

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP AND INTERCOMMUNION. 10th Downside Symposium, edited by John Kent and Robert Murray. *S. J. Darton, Longman & Todd, Dimension Books Inc., Denville, New Jersey, 1973.* x + 306 pp. £3.

In other reviews attention has rightly been paid to theological essays by Nicholas Lash and Robert Murray, to the agenda proposed by the Archbishop of Birmingham, and to theoretical and practical reflections by Piet Fransen and John Coventry. John Austin Baker on 'Behaviour as a criterion of membership' has received less attention, because his contribution is concerned not so much with intercommunion as with some who would welcome 'some form of association with the Church which, while not pretending to be closer than it was, would acknowledge the great and fundamental things we have in common, would come clean and admit that these things are *Christian*. . . .' This merits further examination, but I feel primarily bound to call attention to a less satisfactory essay on the background.

In 1870 the Convocation of Canterbury was persuaded to give a lead towards the revision of the Authorised Version of the Bible. It is much to the credit of their committee that they invited collaboration from scholars outside the established churches of England and Scotland, including Newman, who declined, and John Kenrick, a Unitarian Bible scholar of distinction. He was getting old, and proposed another Unitarian, George Vance Smith, 'a mild conservative' in criticism, who accepted Dean Stanley's notice of a celebration of Holy Communion in the King Henry VII Chapel on June 22nd, the day the revisers met, as an invitation to communicate. Westcott, who had himself suggested the celebration, did not expect 'that one who could not join in the Nicene creed would desire to communicate', but Stanley saw in his communion 'an event . . . fraught, if rightly considered, with possibilities . . .', and said so in *The Times* of June 27th. A row ensued that led the bishops, but not the Lower House of Convocation, to regret the invitation 'of any person who denies the Godhead of the Lord Jesus Christ' to take part in the revision. This might have scuppered the Revised Version for the time being, had not Connop Thirlwall, the Bishop of St David's, intervened to prevent

them from taking any further action. No one emerged from these proceedings with much credit.

Now, Fr Hamish Swanston is an acute and versatile writer, but his account of the controversy in this book is not one of his happy ventures. He confuses the English Church Union with the Christian Union, and misses the point of Westcott's distinction between the Church of Scotland and the English Free churches, which was traditional in Anglicanism. His account is also marred by a tone of superiority to any argument from legality, such as bishops must use in reply to complaints, and of disdain for prejudices in favour of orthodoxy (or even, it seems here, of scholarship!). Jowett, who was not invited to be a reviser, is called 'the author of what is still one of the most useful commentaries on the major Pauline Epistles'. 'Useful for what?', we may ask. 'Westcott and Lightfoot were content to repeat their cosy performance at the *Essays and Reviews* crisis'. Could Lightfoot be 'cosy'? Stanley, according to Hort, 'fought for every antique phrase that can be defended'. He is here credited with wanting 'a version of the Scriptures that would set the imagination tingling with an excitement akin to that of its original lively language'. Greek or English? Stanley in fact used the opportunity to impose on others his own view of the Church of England as the nation at prayer. This was a serious view, natural in a Dean of Westminster, and it survived to our own day among elderly Anglican divines. The wet we have with us always, and Stanley's damp persists in what John Kent calls 'radical Protestantism' in his essay on 'Old-fashioned Diplomacy', commending open communion for everybody with no uneasy striving after organic union. His final appendix on the changing situation shows how the Church of England, moving in this direction, is in process of becoming one of the denominations. The Roman Catholic Church is expected to do the same, but as she cannot it is she, I suspect, who will eventually become 'the Church of the nation'.

GEORGE EVERY