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THE CHURCHMAN

January, 1913.

The Month.

Islington. UNLESS we are altogether lacking in the prophetic gift, the Islington meeting of 1913 will not only be worthy to rank with its predecessors, but it will be notable in itself. The topic for discussion, "Church and Nation," and the names of the speakers who are to deal with its various aspects, not only suggest a meeting of real interest, but indicate a breadth of view which must make present-day Evangelicalism in the providence of God an ever-increasing force in the life both of the Church and the nation. Evangelicalism has no need to apologize for itself; it has its message strong, clear, and true for the perplexing age in which we live, and we are glad that that message is to be proclaimed once again on the Islington platform. We venture quite confidently to congratulate the Vicar of Islington on the wisdom and the good fortune of his latest effort to serve the Church.

**Divinity
Degrees.** The period of mere privilege is passing, and it ought to pass. We do not mean that privilege to render effective service should be taken from any individual or any class, but we do feel that, as far as possible, all men should have the privilege of service, if they be worthy of it. If that is true of service, it must be true of honour; and so we come to the question of Divinity degrees. Our Nonconformist brethren have rendered splendid service to theological study; a glance round the shelves of any clergyman's library,

even that of the most determined opponent of Nonconformity, proves it in a moment. Is it possible to withhold from them the highest honour that the two premier Universities of the British Empire can confer? We feel that it is not, and so we rejoice that there is real prospect that the degrees at both Universities will soon be thrown open. Narrow sectarianism will lose, but we believe that theology and religion will gain. Reunion of English Christianity seems to be drawing nearer on more sides than one. We unite in social service, in missionary enterprise, and in the search for truth. Unity in the search for truth will mean in the long run unity in the finding of it—that is, unity complete and real—and in that particular direction the removal of old-time restrictions at Oxford and Cambridge will help.

In this particular respect the year 1913 opens with very good omens. Cambridge, by the unexpectedly large majority of 109 votes, has spoken in favour of the abolition of older restrictions. Congregation at Oxford has dealt with the twofold question of theological examinerships and the opening of the theological degrees. The decree enabling others than priests in the Church of England to examine in the Honour School of Theology was passed by 133 votes to 28; the decree abolishing the ancient limitations on the Divinity degrees was passed by 153 votes to 35. At Oxford this vote of Congregation is not the last word. Convocation has still to have its say in the matter. We can only trust that, in view, not only of the weight of solid argument by which these decrees are backed, but also of the eminent character and judgment of the distinguished men who have supported them, Convocation will not feel called on to reverse these decisions of Congregation. We trust, too, that the sentiment of the two older Universities will not be without effect on the future policy of the University of Durham. Some there who hesitated to support the movement were confessedly waiting for a lead from Oxford and Cambridge. It is no longer possible for Durham in this matter to take the lead; she may now, at any rate, be well content to follow.

A Friendly Warning. It may not be inopportune in this connection to address a word of counsel and of friendly warning to our brethren of the Free Churches. The situation is not free from complications. Nonconformists who are keen about this question of the Divinity degrees will doubtless, as they have already done, appeal to the general principles of Christian brotherhood, and will urge fair-minded Churchmen to act in a friendly and accommodating spirit; but they must remember that Churchmen are also pressing this plea in the matter of the Welsh Church. Brotherliness and kindly consideration cannot be sought from one side only. They must be extended from the Nonconformist to the Anglican, if there is to be any possibility of better feeling and fuller co-operation. The proposal to rob the Welsh Church of its ancient endowments and seriously to cripple its work is one that is warmly resented, and bitterly opposed, not only by Churchmen, but also by much of the best Nonconformist opinion in the country. A general attitude of taking all and giving nothing is not one on which a structure of future harmony can be reared. Nonconformists who are determined to rob a particular branch of the Church of its lawful means of support have no tenable ground whatever for asking Churchmen in the Universities to surrender old and long-standing academic privilege.

The Creed in the Pulpit. Canon Hensley Henson, whom we cordially congratulate on his appointment to the Deanery of Durham, has recently issued a volume of sermons entitled "The Creed in the Pulpit." Not the least interesting part of the book is the somewhat lengthy preface in which he justifies the claim for a frank and "critical" treatment in the pulpit of the fundamental truths of Christianity, and deprecates the treatment recently meted out to Mr. Thompson by the Bishops of Winchester and of Oxford. With the claim for full investigation in the light of all the help that archæology, history, and criticism can afford, we are in the fullest sympathy. We also agree that the clergyman should aim, not only at being

conversant with, but at being able to discuss the treatment which their great topics are receiving in the Press and on the platform of the present day. But we cannot help feeling that Canon Henson, like so many others, speaks on the assumption that "criticism" utters one voice only, and that a negative one with reference to older beliefs. For example, he says that "Mr. Thompson's 'Miracles in the New Testament' is a scholarly and careful attempt to apply *accepted principles of Biblical criticism* [the italics are ours] to the documents of the New Testament, especially to the so-called miraculous narratives of the Gospels and Acts."

"Accepted principles of Biblical criticism" is **"Accepted Principles,"** surely a misleading description of the method prevalent in Mr. Thompson's book. "Accepted," perhaps, by those who take a purely negative line, leading naturally to negative results, and who regard the conception of a non-miraculous Christ as axiomatic. One cannot deny that this is the general tendency of much recent writing, but it may be questioned whether the tendency can maintain itself on strictly philosophical and scientific grounds. It is at once too rigid, too narrow, and too dogmatic. A truer criticism will aim, not so much at absolute negation of what is old, but rather at the proper correlation of it with the new. In a recent leading article on "Scientific Methods in Education," the *Times* says :

"Science is simply knowledge systematized and correlated. The scientific habit is simply the habit of correlating every new fact of experience with all that is already known, checking the new by the old and the old by the new, and synthesizing the whole, as far as is possible, for each individual into a coherent conception of the general frame of things."

A better method of criticism than that which prevails in many quarters to-day will give fuller attention to "checking the new by the old."

The Need for Caution. There is too great a tendency to assume that the "last word" is the final truth. There are three particular departments of Biblical investigation, in which, while welcoming fuller light, we may well be cautious

about the whole-hearted acceptance of prevalent theories. In the sphere of the Old Testament, the different use of Divine names, as the criterion for the discrimination of the Jhavistic and Elohistie documents, is being so seriously questioned, that a suspense of judgment may well be called for. In the sphere of the New Testament, the attempt to conceive Christ purely from an "eschatological" point of view may fairly be said to have over-reached itself. It may have enabled us to do more justice to the apocalyptic background of some of our Lord's discourses and to the apocalyptic element contained in them. But we shall do well to "correlate" all this with the older views of His Person and His Work. We are also face to face with the attempt to trace much of St. Paul's distinctive teaching to the influence of contemporary mystery religions. Here, again, we may admit to the full the interest and the perfect reasonableness of the investigation. But we shall do well to "correlate" our results with the older view that finds the main background of Paulinism in the Old Testament, and its main sources in the teaching of Christ, and in this way, possibly, to arrive at a richer synthesis and correspondingly truer conclusions.

The picture show is now a well-established form of popular entertainment, and it is much to be hoped that it will not become a menace to the religious life of the nation. The question is being raised, and will doubtless continue to be raised with increasing frequency: "Are these shows to be opened on Sundays?" We have no hesitation in affirming that, in their right place and under proper conditions, they are thoroughly to be commended. One locally, at least, is known to us, where the advent of the picture show has meant a diminished attendance at the public house and a consequent improvement in the conditions of the streets at nights. But the proposal to open them on Sundays is quite a different matter. A representative meeting of actors has spoken in emphatic condemnation of such a step, on the general ground that the actor, too, must have his day of rest. Quite

Picture Shows
and Sunday.

apart from religious sanctions, which can only be expected to weigh with professedly religious people, and on grounds of national health and welfare, this increasing tendency to secularize Sunday ought strenuously to be resisted, and we hope that in every locality where the question arises, those to whom Sunday is pre-eminently the "Lord's Day" will join in common effort to maintain, not only its sanctity, but also its essential character as a day of rest.

Deacons and
the Bible.

Once again the effort to vary the words of the question put to candidates for Deacon's Orders as to their attitude to Holy Scripture has failed. Frankly, we regret it; not because we have any wish to detract one whit from the authority of Scripture as the final court of appeal in matters of faith and practice, but because we feel that the question is ambiguous. We have no right to put an ambiguous question to young men at so solemn a time. Archdeacon Madden writes a wise little letter to the *Church Family Newspaper*:

"If by the words, 'Do you unfeignedly believe all the Canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testament?' a Deacon is expected to thereby assert his belief in the literal accuracy of every word of the Holy Scriptures, then I think some change ought to be made in its wording. I certainly did not assert a belief in 'verbal inspiration' in the sense that every word of the Canonical Scriptures was inspired when I declared my assent, as a Deacon, to this third question. I did not read it so. I do not so read it now."

The Editors of this magazine, engaged as they are in training young men for the ministry, are quite clear that to the minds of some the question conveys the implication which the Archdeacon's letter suggests, and cordially agree that, this being so, an alteration is needed. Archdeacon Allen writes a full letter in the same newspaper, and his experience leads him to the same conclusion as ours. Surely, it is within the wit of man to frame a question which shall not be ambiguous, and which shall maintain cordial acceptance of the Sixth Article. We quote with complete approval Archdeacon Allen's final paragraph:

"I am not particularly concerned as to how the question shall be altered, but let there be substituted for it words which shall constitute a plain

question, which candidates can answer in a plain sense corresponding to the natural meaning of which the words convey to them, and, what is of great importance, to the lay people."

The
"Vulgar"
Tongue.

The word "vulgar" has lost its connotation with the centuries, but it still occurs twice in our baptismal service. To those who bring their children to Baptism in our poorer parishes it nominally means the rough language of the streets. It is a pity that it should be so. So the Committee of Convocation felt; and as there is, we trust, little likelihood of the children of the future being taught their Catechism in Latin, they proposed to drop the phrase. But Convocation would not have it so. "Vulgar tongue" represents an important principle, and we must have it, whatever it may mean to the working classes. A well-meant attempt at mediation, which suggested the phrase "mother tongue," was defeated, and "vulgar tongue" still stands. The Prayer-Book of the Church of England belongs to the people, and the "vulgar" tongue meant the tongue understood by the people. The retention of the word is a breach of the rule that the word was intended to lay down. There is a conservatism which in the long run will tend to radical destruction, and the conservatism of the Lower House of Convocation is getting perilously near to it.

