

Editorial

AN editorial interregnum is seldom a good thing for a periodical, and certainly not for a serious theological quarterly. During recent months *The Churchman* has been without a regular editor, with the result that it has appeared under difficulties. We would like to express appreciation to those who, although already over-busy, have "kept it going" in the interim between Mr. Pollock's setting out on fresh travels to distant lands and the appointment of his successor in the editorial chair. We wish also to pay tribute to the admirable manner in which Mr. Pollock discharged his duties during the years of his editorship. Under his guidance the prestige of this old-established journal has been maintained at a consistently high level. It is our hope to continue this good work and to demonstrate that Evangelical scholars of the Church of England are alive to the trends and needs of our contemporary situation and have something relevant and constructive to say. In everything we shall seek to observe a spirit of genuine Christian charity and to glorify the Name of Almighty God, to Whose goodness and grace we owe all that we are and all that we have. May He be pleased to add His blessing to our humble efforts!

* * * * *

The far-reaching importance of the current vestments controversy was in effect acknowledged by the lengthy and carefully prepared speech made in the Canterbury Convocation by Dr. Norman Sykes (now the Dean of Winchester) in January of last year. Only after a delay which is as regrettable as it was prolonged has it at last become available in print in the *Chronicle of Convocation*. Upon its publication it was given careful study, not least by Evangelicals. The first article of this issue is an able examination and appraisal of the case for the eucharistic vestments as propounded by Dr. Sykes. We trust that Mr. Coates's comments and criticisms will receive the serious attention they deserve. Evangelicals and Anglo-Catholics alike (not to mention Roman Catholics) have consistently maintained that, despite the disclaimer included in Draft Canon 17 as at present proposed, the vestments in question are in fact associated with distinctive sacramental doctrine. It is, therefore, undoubtedly significant to find Dr. Sykes confirming this view when he affirms that the alleged introduction of the eucharistic vestments after the Marion interlude "was designed to convey to the outward eye that there had been a shift of doctrine between 1552 and 1559". It seems clear, as Mr. Coates points out, "that Dr. Sykes believes that the vestments do signify doctrine and that they are meant to teach doctrine".

Of course, if it were the case, as Dr. Sykes desires to persuade us, that the eucharistic vestments have all along been legal wear in the Church of England, authorized by the Ornaments Rubric, the long drawn-out debates, still not completed, in the Convocations and Church Assembly, have been so much wasted breath, and there would

be no necessity, as it is now recognized there will be, to obtain the authorization of Parliament for Canon 17 as proposed. These, at least, are considerations which appear to constitute a stultification of Dr. Sykes's interpretation of things.

The Evangelical opposition to the eucharistic vestments does not rest merely, or even primarily, on legalistic or historical grounds, though these have to be taken into account, as Dr. Sykes's speech has acknowledged, however much we may disagree with his conclusions. The main objections come under two heads : scriptural and doctrinal. Can anyone seriously imagine our Lord or His Apostles attiring themselves in such garments in the prosecution of their ministry? And can it seriously be argued that they have no doctrinal significance when, in the proposed Canon, they are specifically associated with the Sacrament of the Eucharist?

"The peace of the Church is hurt already by this Canon," declared the Rev. M. A. P. Wood in his Presidential Address at last year's Islington Clerical Conference, held during the selfsame week in which Dr. Sykes made his speech in Convocation. "We must walk humbly and courteously in all we do, yet remembering that the *truth* of the Church is as important to maintain as the *peace* of the Church. . . . If we hold our peace now, and let things go on in the way they are doing at present, we shall have ourselves to blame later for a changed doctrinal position" (*The Churchman*, March, 1958, pp. 7f.). And, speaking again at this year's conference, he said: "We cannot agree with what the new Dean of Winchester called 'the comprehensiveness' of the Church of England, beyond a certain point, and we are very near that point to-day. . . . The door is being opened for totally distinct modes of dress to be officially recognized in the Holy Communion Service" and for "two distinct services of Holy Communion". The Vicar of Islington speaks for many who believe that the issues at stake are by no means unimportant.

* * * * *

In our article (the first part of which is given in this issue) on the Place and Purpose of the Sacraments our aim has been to propound the doctrine of the Sacraments as it was held and taught by those great moulders of the Church of England, the Anglican divines of the sixteenth century. Their teaching must be viewed not merely within the historical framework of their time, but also, and more significantly, in the light of their resolution to return to an understanding of the sacraments that is consciously governed by the clear principles of Holy Scripture. In other words, their theology represents a desire to return to the source. Because of this, it has something of importance to say to the situation of our day; for the great principles of the biblical revelation are timeless principles in the sense that they are related to man at the deepest roots of his being and need, and accordingly are always relevant and meaningful, however much outward circumstances may change.

The two shorter articles, which we are pleased to include in this issue, will be found to have their own special interest in two very different fields.

P.E.H.