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Editorial Topics.

UNDERGRADUATE RELIGION. The *Nineteenth Century* in its October and November issues contains interesting papers on The Religion of the Undergraduate. The writer of the initial article in the October number is a Mr. Deane, a Cambridge graduate of three years' standing. He directs his remarks particularly at Cambridge and incidentally at Oxford, his experience of the latter institution being gained by a residence at Cuddesdon some eight miles from the University town. In the November issue replies are published; graduates of both Universities have accepted the issue and undertaken to refute the charges on behalf of their respective alma maters. The contributor of the original article summed up his charge against the undergraduate body in the one word, "Agnosticism." Specifically he lays a considerable part of the burden of responsibility for the existing religion—or rather irreligion—of the undergraduates on two established institutions, viz.: the use of Paley's *Evidences* as a textbook, and the system of compulsory chapels. It would seem an essential ground of argument that we should have a distinct understanding of the term agnosticism. But to plunge into the philosophical, historical and theological meanings of the word is to run the risk of causing the discussion, in this connection, to become ridiculous. Certainly it is doubtful if we can soberly discuss the existence among young men between eighteen and twenty-two years of that species of agnosticism born of earnest and profound thought; of a conviction attained only after the deepest research into the principles of a First Cause. It is said that "there must necessarily be some agnosticism of the kind wherever religious and philosophical questions secure any considerable amount of thought." So far we agree, but only so far. Such a state of conviction may exist among the Dons, and the undergraduates may be affected by it, but in its maturity it can scarcely be said to have a place among the latter. We are led then to believe that the charges against the undergraduates would have better been summed up in the word thoughtlessness or indifferentism; an unwillingness,

perhaps, to entertain any serious thoughts on the subject of religion—even going so far as to scoff at religious matters. Here we must leave the general part of the accusation. The discussion on this point in the Nineteenth Century amounts simply, as the Cantab defendant remarks, to pitting one man's *ipse dixit* against another's. Mr. Deane, the accuser, has drawn a picture of the English undergraduate, his daily life, mode of thought and religious views. Mr. Fellows, Cantab, and Mr. Legge, Oxon, agree that the picture as presented is entirely erroneous.

Coming now to the specific criticisms, PALEY V. THE MR. FELLOWS, of Cambridge, still stands as CHAPELS. defendant while Mr. Legge sides partly with the accuser. Regarding the actual value

of Paley's *Evidences* the former has nothing to say. That its use is a direct encouragement to agnosticism he denies on the ground that "the more thoughtful freshman"—the one claimed to be influenced by the work—would certainly appreciate the circumstances under which the book was written. At Oxford there is no Paley, but its substitute—an examination called Divinity Moderations—is condemned by Mr. Legge. The Oxford graduate inclines to a belief in proper religious training as part of work preparatory to a degree—with relief under a conscience clause, which is altogether an excellent sentiment. The system of compulsory chapels is warmly argued in all three papers. As regards the system and its effect on the moral constitution we are of the opinion that the argument of Mr. Fellows, of Cambridge, is neither conclusive nor fairly put. "There is," he says, "in the Church itself a compulsory chapel system." "All priests and deacons are to say daily morning and evening prayer, etc." "Are we then," he asks, "to be told that the Church trains her clergy to look upon the worship of God as an obnoxious duty?" This argument, aimed as it is to clinch the matter, is rather unfairly put. No one wishes to question the wisdom of the Church's commands. At the same time, because the Church's mandates to her clergy do not reduce worship to the level of an "obnoxious duty," no argument is deduced to prove that compulsory attendance at Divine worship under college regulations may not produce the undesired effect. The writer says that he does not wish to enter on the larger subject of the wisdom or unwisdom of compelling members of the Church of England to attend the Church's services. Certainly this is a subject of greater scope than the one we are discussing. But the two subjects are so distinctly analogous, their relationship is so close, that the writer would seem to have ignored the principal matter of discussion. If the chapel system of Trinity were under observation Mr. Legge, of Oxford, would occupy a well-defined position on the fence. He is an advocate, or at all events not an opponent, of a compulsory system governing college chapels; but he stops short at a system whereby the keeping of a percentage of chapels is an integral part of the disciplinary routine necessary to the keeping of one's term. The latter he goes so far as to characterize as "obviously an abomination, prostituting the service of the Church to subserve the requirements of university discipline." The chapel question is bound always to be a bone of contention owing to the fact that the system is one whose theoretical and practical effects are more than ordinarily divergent. It would be a mistake to conclude from this controversy that there exists at the great English universities a general feeling of dissatisfaction at the chapel system as there con-