

Editorial

THE leading article in this issue is the substance of the Islington Presidential Address. The day following, the Vestments Canon was passed through Convocation, but the arguments set out by Mr. Wood should be carefully weighed.

Every Evangelical must be exercised in mind as to our right future course. Certainly there is now a far better atmosphere in these debates; Evangelical feelings are not dismissed as factious opposition, and the removal of the misguided Canon on obedience to future unspecified dictations is a step in the right direction. But what, now, about vestments?

One line would be to fight the Vestments Canon every step of the way, until Parliament gives us victory, as well it may. What then? The nation has been treated to a spectacle of religious scrapping; Anglo-Catholics will continue to use vestments, and unless we have a series of lawsuits, which will bring the Church into disrepute, we are back exactly where we were, with the nation sick of the business and little disposed to listen to the Church of England.

If, on the other hand, we take Professor Sykes' line, and accept his teaching on comprehensiveness, that the exclusive Protestant emphasis of former times was misguided, we are left, to put it baldly, with a Church which proclaims to the nation: "There are two ways to heaven, two quite different kinds of Christian minister—both are right; choose your preference." If, again, we withdraw all opposition having made our protest, it is almost certain that the "dedoctrinating" clause will be ignored and forgotten. The weight of numbers in the ordained ministry is not at present in our favour, and the nation may before long receive the subtle impression that the "official" teaching of the Church of England is of eucharistic sacrifice, as in South Africa, and that Evangelicals are a foolish minority who have refused to accept the verdict. And, in addition, reunion will be retarded indefinitely.

Whichever way we look, the Vestments Canon appears to bedevil the future. But we are in danger of losing our sense of proportion. What *really* matters to-day? To the ordinary semi-pagan yet spiritually hungry man or woman of the mid-twentieth century, the whole business appears almost ridiculous. These are harsh words, but one cannot but echo Canon Moore Darling's remark, in his book reviewed in this issue: "Oh how utterly much the over-professionalization of religion has to answer for!" It might be said, and it is true, that Evangelicals do more than anyone else to get the Church away from this professionalized clericalism. But if we are deflected to a new ritual war, we shall be among the worst offenders.

Perhaps one solution might be suggested by the Lutheran Church, or the Mar Thoma Church in South India. Each is a Church in which vestments are worn, and yet at its best is strongly evangelical and evangelistic (where it is not, its failure springs from modernist teaching). Is it possible that if vestments are condoned in the Church of England, the results will not be so terrible after all?

Another way out is to see that Parliament insists on a far stronger "footnote" than the de-doctrinating clause; a clear statement such as: "In that certain in the Church of England are guided by their conscience to the use of vestments, they are permitted to do so, but only because a tender conscience must be respected. The Church knows nothing of the doctrinal teaching of vestments, whatever may be said to the contrary."

Best of all would be a self-denying decision on the part of both Evangelicals and Anglo-Catholics to ask for the postponement of the Vestments Canon. We cannot afford a ritual war at this juncture. England needs evangelizing—men and women are crying out for spiritual help, however more the surface of modern life may suggest the contrary. All hands must turn to that, and in a more propitious time we can return to this vexed question. Before the 1914 war "Votes for Women" agitated the nation. When war broke out, a truce was called, and after it was over the business resolved itself. We face now a vital battle for the soul of the nation. Can we not—both sides—call a truce, and carry on with the job God is calling us to do?

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After the June number the Editor will be abroad for nearly two years on a special assignment, and has been granted leave of absence by the publishers, who will be putting THE CHURCHMAN into the hands of a Deputy. Full details will be given in the next issue, but the Editor would be grateful if from now on all correspondence be directed to him at Wine Office Court and not at Templecombe.

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The Editor is glad to draw attention to three further booklets published by CRUSADE. In *Christian Faith and Fellowship*, by Frank Colquhoun, a former Editor of THE CHURCHMAN lucidly outlines the principles of evangelical unity. His arguments are admirable, and should be widely disseminated. *A Bibliography of Booklets*, by T. Dudley-Smith, is a useful guide, and *Christian Service in Youth Clubs*, by G. J. Venables, will prove helpful in recruiting to that service, and guiding those who are undertaking it.

