

THE CHURCHMAN

June, 1912.

The Month.

FOR a moment the whole world shuddered, and then for the most part our faith reasserted itself. ^{The} "Titanic." This terrible thing was allowed to happen and, "God doeth all things well." We can learn the lesson of an evil that we cannot explain. No evil at all can be fully explained though we learn its lessons. Perhaps there is no lesson that we need so much to learn just now as the lesson of the seriousness and shortness of life, the lesson of our absolute dependence on God. The finest creation of man fails before the touch of Nature. God reigns and we must learn the lesson. We need say little here, for the lesson has been well brought home in many quarters. We mourn with those who have been so sorely bereaved; we rejoice with those who have come safely through. May the spared lives of these latter be used to the glory of Him who gave them back, spared, not because better than the rest, but saved to serve!

Victory was the keynote of the anniversary gatherings of the Church Missionary Society—victory mingled with the sense of real thankfulness and purposeful and humble determination. ^{The C.M.S.} The new policy—the policy that we were all so sorry to adopt—has been justified. The Society has received the largest general income that has ever come to it in an ordinary year, and receipts have balanced expenditure. In what spirit

are we to take those results? In the spirit of satisfaction and of willingness to let things be? The May Meetings gave the true answer. Our thanksgiving must issue in a fresh determination, in a more vigorous enterprise, in a deeper spirit of sacrifice. The C.M.S. is not a limited liability company, existing to make a profit. Its true balance-sheet is not to be found in the pages which deal with finance. But those financial pages do show this year something of the spirit that animates the Society both at home and abroad. For that spirit we thank God, and we pray that it may extend more deeply and widely to the friends and helpers of the Society throughout the world.

In many ways the C.M.S. is, for good or ill—we believe wholly for good—the visible centre of Evangelicalism. Sometimes we differ a little amongst ourselves—sometimes we are apt to feel that our differences are greater than in reality they are. But in the atmosphere of the C.M.S., with the Divine call sounding in our ears, and the appalling need of heathenism before our eyes, our unity becomes closer and more real than any external bonds can make it. The unifying power of a common enterprise is always a strong force in the direction of unity; in this case it is the strongest of all. The C.M.S. stands for a spiritual religion; it stands for the spirit of sacrifice; and for these things Evangelicalism stands too. We rejoice heartily with Mr. Bardsley and the Committee, and in the name of ourselves and our readers we believe we can dare to thank them for the level-headed faith, the quiet confidence, and the lesson of sacrifice which in our common lives has helped us all.

Vestments. Some time ago the Bishop of Liverpool accepted the Bishop of Chester's proposal that a distinctive Vestment should be permitted to be worn by the chief minister at the Holy Communion. It was an attempt at peace by way of compromise. We believe we are correct in saying that the compromise was unanimously rejected by those whom it most concerned. The Bishop, therefore, has put this unacceptable compromise outside the sphere of practical things, and has sug-

gested a definite policy for dealing with the anarchy that exists. We venture respectfully to express our agreement with the Bishop's action, and could have wished that the Bishops of Durham and Ripon had followed his line. We feel that there is amongst us a definite attempt to return to the medieval position. We believe that such a return would be fatal to spiritual religion. The Vestments are the party badge of those who are making that attempt; a slight change of that party badge will not make that attempt any less dangerous. Somehow it must be made clear that the main body of the Church of England is not prepared to barter away its Anglicanism. In their speeches in Convocation the Bishops of Manchester and Liverpool made it clear in language for which we are profoundly thankful. If they, and those who think with them, will at this critical hour translate their speeches into action, we believe that the dawn of a happier day is near at hand. Whilst we say this, we wish to put on record our appreciation of the motives of the Bishops of Chester, Durham, and Ripon, though with the utmost regret we are bound to disagree with them.

From a survey of the debate, one fact seems to emerge with unmistakable clearness—that is, that the resistance to the introduction of these Vestments is becoming largely a matter for the Evangelical section of the Anglican *laity*. The Bishops who are opposed to them have made a gallant stand—a stand deserving of the highest honour and the warmest gratitude. But neither they nor their clerical supporters can stand alone. The time has come for the laity to consider the ultimate issues of the question, and to say whether they are prepared to accept the consequences to which the legalization of the Vestments will most undoubtedly lead. They must realize that they are not merely being asked to decide upon the cut of a clerical garment; they are being asked to accept the most decisive retrograde step in the direction of pre-Reformation usage and pre-Reformation doctrine that has yet been attempted. If the lay-folk of the Church of England do

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the Laity.

not wish for this, now is their time to act. They must make it abundantly clear that the Bishops in the Northern House are not speaking for themselves only, but for many thousands of their fellow-Churchmen. To be silent at this juncture is to desert our leaders in the crisis of the battle.

Professor Du Bose has reached his seventy-sixth year, and has completed thirty-six years of service in his Chair at the University of the South. Last August his old students gathered to do honour to him. His papers and addresses on that occasion have now been published ("Turning-Points in my Life"; Longmans), and a very interesting volume they make. He indulges in reminiscences and talks over his early spiritual experiences, and the effect of Church influence and Catholic principles upon him. He will not always carry his readers with him, but he certainly carries us when he discusses the question of ritual in his University chapel. We do not know how he interpreted his principles, nor whether the details of his ritual would have pleased us; but we do feel that his words exactly express the place that ritual should take in our common worship. It is the place which Evangelicalism has always claimed for it, and which Evangelicalism is ever more and more trying to give it. Here are his words: "What I have wished, and wish, to see at Sewanee, as a religious and educational centre, is a high, dignified, and truly typical worship, fully expressive of the reality with which we are dealing and of what we are doing; neither manifesting by our carelessness and indifference our contempt of or superiority to forms, nor, on the other hand, supposing that we have to be Oriental or Latin in our exhibitions of reverence. If there were a ritual exactly and distinctively expressive of the truest and most real reverence of our race, it would be a simple and severe one. We are least demonstrative when we think the most seriously and feel the most deeply, and least of all in matters the most sacred. At the same time, the highest good manners in the world are those that show themselves in the presence of Divine realities."

Prebendary Webb-Peploe has rendered splendid service to the Evangelical cause, and is still rendering it. He has added to that service lately in the interests of unity amongst ourselves. We have felt for long, and we have expressed our feeling in these pages, that Higher Criticism must not be allowed to divide us. In the columns of the *Record* of March 15 last a correspondence between the Prebendary and Mr. Linton-Smith was published. Mr. Webb-Peploe's letter was marked by just that adhesion to personal conviction and that broad-minded sympathy with the convictions of others that always makes for unity. Mr. Linton-Smith asked a question. He had heard a speech of the Prebendary in which he understood him to say that,

"provided a man held firmly the fundamental truths of the Incarnation, the Atonement, and the Resurrection, and recognized the Bible as the Inspired Word of God and the final Court of Appeal in matters of faith, as I most assuredly do, he ought to be recognized as an Evangelical, if he desires to range himself with that school."

He asked whether his impression of the speech was a correct one. In a most happy letter Mr. Webb-Peploe says yes. He writes :

"I for one should most cordially welcome you as-a brother in the faith and as a true disciple of the Lord Jesus, though we may differ, as you say, upon the very crucial and solemn subject of Inspiration in regard to its nature and its influence upon the Biblical writers."

Now, there are many Evangelicals who hold precisely the same views of Higher Criticism as those of Mr. Webb-Peploe. We venture to ask them to study this correspondence carefully, and to see whether they cannot take the same step that he has taken, and exercise the same brotherly sympathy towards their brethren of the school who differ from them upon this difficult point as that to which this correspondence gives such beautiful expression. The Bishop of Liverpool told us the other day that the Evangelical School has the future in its hands if it will but use its opportunities. Prebendary Webb-Peploe has taken a momentous step in helping us to use those opportunities unitedly.

Bahatism and Christianity. Some time ago Canon Hay Aitken suggested the possibility of interchange of pulpits between Churchmen and Nonconformists. His suggestion provoked controversy, and lately the correspondence of the controversy has been published. There are difficulties, some of them so great that we are not sure that it is the best road to unity. One of them has just come into lurid light. A New York clergyman, a member of the Protestant Episcopal Church, has invited into his pulpit the son of the founder of Bahatism and an apostle of that cult. Bahatism aims at regenerating Islam. It hopes to permeate it with a higher morality and a deeper theology, but it makes no pretence of being itself Christian. Abdul Baha does not believe in the Resurrection of Christ, yet he preaches on the first Sunday after Easter in a New York church. He kindly praises Christian ethics, and advocates social and political peace. In the Canons of the American Church there is a provision whereby the Bishop may permit Christian men, not ministers of the Church, to give occasional addresses. In this case that provision has been abused. In whatever plans we make for the future of the Church and of the Churches we must see to it that such a scandal as this is made impossible. Sometimes the English pulpit is abused by politics or by partisanship; we must see to it that the place where the Gospel is wont to be preached is not reduced to the level of the rostrum in a debating society. The fencing of the table is an old and ever-pressing duty, the fencing of the pulpit must not be ignored. Men may deprecate Creeds and Articles, subscription and the rest, but in the practical working of the Christian Church there has been and there still is need for them. Undenominationalism may all too easily become evacuated of its Christian content.

Fashions in Criticism. Those who bestow some attention on the output of contemporary critical literature can hardly fail to be impressed by the fact that here, as in other departments of life, there is a good deal in "fashion." Some particular

point of view is promulgated by an enthusiastic exponent. His enthusiasm is not infrequently "catching." A wide circle of readers is infected, and, for the time being, the theory so promulgated becomes "fashionable." It tends to be regarded as the long-sought key by which the door has finally been unlocked for the solution of problems hitherto regarded as inexplicable. In time there follows a reaction—due to a combination of diverse causes. One reason for reaction is, that when the theory in question has been submitted to impartial scrutiny and criticism, it is seen more clearly in its proper proportions. It may be found to contain a very considerable residuum of truth, and the truth so obtained, after due processes of sifting, will be a permanent acquisition for the student of history and of Scripture. Another cause for reaction is purely and simply a change of "fashion." Another point of view emerges; it becomes the prevailing "cry," and the previous one is simply elbowed off the field. The new topic has come to stay till it, in turn, is ejected by some more potent and attractive rival.

The truth of what has just been said may best
Eschatology. be illustrated by what is happening to-day. Of late "eschatology" has been the fashionable word. The subject, it is true, has always had a place in the thoughts of New Testament students; but Schweitzer's "Quest of the Historical Jesus" gave it a paramount and distinctive place. It was the key to solve the most perplexing problems of the Synoptic Gospels. Christ's whole conception of the kingdom which He came to found was "eschatological" in essence. So far as the kingdom thus conceived remained unrealized, it simply meant that Christ was in error, and mistaken in the estimate He had formed of Himself and of His work. Schweitzer, who is nothing if not "thorough," has, in a recently published work, included the Pauline Epistles as well as the Synoptic narrative within the scope of his theory. The sifting process is now at work, and we shall in time be able to estimate more clearly how far the prevailing emphasis

on "eschatology" has secured for us truths either undetected formerly or, at any rate, not fully understood. In the meantime, however, interest in the topic is passing, for another "fashion" has emerged, which bids fair for the present to absorb in the most exclusive way the thoughts of careful Bible students.

The new topic is that of the relation between
 The Mystery Religions. the thought of St. Paul and the "mystery religions" of the Græco-Roman world. Attention is being concentrated on the fact that the cults of Isis, of Cybele, and of Mithras, had their rites of initiation in the form of a baptismal ceremony; that in some cases, at any rate, the death and return to life of a god formed part of the "mysteries" of the religion; and that it was possible, by union with the god, to share in the divine immortality. It is not difficult to see at a glance the affinities in a general way between all this and St. Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians. And it is perhaps to be expected that many a one will spring hastily to the conclusion that St. Paul's conception of Christ and of the Christian's relation to Him has been profoundly affected by contact with ideas distinctive of these "mystery religions." And once this point of view is reached, the further suggestion is not very remote that the whole doctrine of the Christian "mysteries," the whole sacramental system of the Christian Church, is "Pauline"—*i.e.*, that it has been added, *ab extra*, by the powerful influence of the Apostle of the Gentiles to the simple ethical doctrines of Jesus, the Prophet of Nazareth. The "mystery religions" are now the "fashion," and will doubtless hold attention for many days to come.

Work and Method. In view of this, two practical suggestions may perhaps be offered. The first is this: That some effort should be made to study the subject at first hand as far as that is possible. English readers will find matter of the deepest interest in the late Dr. Bigg's "The Church's

Task under the Roman Empire," and in the two works of Cumont, now most fortunately accessible to English readers, "Oriental Religions in Roman Paganism," and "The Mysteries of Mithra" (both published by the Open Court Publishing Company, Chicago). The other suggestion is that the greatest caution should be exercised against forming hasty generalizations. There are many points to be considered. How far is it likely that St. Paul, with his Jewish antecedents, would deliberately adopt the views and language of contemporary Gentile religion? To what extent is his language merely that of general speech and not an intentional adaptation of the technical terminology of the "mystery religions"? On the other hand, there is the problem how far he may have elected to present the truth of Christianity to his Gentile hearers in terms with which they were already familiar. No care and thought can be too great in the examination of these and kindred questions. The interests of truth, however, will best be served if caution and wise reserve control our investigation of this "fashionable" and most fascinating theme.

