

Editorial

EVENTS are moving so fast in the international scene that the position may have changed yet again by the time this number is out. That on Suez there has been a deep cleavage of opinion among Christians is obvious. We should be glad, whatever our convictions on the matter, that the nation has showed great concern over the *moral* issues of the Government's action ; on the other hand, it cannot be denied that much opposition was neither sincere nor sensible.

The Editor's strong personal opinion is that neither in the light of history nor of Scripture should we condemn the Prime Minister's decision, granted that he was acting on sound information as to likely events if he did not intervene. After all, at this time of year the Christian doctrine of the Last Things is much in mind. Can we deny, if we accept the Bible at all, that according to that doctrine God is going to intervene to "put all enemies under His feet" by what we may call without irreverence, "naked aggression"? And yet if we feel otherwise on the matter, let us as Christians believe the best as regards the motives of our statesmen, and continue to bring the problems and sorrows of the world to the Throne of Grace. The Archbishop of York's recent words are well worth remembering : "The first duty of Christian people is to stand firmly for patience, charity and rational discussion against hysterical passion and the loathsome imputation of motives which are poisoning the minds of many people".

The first article in this number is the Bishop of Rochester's paper on Nullity, read at the Oxford Conference. The publicity given by the press to this year's conference reflects the concern many feel on this whole question of divorce. A change in Christian opinion is certainly, though slowly, taking place. Without commenting on the matter editorially it may be remarked (at risk of saying the obvious) that the great problem ahead is to steer between any lessening of emphasis on the sacredness and life-long character of the marriage bond, and the rigour which prevents reconstruction of the individual once a marriage really has broken down. Perhaps some of us, not having had to deal personally with the problem in the course of pastoral work, have hidden our heads in the sand. This escapism is harmful. The Bishop's paper will go a long way in helping us to find God's will in this whole perplexing matter.

In the last number was printed another article on the Canon Law Proposals. The Editor has been given to understand that this article produced a reaction of considerable annoyance (the word is used advisedly) from a very high authority in the Church. This suggests that some of those concerned with the Canon Law Proposals are more worried by the opposition of evangelicals than they would care to admit

publicly. It is most important that while keeping a balanced view of the matter we should continue to press for the elimination of objectionable proposals.

It is much to be hoped that those bishops who realize the undesirability of some proposals should not hesitate to say so. Sometimes the outside observer is led to feel that there is a "party line" on the bench on matters on which there can be no honest agreement. The Death Penalty debate in the House of Lords is a case in point: only five bishops voted, all in the minority supporting Mr. Silverman's bill. It is hard to believe that none of the bishops with seats were opposed to the bill, or that all who were opposed happened to be too busy to attend the debate. That particular incident is immaterial, except as an example. But let us hope that individual bishops will maintain their independence. One of the characteristics of the Church of England is that a J. C. Ryle and an Edward King can sit happily on the bench together.

An appeal for funds has been issued by the Evangelical Literature Fellowship of India, which was formed a few years ago to meet the growing demand for worth-while commentaries, evangelical study books and popular Christian literature in the languages of India. The need is great, and readers of the CHURCHMAN are urged to send donations or to write for further information to the Overseas Secretary, Evangelical Alliance, 39 Ladbroke Grove, W.11.

The publishers have decided, with much regret, to raise the subscription to the CHURCHMAN to 10/- per annum, post free (2/6 per copy) as from the next number. The Editor believes that though it hurts their pockets readers will respond readily to this increase, for this reason: the price has remained stationary for years; yet printing costs and postage have risen greatly. Thus the deficit has been borne by the Church Society, and by accepting the increased price we shall pay a fair price for what we get, and release urgently needed funds for the work of the Society, thereby making a useful contribution to its service for God. In the light of this, the Editor believes that few, if any, of his readers will feel that they cannot afford to pay a price more in keeping with current costs.