

IN REGULAR ORDER.—Bishop Brooks of Boston, Mass., recently confirmed a distinguished Universalist minister in Massachusetts, the Rev. Chas. Follen Lee, D.D. He will enter the ministry of the Church. He is a man of marked ability and high character.

THE new Dean of Bristol, Dr. Pigou, was instituted and installed on Wednesday, 9th Dec. The *Church Times* understands that he has already inaugurated some important improvements at the Cathedral. The changes are, however, regarded by some of the old-fashioned worshippers as anything but improvements. One of these, who describes himself as "A Bristol Protestant," writes:—"The lay clerks and choristers have been habited in long black cassocks, with short, white surplices. A large brass cross has been placed on the Communion-table, with large candlesticks on each side. Ladies have been excluded from the stalls, where they have hitherto been seated, and even the minor canons' wives are not allowed to sit by their husbands. The offertory boxes have been replaced by bags, and these are now carried by gentlemen instead of by the lay clerks, who have been accustomed to collect the offerings." If Dean Pigou goes no farther in the direction of extreme ritual than this, the *Globe* thinks that Bristol Protestants will not have much to complain of.—*Family Churchman*.

"THE MYSTERY OF THY HOLY INCARNATION."

The great festival of the Incarnation is once more present with us. To-day we keep the Feast. The Mystery is summed up in few words—*verbum caro factum est. Incarnatum pro nostra salute*, as Irenæus succinctly has it. "I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, . . . who was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man," as the Nicene formulary declares it; and in the Litany we plead its virtue thus, "By the mytery of Thy holy Incarnation, Good Lord deliver us!" The old English tongue preserved the truth in the terms "wearth geflæschamod," and "iflæschemod." The Scripture authority for the dogma of the Incarnation is to be found in these words—"Now the birth of Jesus Christ is on this wise: When as His Mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost." "They shall call His name Emmanuel, which is, being interpreted, God with us. That which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost."—(St. Matt. i. 18, 23, 20.) "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that Holy Thing that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."—(St. Luke i. 35.) Upon these Scriptural words is founded the clause in the Apostles' Creed, "was conceived of the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary."

It might be said, perhaps—and has been said—that we are dependent for this dogma of the Incarnation in the first instance upon the word of a few persons, and that for some time at least it was a family secret. This is so in a measure. Mary and Joseph, and Elizabeth and Zacharias, were the original recipients of the mighty secret, and by them it was gradually disclosed to others. So little, indeed, was the truth a common possession, that the objection was raised by His

contemporaries, "Is not this the carpenter's son?" "Is not this Jesus the son of Joseph?" This is quite the case, and there was a purpose, no doubt, in keeping the mystery hidden in its first stages. Like other great truths in the divine economy, it was to be gradually revealed to the world as it was able to bear it.

If the subsequent life and ministry of our Lord did not correspond with this doctrine, then indeed we would be presented with an insurmountable difficulty, but the whole after story of the Gospels is consistent with it, and can be no otherwise explained. It would be a real and insurmountable difficulty to explain that story on any other grounds than the truth of the Incarnation.

As for objections to the Incarnation on naturalistic grounds, we cannot entertain them. The Conception was miraculous. The Catholic doctrine is that the Creator of all things was pleased to be born into the world in the person of the Divine Child, and that the Virgin Mother was made the channel of that Birth. We at once acknowledge that the manner of the Incarnation is opposed to all experience, and that a miraculous Conception of the kind never occurred before or since. If we believe an act of *Creation* possible at all, such a Conception was not beyond the power of the Creator to effect. How the Conception was initiated is a mystery, on which Holy Scripture is silent, as it is silent on many other points in our Christology; all we know is that the Holy Ghost, who is "The Lord and Giver of Life," "overshadowed" the Virgin, and that from the hour of this miraculous Conception that "Holy Thing" that was to be born of her was made and moulded of her substance, and grew day by day—that He who was thus born did "not abhor the Virgin's womb," and so was "perfect God and perfect man, of a reasonable soul, and human flesh subsisting."—*Ath. Creed*.

But, as we have said, the whole life of Christ on earth reveals *the Divine Personality*. He claimed to be equal with God: "I and my Father are one" ("unum one substance."—*St. Aug.*) "I am in the Father and the Father in Me." "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." In his old age, looking back and reflecting on the mystery, St. John writes: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (St. John i. 1.)

For us men, the glory and the greatness of all this is unspeakable. What may not be anticipated for nature that has thus been assumed into the Divine? Perfect God and perfect Man have been united in one Person, "never to be divided" (Art. ii.) But when Christ thus took human flesh, it is to be remembered that it was not the birth of another person that then took place, but that it was the birth of the Eternal "I am," who was "from the beginning," so that afterwards when He died it was the blood of God that was shed upon the cross (Acts xx. 28.) It is the *nature* of God, as Hooker reminds us, that is incarnate and took to itself Flesh in the only Person of the Son (*Ecol. Pol.* v. lii. 3.) And this mystery bears on some of the questions of the day. By virtue of this hypostatic union—God and man in one Christ, the Divine properties must be predicated of "the man Christ Jesus." While, therefore, it could not be asserted of Christ's Body that it is omnipresent, it may be so spoken of the Christ who is both God and man, because His two natures cannot be separated, and whosoever He is there must be both natures. While He was on earth He was also "the Son of Man which is in heaven" (St. John iii. 13.) So of His omniscience, and likewise of His omnipotence; these divine attributes must also be predicated of our Lord's human nature.

And the sacramental bearing of all this is plain. There could be no Sacraments apart from the Incarnation. The body of the Church presupposes the Body of Christ, who is the head of the body which is His Church. It is "by one Spirit we are baptised into one body." "We being many, are one bread and one body, for we

are all partakers of that ode Bread." So we pray in the Communion office that we may "so eat the flesh of Thy dear Son Jesus Christ, and drink His Blood, that our sinful bodies may be made clean by His Body, and our souls washed through His most precious Blood." The new life of the soul thus takes its rise from the Incarnation, Christ was to be "the First-Born among many brethren." Into Him we are to grow up in all things, which is the Head, even Christ, from whom all the body, fully framed and put together through that which every joint supplieth, according to the working in due measure of each several body, maketh the increase of the body unto the building up of itself in love."—(Eph. iv. 15, 16.) Were the Sacraments, as Zwingly taught, mere badges or ceremonies, incapable of conveying grace, they would have ceased to be observed long ago, and would have died out of the Church as the kiss of peace died out and the washing of the saints' feet; but as the 25th Article of Religion teaches us, they are more than this—"they be rather certain sure witnesses and effectual signs of grace and God's goodwill towards us, by the which God doth work invisibly in us, and doth not only quicken, but also strengthen and confirm our faith in Him." It is because of this that Christmas Day was from the beginning a day on which it was specially enjoined, on clergy and laity alike, to receive the Body and Blood of Christ.—*Irish Ecol. Gazette*.

GOOD NEWS FROM A FAR COUNTRY.

The birthday of our SAVIOUR of the world is one which has no parallel in the annals of time. No single family, nor town, nor neighborhood, nor state, nor country, is interested in this occasion, but the whole human race. Thrice blessed CHRISTMAS, which beheld God's best and greatest gift bestowed on fallen man! With the shepherds we bend with adoring wonder over the infant JESUS as HE lies in the manger at Bethlehem. As the grave was afterwards hallowed, because he had lain in it, so was the *cradle*, also. Strange scenes in his after life rise up before us, as we behold the gentle JESUS nestled in his blessed mother's arms. "Those little, tender feet, unable to sustain the infant frame, are yet to tread upon the roughened waters of a stormy lake as men tread the solid earth. At the touch of that little feeble hand, the blind eye is to open, and the tied tongue to be unloosed, and diseases of all kinds are to flee away. That soft, meek voice, whose gentle breathings in his infant slumbers can scarce be heard, is to speak to the winds and the waves, and they shall obey it: is to summon the dead from the sepulchre, and they shall come forth." (Hanna.)

"All hail, thou noblest Guest, this morn,
Whose love did not the sinner scorn!
In my distress thou cam'st to me;
What thanks shall I return to thee?"

"Were earth a thousand times as fair,
Beset with gold and jewels rare,
She yet were far too poor to be
A narrow cradle LORD, for THEE."

"Ah, dearest Jesus, holy child!
Make THEE a bed, soft, undefiled,
Within my heart, that it may be
A quiet chamber kept for THEE!"

The most wonderful fact in all the history of our race, is this which the whole Christian world commemorates to-day; "God was manifest in the flesh" (I Timothy iii, 16). It was the gracious purpose of the MOST HIGH to reveal HIMSELF to HIS creatures, and to assume such a form that that all might behold HIM. HE took not on HIM "the nature of angels" (Hebrews ii, 16), since angels are spirits, and, as such, invisible. It was, therefore, as *man*, that GOD revealed HIMSELF on this day in the person of CHRIST JESUS. IN HIM GOD was manifest to the world;