

EDITORIAL

The Church of Scotland and the Church of England are the 'Established Churches' of their respective lands, but this is not to say that they enjoy an identical relationship with the state. We must be cautious, therefore, in reading any significance, where the Church of Scotland's position is concerned, into the controversy which has surrounded the Falkland Islands service.

It is not our purpose here to comment on what was included, or what omitted, on that occasion. A more profound question is deserving of our attention. It was claimed by voices towards the far right of the Conservative ranks that the Church of England, as the 'Established Church', has a duty to reflect the point of view of the government when devising acts of worship with a national dimension. But British politics is in a state of turmoil, and the very real possibility exists that a strongly left-wing administration might come to power within the foreseeable future. In that event, would the right-wing critics of the Falklands service still want to go on claiming that the Church of England ought to fall in line with the government of the day? One suspects, rather, that they would look to the Church to fight a rearguard action against the fundamental changes which such an administration would undoubtedly seek to implement.

The theological issue at stake here is the catholicity of the Church of Jesus Christ. An event which takes place within an ecclesiastical building is either an act of Christian Worship, or it is not. If it is a genuine act of worship, then it is offered in and through our Lord Jesus Christ, within the communion of all his saints. In other words, the intrusion into an act of worship of any kind of nationalism which would imply that God is automatically on the side of one particular nation, or of any kind of partisanship which would imply that God is automatically on the side of one particular political strand within a single nation, would be a denial of what the Church professes about itself.

This is not to say that people should be prevented from articulating their Britishness or Scottishness within the context of worship. There is nothing inherently wrong in this, provided that at all times it is the Word of God which is brought to bear upon the national ethos, and not the national ethos upon the Word. People with strong political motivations of every hue are notoriously prone to reading out of the Word only those things which would appear to favour their own point of view. This (and we intend no irreverence here) is nothing less than an attempt to 'hijack' God - a crime of which others besides the politicians are frequently guilty. Down through history, in quasi-christian

and pagan national religious rituals alike, God has been demonized by being cast in the role of the genius of state or party. If an 'Established Church' should ever find itself unable, by its very constitution, to part company with the government of the day, then the sooner it is disestablished, the better.

CENTENARY LECTURE

The Revd. A. Raymond George, distinguished Methodist liturgical scholar, has accepted the 1982 Lectureship. His topic will be "SOME NEW ANAPHORAS COMPARED" . He will deliver his lecture on November 11th. at 6 p.m. in the Martin Hall, New College, Edinburgh, and on November 12th. at 10 a.m. in King's College, Old Aberdeen. Members and friends are cordially invited. Help to publicise the lecture will be appreciated.

ROLL OF MEMBERS

The following corrections should be made to the roll published in Issue No. 1.

DUMBARTON: A. T. Rhead is non-presbytery.

DUNDEE: L. E. Luscombe is non-presbytery.

OTHER MEMBERS: I. G. Forbes is a member of Edinburgh Presbytery.

OBITUARY

On February 20, 1982, the death occurred of Dr. Isobel Wylie Hutchison, LL.D., FRSGS, JP, in her 93rd year. An internationally-distinguished explorer and botanist, the Society was privileged to have one so eminent among its members. The Editor has received, through her Parish Minister at Kirkliston, a three-page appreciation of her life. Written by Miss K. M. Lewis, it is a fascinating story, worthy of considerable expansion, and any member of the Society interested in reading it should apply to the Editor.