

# Editorial

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## *Archbishop's Call*

THE call to the nation by the Archbishop of Canterbury on October 15th was a matter of some significance. The press conference at Lambeth Palace was well attended and the coverage given to his statement by the press, radio and television was most encouraging. While in many ways the Church of England is having to adjust itself to something of a *de facto* recognition that it no longer represents the whole of the English nation it is good to know that its leaders can be so widely listened to when they have something of importance to say. In the course of recent events which have made the congregations of the church more committed bodies on the whole, and therefore in many cases more concerned with the more directly 'spiritual' aspects of the Christian faith, there has been a danger that the 'prophetic' element, in which the church addresses the nation, should be undervalued or left to a few individual Christians with strongly held but sometimes unrepresentative views. The fact that Dr. Coggan has felt the need to speak out and that he has been so widely heard is a reminder that regular church attendance is not by any means a sure guide to the religious and moral beliefs of Englishmen.

In one sense of course the Archbishop's statement was not striking. He said the sort of things that many people would expect an archbishop to say. He said that each man and woman matters, that the family matters, that good work matters, that the other fellow matters and that attitudes matter. These things may be old truths but they can bear reiterating, particularly at the moment. Some predictable criticism of Dr. Coggan has come on the ground that his statement was too 'right wing'. It is true that he stressed the need for reforming the individual before reforming society, that he extolled 'responsibility' rather than 'compassion'. But this was not meant to be a fully rounded statement of Christian social ethics. It was rather meant to deal with certain

obvious dangers in present-day society. In the questioning afterwards at the press conference Dr. Coggan was careful not to fall into the error of some intemperate moralists who imagine some mythical state of grace, usually in the Victorian era, from which the once moral and godly nation has now fallen. The great power of their appeal is that everything is getting worse and worse. There is of course little evidence for such claims. How can the virtue of an age be quantified? And if some aspects of modern permissiveness are to be deplored, some aspects of modern social legislation are to be welcomed. What the Archbishop did stress was that there were certain acute danger points in modern society and the response to his statement has shown that there is a vast number of people who agree with him. Let us hope that at the appropriate moment he will speak again and be heard again and that ordinary Christians can exploit this opportunity to speak out as well.

### *World Council of Churches*

IF some have carped at the Archbishop's silence on certain matters of social justice, there can hardly be any similar criticism of the World Council of Churches. Rather the criticism of them comes for seeming to substitute social justice for the gospel. The July-September issue of *The Churchman* was devoted entirely to the forthcoming Nairobi assembly of the WCC and its generally critical stance has caused a considerable amount of interest in various quarters. It has been pointed out that some statements in that issue have treated the WCC as if it were a monolithic organisation with a single viewpoint. It is of course a council of churches and there are opportunities in its committees as well as at its assembly to make known the views of ordinary Christians in the participating churches. This point is taken, but it still remains true that an organisation the size of the WCC with its large staff can give the impression of promoting 'official lines' which may not be representative of its members. There is scope here for improved public relations. It is at any event hoped that some articles from a different viewpoint may emerge out of the Nairobi assembly.

The need to ensure that evangelism and social action go hand in hand has come to be recognised increasingly in Evangelical circles over the last few years. We have already carried a report on the International Congress on World Evangelization at Lausanne in 1974 (October-December 1974 number) but it is good now to have the papers and responses collected in the official reference volume *Let the Earth Hear His Voice*, edited by J. D. Douglas (World Wide Publications, 1975, 1471 pp., \$12.95). There is a wealth of important material here and this volume should be taken seriously far outside the section of the church which likes to wear the label 'Evangelical'. For those who would find this somewhat indigestible, one of the chief architects of the

'Lausanne Covenant', John Stott has expressed himself in his usually biblical and lucid way in *Christian Mission in the Modern World* (Falcon Books, 1975, 128 pp., £1.25). This booklet consists of the Chavasse Lectures in World Mission given at Wycliffe Hall Oxford this year. It should help many people to a clearer definition of terms and priorities.

### *Other Recent Literature*

IT is good to see the most distinguished Evangelical series of commentaries of recent years, the *New London Commentaries* on the New Testament, appearing in limp cover editions. Those recently published in this format have all already proved their worth: the late John Murray on Romans (2 volumes in one £5.50), F. F. Bruce on Hebrews (£5.50) and Leon Morris on John (£7.50). All are from Marshall, Morgan and Scott.

Another important New Testament commentary to be republished is that of the seventeenth/eighteenth century divine Matthew Henry, whose work was extremely influential at one time. It has been abridged by David Winter and is published in two volumes by Hodder and Stoughton (*The Four Gospels*, 1974, 662 pp., £1.00; *Acts to Revelation*, 1975, 541 pp., £1.00).

A. T. P. Williams, who died at the age of eighty in 1968, held two important educational positions and two senior bishoprics in the course of his life. He was successively Headmaster of Winchester College and Dean of Christchurch, Oxford before becoming Bishop of Durham and then Bishop of Winchester. He was not a major public figure in the church for those who did not know him personally but he made a considerable impression upon those who did. He has been well commemorated in a short biography by C. H. G. Hopkins, *Bishop A. T. P. Williams* (Mayhew-McCrimmon, 161 pp., n.p.). It is to be regretted that the publishers have not managed to produce this book to a satisfactory standard. Williams' greatest memorial will be the *New English Bible* as he was chairman of the joint committee responsible for its production.

### *The Churchman*

THE editorial office has now moved to Nottingham (hence the delay with this issue) and plans are in hand for a certain amount of administrative reorganisation which will be announced to our readers in due course. Meanwhile the need for further subscribers (as in the case of most other journals) remains pressing and it is to be hoped that the not inconsiderable number of people who seem to appreciate *The Churchman* will do something to introduce it to others.

R.E.N.