Editorial

Mr. G. E. Duffield

THE COUNCIL OF CHURCH SOCIETY has issued the following statement:

> 'The Council of Church Society take this opportunity of recording their sincere gratitude to Mr. Gervase Duffield for his editorship of *The Churchman*, which he originally assumed in an emergency and for a temporary period at their request. The Council are appreciative of the lead which he has given in the Church of England as a whole. During his term of editorship articles appearing in the journal have again and again reflected his breadth of vision and resourceful mind.
>
> On behalf of the Council
>
> K. M. L. BENSON.'

His successor in the editorial chair would like to endorse the statement above and express his gratitude to Mr. Duffield for the ways in which he has made the transition as smooth as possible. In particular he would like to express his admiration for Mr. Duffield's foresight in preparing so much material in advance. The result is that virtually the whole of this issue has been prepared by him and a good deal of the next one too.

An old friend

IT is good to be able to welcome another issue of *The Catholic Faith* by Dr. W. H. Griffith Thomas (Church Book Room Press, 308 pp., £0.90). The book was first published in 1904 and together with the same author's *The Principles of Theology* has provided the main exposition this century of Church of England doctrine from an Evangelical

point of view. It was revised by the author in 1920, by Guy Johnson in 1929, and by Messrs. Stibbs, Bromiley and Stafford Wright in 1952. The present volume is merely a reissue in paperback form with a brief foreword by Dr. J. I. Packer. The publishers have been wise not to attempt a further revision for so much has happened in the Church of England in the last ten years that Griffith Thomas' dependence for instance upon the Prayer Book and Articles as fixed points makes the whole work seem dated. The fluidity of the present situation means that it is unlikely that anyone in the near future will undertake such a compendious task as writing an Anglican systematic theology. It is therefore all the more important that the younger Evangelical clergy and ordinands, who are rightly concerned to see that their theology is relevant to the present situation, should make sure that they are well grounded in basic doctrine. There are few books to which they could turn with greater profit than to this. As Dr. Packer rightly says, 'this fine grounding in Prayer Book Christianity, if taken to heart, will in fact induce just the inward pattern of thought and life . . . which the modern Christian most obviously lacks, and desperately needs'. We are happy to commend it.

Agreement on the Eucharist?

IF it was something of an exaggeration to call the 1971 Anglican-Roman Catholic Agreement on the Eucharist the most important theological statement since the Reformation, it nonetheless represents a very significant milestone in contemporary ecumenical dialogue. The statement has as yet committed no-one but the signatories, but it is bound to be used as a starting point in continuing debate in both churches for some time to come. It is hoped to give much fuller consideration to the statement in a future issue but meanwhile one or two observations may not be out of place. First, while one welcomes the attempt to be positive which is characteristic of the statement throughout, it is difficult to be entirely faithful to the truth without in some respects being negative. G. K. Chesterton once said that you must not take a fence down until you know why it was put up in the first place. It is not to be doubted that members of the joint commission know about the fences, but those less well informed may not and the way is left open for Roman Catholics to continue beliefs and practices which many members of the Church of England have felt needed to be specifically repudiated. Secondly, in dealing with sacramental theology, where objectivity and subjectivity are so delicately balanced, statements need to be most carefully contextualised. Many Anglicans would be prepared to make as 'high' assertions about the presence of Christ in the Eucharist as would Roman Catholics, provided that they were clearly set in the context of the faith of the participants.

The assertion that the bread and wine 'in this mystery become his body and blood' appears to lack the necessary safeguards. The ambiguity involved will almost certainly reveal itself in areas of practice and devotion such as reservation. Thirdly, while a piecemeal approach to problems of this sort is inevitable in the present climate of opinion, the agreement has to leave untouched the conditions on which members of both churches could practise intercommunion. It is out of the experience of joint worship that a fuller and more satisfactory doctrinal consensus would be likely to arise.

If these remarks seem somewhat niggling, they are not intended to belittle the magnitude of the achievement. We can surely see the hand of God in drawing together into serious discussion, based on mutual respect and friendship, and into a large measure of agreement, scholars from these two communions whose official dealings with each other were for so long on the level of polemics. Of particular interest is the contribution of an Evangelical Anglican member of the commission. In his booklet *The Anglican-Roman Catholic Agreement on the Eucharist* (Grove Books, 24 pp., £0.20), the Rev. Julian Charley, Vice-Principal of St. John's College, Nottingham, provides an historical introduction to and theological commentary on the statement. If he does not carry full conviction at every point, he has provided a very useful starting point for the study of the statement and some indications of the further problems which arise as a result of it. The booklet deserves a wide circulation.

Anglican-Methodist Unity

AS we go to press the General Synod has just voted on the scheme for Anglican-Methodist union and, as was widely expected, the necessary seventy-five percent majority was not reached. This will be a bitter blow for many who have worked hard towards this goal over the years but it may well be that in the perspective of history the rejection of the scheme, like the rejection of the 1928 Prayer Book, will be seen, even by many of its supporters, to have been right and proper because of some basic defects in it. Most opponents as well as most supporters of the scheme have professed their concern for reunion in England. When those who voted for the scheme have had time to adjust themselves to their disappointment fresh moves must be made on a wider front at local and national level. It is the responsibility of us all.

R.E.N.