

the special attention of all who lead devotional and intercessory meetings. It gives a very beautiful and suggestive "Vision of Earth," intended as a foundation for an "Edinburgh" central act of silent prayer. The London Missionary Society (16, New Bridge Street, E.C.) have issued, in a penny pamphlet called *The Heart of Vaiea*, letters of singular interest and beauty. They are written by a Samoan woman who is working alone as a missionary teacher in New Guinea, and are addressed to the missionary lady who taught Vaiea as a girl in Samoa, and who now translates the letters, and adds a brief sketch of the writer. For artlessness, reality, and devotion these letters will not easily be surpassed. The *Annual Report of the Central Board of Missions* has just been issued, and can be had from the secretary at the Church House, Westminster, S.W. Lastly, the new C.M.S. *Intercession Paper* (for July and August) suggests topics for meditation and prayer which will help to make fruitful many a holiday. A subject for a daily ten-minute meditation upon the Life of our Lord is outlined, and will form a bond of union between scattered workers as well as a deep preparation for future work.

G.



## Discussions.

### "HISTORICAL RECORDS AND INSPIRATION."

(*The Churchman*, May, p. 337; June, p. 472.)

I THINK that Canon Girdlestone's comment tends to obscure one of the chief conclusions of my paper. I sought to prove that intellectual honesty must lead the inquirer ultimately to one of two positions: (1) a belief in verbal inspiration of the most rigid and uncompromising sort, which secures itself only by ruling out of court all the witness of science and history, and therefore leaves no room for any Biblical criticism at all, whether conservative or liberal; and (2) such a belief in inspiration as consists with a determination to accept, on adequate evidence, any of the results of such criticism, and therefore has recourse, when any dispute arises, to a renewed careful scrutiny of the

evidence rather than to a denunciation of the conclusion as unchristian. Of these two positions it may be said that the first denies, while the second affirms, the present activity (of the same kind as in the past) of the Holy Ghost.

I wish to insist that recourse must be had *ultimately* to one of these two positions ; that no intermediate one is logically tenable. But this, of course, is very far from saying that at the present time every Christian occupies one or other of them. It is obvious that very many persons are at present trying to maintain some sort of balance midway between these two extremes. And so there is no need for me to disagree with Canon Girdlestone when he doubts whether Mr. Pilter accepts what I called a "mechanical theory" of inspiration. Perhaps he does not ; he certainly makes no attempt to defend the extreme logical form of it which I have just outlined. But at any rate he is standing somewhere between the two extremes, and it is just for that very reason that his position is open to the attack which I tried to bring against it.

I believe that this description of the state of things will enable us to understand the perplexing inconsistencies which occur in the remarks of leading Churchmen from time to time. It is notorious that the same speaker is often claimed as a supporter by both sides in the controversy—one party finding in some of his utterances a frank admission of the rights of the intellect, and the other appealing to some equally unmistakable insistence on the iniquity of modern critical conclusions. The explanation is, after all, a simple one. The speaker has relinquished the first point of view without adopting the second, and is trying to maintain a precarious balance between them. But such a position is necessarily one of unstable equilibrium ; so long as he is left entirely undisturbed from without, it may seem satisfactory enough, but the lightest breath of an inquirer will reveal its instability, and will set him moving to this way or to that. And the approach to one extreme will be arrested by some other inquirer, only to be succeeded by as uncontrolled a movement in the opposite direction. In other words, the speaker, under stress of criticism, makes statements the logical implications of which he does not perceive ; but they are perceived, and attention is called to them, by others, with the result which has been described already. And I am persuaded that this result is inevitable when the attempt is made to combine friendliness to conservative criticism with hostility to that which is called liberal.

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