# Evangelical Fellowship in the Anglican Communion

## EVANGELICALS AND THE CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA

By Stuart Babbage

IN Australia there is a strong and virile tradition of evangelical faith and piety which goes back to the earliest days of the foundation of the colony. The Reverend Richard Johnson, Chaplain to the First Fleet, was recommended to William Pitt, the Prime Minister, by William Wilberforce, the emancipator of the slaves, who was deeply concerned that an evangelical should be appointed as chaplain to the infant colony. Johnson had the support and commendation of the Eclectic Society, an association of devout evangelicals, which, besides Wilberforce, numbered among its members, Charles Simeon, of Cambridge, the poet William Cowper, and the converted slave-trader John Newton. Newton expressed his loyal and lasting friendship for Johnson in a verse called *Omicron to Johnson Going to Botany Bay* :

> Go, bear the Saviour's name to lands unknown,
> Tell to the Southern World His wondrous grace ;
> An energy divine thy words shall own,
> And draw their untaught hearts to seek His face.

The Society maintained contact with its nominee and, at its meeting in February 1789, read portions of Johnson's Journal written on the voyage. The Commander of the Fleet, Governor Philip, complained about the heavy theological content of Johnson's sermons and requested him " to begin with moral subjects ". Johnson, however, was not indifferent to the claims of morality ; he obtained from the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, for distribution to the members of his convict congregation, in addition to Bibles, Prayer Books, and Catechisms, two hundred copies of *Exercises Against Lying*, fifty *Cautions to Swearers*, a hundred *Exhortations to Chastity*, and a hundred *Dissuasions from Stealing*.

The first Christian service in Australia was held on Sunday 3 February 1788, when Johnson preached on Ps. 116: 12 : " What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits towards me ? " It was not until a fortnight later that Johnson first administered the sacrament in a marquee borrowed for the occasion from an officer, Lieutenant Clark (who wrote in his diary : " I am happy that it is to be in my marquee ; never did it receive so much honour . . . I will keep this table also as long as I live, for it is the first table that ever the Lord's Supper was eat out of in this country ").

On his return to England, in 1800, Governor Hunter described the chaplain as " a most dutiful son of the Church of England . . . a Moravian Methodist ". The same charge has often been made against his spiritual successors, not in kindly commendation (as in the case of

Governor Hunter), but in bitter condemnation. The accusation that evangelicals are "nonconformists in disguise" is a cheap gibe calculated to excite the prejudices of the ignorant and to inflame the passions of the uncharitable.

Before his enforced return (owing to ill health) Johnson was joined, in 1793, by the Reverend Samuel Marsden, again on the recommendation of the Eclectic Society. Marsden was responsible for the first preaching of the Gospel in New Zealand and for the establishment of missionary work in that land. On Christmas Day 1815, at the Bay of Islands in New Zealand, he preached on the text: "Behold, I bring you glad tidings of great joy".

The work of these early evangelicals was consolidated in Melbourne by the outstanding episcopate of the first Bishop, Charles Perry (1847-76), the pioneer of synodical government in Australia, and in Sydney by the second Bishop, Frederic Barker (1854-83). Barker completed the Cathedral, founded Moore Theological College (which was later moved to its present strategic location adjoining the University), and established the Home Mission Society. He gave a permanent impress, and that an evangelical impress, to the diocese of Sydney.

Archbishop J. C. Wright and, more particularly, Archbishop Howard Mowll (1933-58), faithfully continued Barker's tradition. Mowll's long episcopate was one of tireless activity, both within the diocese of Sydney and beyond. He gave massive support to the evangelical cause (not least to evangelism by issuing the invitation to Billy Graham to visit Australia). He boldly promoted the establishment of youth chaplaincy work and the purchase of camp sites and conference centres, and in a host of ways he expanded and extended the work of the Church. Himself a former missionary in China, he sought to arouse the the Church in Australia to a realization of its missionary responsibilities in Africa and Asia.

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On the initiative of Archbishop Mowll, T. C. Hammond was invited to accept the principalship of Moore Theological College. From this perspective of time, it is possible to see the decisive significance of this appointment. It is no exaggeration to say that, during recent decades, Moore College has played a major rôle in the preservation and promotion of evangelical truth. During the long régime of T. C. Hammond, the student enrolment progressively grew from fifteen, in 1936, to fifty-five, in 1953, and a comprehensive rebuilding project was begun. Archdeacon Hammond's massive learning and strong masculinity, lightened by his fund of stories and Irish wit, made an indelible impression on successive generations of students.

Marcus Loane, who had served with great fidelity as Tutor and Vice-Principal throughout the whole duration of T. C. Hammond's principalship, succeeded him as Principal, but resigned a little later on his consecration as Bishop Coadjutor. The present Principal is Canon D. B. Knox, a graduate of the Universities of Sydney, London, and Oxford. A doughty defender of what he believes to be right, he has shown tenacity and determination in the further development of the

College, the enrolment of which is now over a hundred. He has a detailed and exact knowledge of ecclesiastical law, and was called as an expert witness in the celebrated " Red Book Case " between the Bishop of Bathurst and certain aggrieved laity of his diocese.

Moore Theological College is now the largest theological college in the Commonwealth. The normal course is a four year one leading to the Licentiate of Theology and part of the Scholar in Theology of the Australian College of Theology. Students who are qualified are encouraged to read for the London B.D.

One of the significant signs of the times is the way in which evangelicals are insisting on progressively higher educational qualifications. In some quarters complaints are heard about an undue emphasis upon intellectual qualifications to the neglect of the needs of the devotional life, but this complaint seems to stem from a desire to make an unfortunate antithesis between the pursuit of scholarship and the practice of piety. Certainly the academic results of Moore are conspicuously better than those of any other college, and the Moore College students, from the point of view of personal qualities and spiritual maturity, will bear comparison with those of any other college. Moore is generously supported by means of a diocesan assessment, and members of the College Council are elected by synod. The appointment of the Principal, however, is in the hands of three permanent Trustees.

Ridley College, Melbourne, is the other chief centre of evangelical work and witness. It was founded in 1910 by a group of staunch evangelicals (including the then Bishops of Bendigo and Gippsland) to provide a place of training for the home ministry and the mission field, and to uphold " the constructive and evangelical principles of the Reformation ". The College has been served devotedly by five Principals, notably by Bishop Donald Baker, who resigned the Bishopric of Bendigo to save the future of the College. He served as Principal for fifteen years. Dr. Leon Morris gave sacrificial service as Vice-Principal for fourteen years, until his appointment as Warden of Tyndale House, Cambridge, being succeeded by another brilliant scholar, Dr. F. I. Andersen. Dr. Andersen resigned at the beginning of this year when he accepted appointment as Professor of Old Testament at the Church Divinity School of the Pacific, Berkeley, California.

Students are drawn from every state in the Commonwealth and there is a small contingent from New Zealand. The College is autonomous and self-supporting and functions under a Council, the members of which are required to sign a statement affirming their continued belief in and adherence to " the constructive and evangelical principle of the Reformation ". The College is dependent on the freewill offerings of Christian friends for major capital works. Nevertheless, considerable expansion has taken place during recent years, and there is first-class accommodation for seventy-five students. The College is situated near the University of Melbourne in a delightful setting of parks and gardens. Many of the students bear the cost of their own training to enjoy the benefits of evangelical scholarship and warm Christian fellowship.

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A deep missionary concern is a hall-mark of the true evangelical. It is claimed that there are more missionaries per head of population in Australia than in any other English speaking country. Whether or not this is so, Australia's record is notable.

There is, of course, a mission field within Australia itself, particularly among the native aborigines. The relationship between the aborigines and the settlers, in the early days of the colony, was an unhappy one of misunderstanding and injustice. The aborigines were soon decimated by disease and death, and, in Tasmania, were completely exterminated. Strenuous efforts have been made, and are still being made, to expiate the sins of the past. Today, the proportion of missionary personnel to the native population is one in fifteen, surely making the north of Australia the most intensive and concentrated missionary field in the world ! The Church and the Commonwealth are making every endeavour to settle nomadic tribes upon a self-supporting agricultural basis. The ultimate goal is full citizenship and assimilation.

The Church Missionary Society is the main agent of evangelical missionary activity. Apart from its work in Northern Australia, C.M.S. has nine fields of responsibility in Asia—Persia, West Pakistan, Nepal, India, Ceylon, Singapore, Malaya, Hong Kong, and Borneo, and three in Africa—Uganda, Kenya, and Tanganyika. C.M.S. has a budget of £A230,000 for this current year, and is supporting 260 workers on its various mission fields.

The main concentration of effort is in Tanganyika, where Alfred Stanway, a former student of Ridley College, is Bishop. The work is not only pastoral and evangelistic, but also educational and medical. Paul White, whose residence in Tanganyika was prematurely terminated by ill health, has turned adversity into advantage, and, by his inimitable Jungle Doctor stories, has continued to render notable service to the missionary cause.

The Bush Church Aid Society is designed to reach with the Gospel, by radio and plane, those who live in remote and isolated places in the interior of Australia. Medical work is an ancilliary activity. The Society was founded and is staffed by evangelicals, and represents an aspect of the wider outreach of the Church.

The Rev. A. J. Dain, after a long apprenticeship with the Bible and Medical Missionary Fellowship, is the present Federal Secretary of C.M.S. He is applying more exacting standards to the selection of candidates and has improved the quality of missionary training. The Reverend Francis Foulkes, a former New Zealand Rhodes Scholar, who has served until recently as Principal of the Vining Centre in Nigeria, has accepted the newly-created position of warden of C.M.S. Federal Training, and a new college will be established in close proximity to Ridley College in Melbourne. It is anticipated that the relationship will be a close and intimate one. This acceptance of unified training is an important policy decision, and marks a clear determination on the part of C.M.S. to raise standards and to improve the quality of missionary service.

C.M.S. is also responsible for summer residential conferences in various states. These conferences (at Christmas and Easter), which

combine the characteristic features of a convention for the deepening of the spiritual life with the challenge of a missionary rally, are attracting an increasing number of young people.

Weekly Bible Study groups are also organized by the League of Youth. In some dioceses the League of Youth provides an oasis where Christian young people of evangelical conviction can meet for mutual edification and encouragement.

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The Church in Australia is moving into a period of significant change which will inevitably test and challenge the resourcefulness and wisdom of all evangelicals. An agreed constitution has now been accepted by the Church in Australia, and the first General Synod under the new constitution has already been held. The suggestion of an Australian Prayer Book has been raised, and a committee has been requested to bring in recommendations. A number of evangelicals are giving themselves to the study of liturgical principles, not only in the light of history, but more importantly, in the light of the Bible. Prayer Book reform necessarily raises fundamental theological questions in relation to the nature of Baptism and the doctrine of Holy Communion. Evangelicals will need to study afresh the significance of the doctrine of the covenant and other biblical teaching.

The situation, however, is more immediately difficult in relation to ecclesiastical practice. In many dioceses there is little respect for, let alone toleration of, evangelical practices. In some cases ordination has been actually refused, in others postponed, in relation to men who have, in conscience, felt unable to wear the eucharistic vestments. The view is advanced by some bishops that a man should be able and willing to serve in any parish within a diocese to which he might be sent. Candidates offering for ordination are often informed of the particular college in which they are required to train, and, at a later date, of the parish in which they must serve. The consequence is that the rights of men tend to be overruled and their convictions disregarded. At the present time, in most parts of Australia, the tide is running strongly against evangelicals, and the situation is one of agonizing difficulty. There are pressures, both covert and overt, against the profession and practice of evangelicalism. And, apart from the desperate remedy of an appeal to the courts, there appears little prospect of redress.

Archbishop Gough has been anxious to encourage, among the clergy of the diocese of Sydney, an outward looking mentality. On many occasions he has expressed his view that evangelicalism is the purest form of Anglicanism, and he has said that Sydney clergy should be willing to serve in other parts of the Commonwealth. And he has shown himself willing to welcome others to the diocese of Sydney. As Primate, he has travelled widely throughout Australia in the wider interests of the Church.

In conclusion, what is the balance sheet? On the credit side, no one can deny the quality of the theological training which is given at Moore and Ridley, the calibre of the staffs of both Colleges, the quality of the students offering for training, and the general excellence of their

academic results. The number of evangelicals who are now seeking and securing higher qualifications in England and America is impressive. Again, there is a genuine appreciation of the importance of theology in the life of the Church. The best evangelicals are not only personally devout but theologically informed. And yet again, in the realm of missionary strategy, evangelicals are showing enterprise, initiative, and imagination. There is much courageous rethinking taking place in relation to places of rapid social and political change.

On the debit side, dissipation is the besetting sin of Australian evangelicals so that, for example, few evangelicals have time to write, let alone to think. Evangelicals tend to serve on far too many committees and to spread their interests far too widely. There is little time for original research or systematic study. There are few who are alive to the sociological and cultural challenges of the present day and who have any profound understanding of international issues. There are few, if any, prophetic voices : on such pressing and vital matters as the White Australia policy the evangelical voice is strangely muted. When evangelicals do speak on political and social issues, their thinking is generally shoddy and ill informed, superficial and reactionary.

Again, within the narrower field of ecclesiastical politics, evangelicals are in imminent danger of being out-manœuvred. The situation is highly critical, and the events of the next decade may well prove of decisive significance. Decisions are being made, and precedents established, which may well determine the character of the Church in Australia for generations to come. What is required, if the Reformed character of the Church is to be preserved, is intelligent and courageous leadership, theological insight, and fervent prayer.

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## E.F.A.C. NEWS

THE Evangelical Fellowship of the Church of England in South Africa was inaugurated at a meeting in Cape Town on 11 February 1963. Bishop Stephen Bradley is Chairman of the Fellowship and the Rev. R. W. Dowthwaite Convener of Meetings. All subscribing members of the Fellowship regularly receive *The Churchman*.