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Editorial

THE leading article in a recent issue of *The Church of England Newspaper and The Record* drew attention to the need for a recovery of a genuine Evangelicalism in the Church of England in line with the great historic tradition of the past. "Evangelicalism to-day, by and large"—so stated the article*—"is sadly adrift from its moorings. Instead of being strong and united in passionate concern for the Gospel it has become divided and disorganised within itself and has tended to adopt an apologetic and defensive attitude towards others. All too often it has attached an exaggerated importance to secondary matters of faith and practice and at the same time has lacked a definite sense of churchmanship. An Evangelicalism which is little more than a negative protestantism on the one hand or a sentimental pietism on the other is far removed from the great Evangelical tradition, with its deeply rooted loyalty to the Church of England, its balanced emphasis on Word and Sacrament, and its burning zeal for social righteousness as well as its unquenchable enthusiasm for evangelism at home and abroad".

These are strong words, but they deserve to be pondered by all who value their Anglican Evangelical heritage. And such words may well serve to introduce the general theme of the present issue of *THE CHURCHMAN*. If at the present time Evangelicalism is not the spiritual force in our Church that it used to be, the fault is due not only to numerical weakness—for in actual fact Evangelicals are still a comparatively numerous body—but to a departure from essential principles, resulting in a narrow outlook upon Church life in general and a negative attitude to certain current problems in particular. Let modern Evangelicals but look to the rock whence they are hewn and they will be recalled at the same time to a new sense of their position in the Church, a larger understanding of their faith, and a more positive conception of the Gospel ministry and sacraments.

Fresh hopes for the future of the Evangelical cause are stirring in many hearts through the formation of the "Church Society", amalgamating the two bodies formerly known as the Church Association and the National Church League. The united society has declared that its basic principle is "the furtherance and defence of the Christian Gospel, to be maintained by a definite and effective churchmanship through faithfulness to the Church's acknowledged standards of doctrine, worship and order". In taking grateful note of that fact we express the hope that the Church Society will rapidly become a rallying centre for all loyal churchmen, and will also prove a means of promoting the spiritual life and forwarding the pastoral work of our Church.

We are glad to include in this issue articles by two distinguished leaders of Evangelical thought: the Archbishop of Sydney and the Bishop of Worcester. Dr. Howard Mowll writes of Evangelicalism with reference to the classical patterns of the past, while Dr. Wilson

* C.E.N.R., July 7, 1950.

Cash discusses the position of the Evangelical churchman in the light of the present. Both writers are insistent upon the great essentials of the evangelical message and emphasise the priority of the Gospel of salvation in relation to secondary matters of ceremonial. There is little doubt that the modern Evangelical occupies a position of peculiar importance in the Church of England, not least in regard to the ecumenical movement and the task of world evangelization. It is a simple historical fact that the Evangelical Party has been the foremost missionary force in the Church of England during the past 150 years, and its influence in this respect has little diminished in recent times. An examination of statistics would almost certainly reveal that the greater part of the overseas work of the Church is carried on by the recognised Evangelical societies. That is a matter not so much for pride as for gratitude, for Evangelicalism is nothing if it be not primarily and passionately evangelistic. At the same time here is a reminder that Anglican Evangelicalism is still very much alive and is in a position to make a vital contribution to the really big issues confronting the world Church at the present time.

It would have been fitting to have included in this issue of THE CHURCHMAN a review of the report entitled *The Fullness of Christ*, which at the invitation of the Archbishop of Canterbury has been drawn up by a group of Anglican theologians of the Evangelical school of thought as a counterpart to the report entitled *Catholicity*. Unfortunately at the time of going to press this document has not yet been published, so we reserve for our next issue some comments and observations on this important statement of Evangelical faith. We do, however, take the opportunity of commending to the attention of our readers another report, also inspired by the Archbishop of Canterbury, representative of the English Free Churches and published under the title *The Catholicity of Protestantism*.* This work is in some measure a reply to the *Catholicity* report, more especially in so far as the latter revealed a serious misunderstanding of the true nature of protestantism in its true historical patterns. The authors of this new report—who are for the most part principals and tutors of the Free Church colleges—devote an important chapter to the concept of Catholicity and the faith of Protestants and argue, as Dr. Fisher remarks in his Foreword, “that there is much more ‘catholicity’ in Protestantism than the authors of *Catholicity* recognize”. Perhaps no two words are more commonly and perversely misrepresented in theological discussions than the words ‘Catholic’ and ‘Protestant’. Rightly understood, there is no antithesis between the two terms, and Anglicans of all people should be in a position to realise that fact. They are members of a church which while claiming the fullness of Catholic faith and order is also officially recognised in the King’s Coronation Oath as embracing “the Protestant Reformed religion”. In that fact lies at once the strength of the Church of England and its strategic importance in the task of Christian reunion.

* Edited by R. Newton Flew and Rupert E. Davies, with a foreword by the Archbishop of Canterbury (Lutterworth Press, 5/-).

A spate of literature has issued from the press in recent months dealing from one point of view or another with the subject of Christianity and Communism. All such contributions are to be welcomed if they will serve in any way to awaken church people out of their apathy and ignorance and bring them face to face with what the Archbishop of Canterbury has called "the grave challenge and menace which Communism presents to civilization and to the Christian Churches". There is assuredly a real need for clear and informed teaching on this crucial issue. For that reason we are glad to call attention to the documentation recently published under the title *Communism and the Churches*.* Prepared at the request of the International Department of the British Council of Churches, the book is an attempt, as the preface explains, "to clarify the attitude of Communist Governments towards the Churches by quoting the words of Communists themselves, either expressed in public speeches, or enshrined in their own official documents. In order to avoid bias the text is almost wholly devoid of comment. Its pages contain basic and indisputable documents and facts, and from these the reader can draw his own conclusions. He is thus provided with a small but ready reference volume on a question of the utmost importance to all who have at heart the preservation of Christian values, or the traditions of European civilization".

The Communist countries here dealt with are the U.S.S.R., Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania and Yugoslavia. In each case a brief historical survey of the events leading up to the Communist domination is provided, and this is followed by the quotations from official decrees, constitutions and pronouncements. A study of the documents forces one to the conclusion that between Communism and the Churches there is a great gulf fixed. Here is a system which is essentially materialistic and anti-Christian and which, by word as well as by deed, is condemned as the enemy of the Church of Jesus Christ.

* Edited by J. B. Barron and H. M. Waddams (S.C.M. Press, 4/-).