

It is difficult to conclude a review of this memorable struggle without one reflection which has an interest more than political. It is that this lamentable spectacle of denominational and antidenominational jealousy—these “miserable” dissensions, as Mr. Balfour justly termed them—raging around the simple question how little children can best be taught the elements of Secular and Religious education is really one of the best object-lessons ever given of the evils of Schism. It is because of the schisms among the Christians in England, and for no other reason, that a great step has now been taken towards the secularization of our elementary education, just as was previously done with our University education. In this case the spectacle is peculiarly scandalous. As Mr. Lambton justly said: “To tell him, in this twentieth century, that there was such a vast difference between Nonconformist Christians and Church of England Christians that they could not agree to give religious teaching in schools to children up to fifteen years of age, was perfectly astounding.” It is worse than astounding, it is disgraceful, and a deep and painful responsibility rests on all to whose action such a result is due. This is not the time, on the one hand, to be making light, as some so-called Liberal Churchmen are now disposed to do, of “the dissidence of dissent.” On the other hand, it is still less the time for Churchmen to be emphasizing and exaggerating their differences from their Nonconformist brethren, and endeavouring to render the English Catholic Church only one degree less exclusive than the Roman Catholic. The danger with which we are threatened by “our unhappy divisions,” on which Mr. Dimock has lately been giving us such admirable counsel in these pages, is nothing less than the practical secularization of all education, with its inevitable result of a tendency to the secularization of our national life. It is the greatest danger to which a nation and an empire could be exposed, and it is to Schism, in the main, that such a danger is due.

Review.

The Study of the Gospels. By J. ARMITAGE ROBINSON, D.D., Canon of Westminster and Chaplain in Ordinary to the King. London: Longmans.

WE welcome cordially this interesting and instructive contribution to the series of “Handbooks for the Clergy” which is being issued under the editorship of the author’s brother, the Vicar of All Hallows, Barking. In about 160 pages Canon Armitage Robinson, who is one of the first authorities on early Christian literature, whether at home or abroad, gives a lucid and devout sketch of the present position of learned inquiry on the authorship and composition of the Gospels. He tells us that it grew out of a series of lectures, of which the first three were delivered from the pulpit of Westminster Abbey, and the remainder in the Divinity School of Cambridge. With great advantage, for the purpose of such a handbook, he has preserved “the easier style and more direct address which belong to the lecture as compared with the formal manual.” His

object, he says, "has been to present in plain language such results of my own study as may serve as a guide to the studies of others"; and the book admirably answers this purpose. Anyone who takes it in hand will find that it leads him by an easy and instructive method through the main questions presented by the study of the Gospels; and we are happy to add that it will leave him substantially assured of the truth of the traditional belief of the Church on the subject. We think, indeed, that Dr. Robinson admits unnecessary doubts as to the date and authenticity of St. Matthew's Gospel, especially as he quotes Dr. Harnack as saying that its date is "probably A.D. 70-75," though with the reservation "except certain later additions." But he accepts the earlier of the dates which Dr. Harnack allows for St. John's Gospel, and is satisfied "to retain the unbroken tradition of its Apostolic authorship." He mentions, moreover, that Dr. Harnack, in sending to him his own "Chronology of Early Christian Literature," in which he "approximates to the older views," wrote that "he hoped that, as to its main positions, we should find ourselves in agreement, and that differences would henceforward appear in the interpretation of the books rather than in the problems of their date and authenticity." It is, in fact, an immense gain to the Christian argument that the most distinguished ecclesiastical Scholar in Germany has substantially admitted the truth of the tradition of the Church respecting the dates, and to a great extent respecting the authorship, of the books of the New Testament. The German criticism, which towards the end of the last century used to be thrown at the heads of "Apologists" in England by such controversialists as the late Professor Huxley, is now acknowledged in Germany itself—in Berlin itself—to have been mistaken, and the result of the controversy of fifty years is the rehabilitation in the most important points of ancient Christian tradition.

We may return, in some fuller criticism, to some of the problems which Dr. Armitage Robinson presents to us; but, meanwhile, we would call attention to a remarkable observation with which the book opens, and which seems to us to have a most important bearing on the questions now at issue respecting the Old Testament. "Christianity," says Dr. Robinson, "started upon her mission to the world with a book in her hand. That book was not the New Testament or any part of it. . . . The scriptures to which the Apostles appealed were the Old Testament scriptures. These held a unique position among the writings of the world. They contained the revelation of God to the chosen people of God; the revelation of His nature and of His will for men. The Apostles were taught by Christ that these scriptures pointed to Him as the fulfilment of the prophetic message; and thus on His authority they became the sacred book of the Christian Church."

These observations are critically true. Is it probable that a sacred Book, received on this authority, and thus appealed to by the Apostles when starting on their mission, could be marked by the confusions, the contradictions, the "unhistorical" statements, which too much modern criticism, even at Oxford and Cambridge, attributes to a great part of its contents?