound, 21s., hard covers.

and this dualism "arises from a conflict of materialism and half-forgotten Christianity on the one hand and from the pure Gospel of Christ on the other. . . . The orthodox churchman lives in an environment where the Church in which he believes is accepted by society at large on terms contradictory to his own belief. He finds the Church to which he looks for salvation expected to be ready and waiting to serve the State and its causes as distinct from the souls of the people. He is not expected to protest overmuch if the acquisitive society attempts to involve the Church in its sales campaigns".

A far more dangerous obstacle to the work of the Church is discerned by Archdeacon Mayfield in the refusal, on the part of members as well as non-members, to accept the dogmatic character and function of the Church. "The Church of England without dogma," he says, "would be the Church of English Expediency". He rightly points out that not only the teaching of the Church in its creeds and formularies but also the teaching of Christ Himself, which is the essence of genuine Christianity, is dogmatic through and through (including the sermon on the mount!). "Those who rejected the dogmatic approach of Christ found reasons to crucify Him." A confusion of categories seems to lurk in his definition that "the purpose of the Church is to be Christ on earth". Such an identification of the Church with Christ, though characteristic of Anglo-Catholic theology with its concept of the Church as the extension of the Incarnation, is inappropriate both because of the sinfulness of the Church (a fact which the Archdeacon of Hastings fully acknowledges) and also because while the Church is called the Body of Christ yet it is not the whole Body, for Christ is its Head. The purpose and function of the Church would be better defined as to be the faithful instrument and witness of Christ its Head in all that it does and teaches. And this certainly involves dogma as well as deed.

One of the great problems of the Church of England is its clericalism, which is the result of inattention rather than design. When the Church is to all intents and purposes identified with the clergy and the laity become little more than passive onlookers, then things are indeed in a bad way. We should ask ourselves what we really know about vital Christianity if the spiritual life and witness of a parish comes to a virtual standstill when it is without a parson. Archdeacon Mayfield's admonition is most salutary, therefore, that the laity are the people of God (which of course is the meaning of the term "laity" in its Christian context), and that accordingly "they are His agents and possess a ministry to spread the Gospel", and "are sent by God no less than the clergy". The realization of this vision of the people of God will do more to revitalize the Church than all the efficiency of administration after which the ecclesiastical officials seem to be hankering. It is well said that "'to give the laity something to do in church' and so to multiply the numbers of servers, sidesmen, and occasional helpers of all kinds" is "a mere palliative"; for the proper function of the laity (commendable though these other duties may be) is something far more dynamic, namely, "to take the knowledge, experience, and truth of God outside church". (In parenthesis we may observe that it is hardly scriptural, and a potentially perilous

over-simplification, to dissociate the clergy from this function and, by contrast, to suggest that "the function of a priest is to bring Christ to His people in church".)

The Archdeacon of Hastings will not expect his equation of episcopacy with the apostolate to commend itself to the evangelical mind, nor the somewhat strange logic that his premiss (a questionable one) that the bishop is "the normal minister of the Church in his diocese" leads to the conclusion that "all others, suffragan bishops, assistant bishops, and priests, are therefore sub-normal ministers of the word and sacraments". But there will be general agreement with his insistence that the episcopal office, rightly conceived, is dependent on the calling of God, so that to be a bishop cannot be a matter of ambition or preferment. Archdeacon Mayfield is not in favour of the multiplication of diocesan bishops through the creation of more and smaller dioceses (though to us, we admit, the realities of the present situation would seem to demand a subdivision of the larger dioceses, if, leaving questions of administration out of account, a diocesan bishop is to have any chance of fulfilling his pastoral obligations to the flock of which he has been given the oversight). It is indeed a strange anomaly that "the diocesan bishop who is consecrated to be the Father in God is now so absorbed in administration that he relies heavily on his suffragans and assistant bishops to discharge for him that personal, pastoral, and apostolic work for which he was consecrated". The solution to this problem, the Archdeacon suggests, is to transfer the administrative burden on to the shoulders of archdeacons—which speaks volumes for the heroic mould in which our venerable author is cast, though we find it difficult to understand how this would not call his own vocation in question (see the ordination service)! Is not the drafting of laymen to do the office work the real answer?

The problem, however, is wider than that of the diocesan bishop being impeded in the fulfilment of his vocation by the mass of administration which claims his attention nowadays; for the Anglican Communion as a whole appears to be moving of set purpose towards the establishment of a vast ecclesiastical bureaucracy—contrary to the affirmation of the Lambeth Conference of 1930 which carefully explained that the churches of the Anglican Communion "are bound together not by central legislation and executive authority, but by mutual loyalty. . . ." The novel appointment of pan-Anglican episcopal councils and of an episcopal Executive Officer of the Anglican Communion points disturbingly to the development of a super-Anglican authority and a super-episcopate which Archdeacon Mayfield forewarns will be "an Anglican version of papalism". In other words, we are heading for the setting up of a pan-Anglican bureaucracy to whose control the whole Anglican world will be required to submit. "The more the bishops became involved in the creation of a super-episcopate, and therefore of an Anglican papalism, however reformed and non-infallible," says the Archdeacon, "the more the honour of the English diocesans will be lessened. Nothing will have been achieved towards relieving them of extra-diocesan work and so bringing them into closer and more personal relationship with their clergy".

Another omen pointing in the same direction was the appearance of

the Paul report last year (see Archdeacon Mayfield's article and our Editorial in our March 1964 issue), which presented a blue-print for the future based on statistics and big-business methods of efficiency. It is fitting (though sad that the necessity should ever have arisen) that we should be reminded that the work of the Holy Spirit is not reducible to statistics, that " reforms which do not take account of doctrine and which are therefore carried out for poor reasons become mere accommodations to expediency ", and that the Church's work of supreme urgency is to " re-dig the wells of doctrine which have been blocked both by the accretions of time and by Pelagian Philistines ". The Archdeacon enters the lists as a sane and worthy champion of the parson's freehold and the patronage system. He also strongly advocates the removal of all differential in clergy stipends, which at present vary from £600 (some incumbents) to £7,500 (archbishops), the only legitimate differential being that connected with the expenses of office, which obviously will fluctuate according to the type of parish or post to which a man is appointed. Who will dare to dispute that such a financial levelling up would make it in this respect a far more Christian system? To the objection that the abolition of differentials within the ministry would deter ambition and remove incentive it is aptly rejoined: " then the sooner the sources of ungodly temptation are moved the better for all ". It is deplorable but true that the high pay of bishops means that " the episcopate has been treated as a separate career from that of the rest of the ministry ", and we entirely agree that the creation of a financial élite which makes bishops " less identified than before with the clergy and churchpeople as a whole " is " not justifiable on Christian grounds ". We must at least be thankful that there is someone bold enough to point out that " the man, whether he is a bishop or priest, is called to a vocation of no great reward " and on retirement, " whether he has been an incumbent, a dean, or an archdeacon, or is a bishop, may scarcely expect differential treatment in pension unless he thinks of the ministry in terms of career and status ". But is the Church prepared to act on this Christian principle?—even more to the point: *are the bishops willing themselves to take the initiative?*

There are important areas in which the evangelical will find himself in radical but charitable disagreement with the Archdeacon of Hastings. At the same time, however, the evangelical will welcome his sympathetic and appreciative understanding of the evangelical position which is apparent in this book as also in his article in our last issue. And brotherly hands are joined at a vital point when it is affirmed that " the Scriptures are the touchstone of the Church of England " and that " the Anglican is bound to accept the authority of the Scriptures as supreme ". How true, but how much it needs to be said today, that " a revival of the Church has never come either through affluence or through efficiency ", and that it is " the cross by which alone God is pleased to shake the Church free from encumbrances which obscure the simplicities of His purpose ". The insistence that " the mission of the Church is achieved first and foremost through the likeness which its members bear to Christ " will call forth a united and fervent Amen.

Anglicanism is certainly in the melting-pot at the present time, and it is more than ever necessary that those who are intent on preserving

and promoting the gospel and the doctrine of Christ and His apostles—in other words, the authentic Christianity of the New Testament in the full uniqueness of its authority—should do everything in their power to ensure that the Church is reshaped in accordance with its dynamic task of evangelism, edification, and sanctity to the glory of Almighty God. If the new form should be that of an episcopalian sect or a humanistic club or an ecclesiastical bureaucracy, then it must not occasion surprise that there will be many who find themselves conscientiously unable to barter what is genuine for what is counterfeit.

We acknowledge with much appreciation the kindness of Messrs. Hodder and Stoughton in granting us permission to include in this issue of *The Churchman* an extract from Canon Hickinbotham's important new book *The Open Table*, due to be published by them in May. The book is one of the *Christian Foundations* series being currently produced under the auspices of the Evangelical Fellowship in the Anglican Communion. Of unusual interest in connection with Canon Hickinbotham's forthright challenge to our officials and legislators, as well as to churchpeople in general, to remain true to the principle of the open table, which is characteristic of classical Anglicanism, is the resolution passed by the House of Bishops earlier this year at the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church of the U.S.A. This resolution declares that "the House of Bishops believes the time has come when Christian churches should recognize as a fundamental principle that all Christians duly baptized by water in the Name of the Holy Trinity and qualified to receive the Holy Communion in their own churches should be welcomed as guests at the Lord's Table in all Christian churches". The next General Convention will be asked to accept this fundamental principle; and it is to be hoped that our own Convocations and General Assembly will give condign recognition to this significant resolution of the American bishops and at least in this respect keep in step with our fellow-Episcopalians across the water.

P.E.H.