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JOURNAL OF
THE TRANSACTIONS
OF
The Victoria Institute,
OR,
Philosophical Society of Great Britain.

VOL. LIV.



LONDON:

(Published by the Institute, 1, Central Buildings, Westminster, S.W. 1.)

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1922.

646th ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING.

HELD IN THE CONFERENCE HALL, CENTRAL BUILDINGS, WESTMINSTER, S.W.,
ON MONDAY, JULY 3rd, 1922, AT 4.30 P.M.

THE VERY REV. HENRY WACE, D.D., Dean of Canterbury—President
of the Institute—in the Chair.

The Minutes of the previous meeting were read, confirmed, and signed, and the Hon. Secretary announced that the following had been elected since the last meeting:—As Members, G. Babington Michell, Esq., O.B.E., G. H. Judd, Esq., F.R.G.S., M.R.A.S.; as Life Associate, Albert Hiorth, Esq., C.E.; and as Associates, Miss Barbara P. Harper and Robert Duncan, Esq., M.B.E.

The Chairman then called on The Rt. Rev. Bishop J. E. C. Welldon, D.D., Dean of Durham, to deliver the annual address, on "Modernism."

ANNUAL ADDRESS.

MODERNISM.

BY THE RT. REV. BISHOP J. E. C. WELLDON, D.D.,
DEAN OF DURHAM.

It is the fashion of the present day to disparage, if not to despise, the Victorian era. Yet the Victorian era was one of the great periods in British history. What names can the 20th century show or hope to show in comparison with such names as Peel, Gladstone, Disraeli, Bright, Tennyson, Browning, Dickens, Thackeray, Macaulay, Carlyle, Ruskin, and George Eliot, Darwin, Hooker, Lyell, Adams, Kelvin and Lister, Newman, Keble, Pusey, Liddon, and Spurgeon, Leighton, Millais and Landseer, Davy and Stephenson. It has often been a surprise to me that the three reigns of women, Queen Elizabeth, Queen Anne and Queen Victoria, should have been signalised by the most conspicuous achievements in war and in peace, in literature and in science. Queen Victoria's reign is not unworthy to stand beside, although in time so long after, Queen Elizabeth's.

But the feature which above all others distinguishes the Victorian age is man's ever-increasing command over Nature. It will be enough to enumerate some few of the scientific discoveries which then enriched human nature and life, such as the locomotive steam engine, cheap literature, photography, electricity, and

as its results the electric telegraph and telephone, the safety lamp, the spectroscope, anæsthetic and antiseptic medicines, the motor car, the aeroplane, and, last of all, the cinema. I can think of no fact more remarkable than that the means of locomotion should have remained virtually unchanged from the age of the Pharaohs to the age of Queen Victoria, and that then within one generation the civilised world should have passed, as the late Lady Dorothy Nevill was fond of saying it had passed in her own experience, from stage-coaches to aeroplanes.

The consequence has been that the Victorian era, and indeed the whole 19th century, has come to be generally regarded as the age of scientific discovery. It is science which has given the age a peculiar name and fame; it is science which has stamped upon the age a special character.

I have sometimes thought that the spirit of science in the 19th century invaded territories which are not properly its own. Thus, science affected literature. Literature is not a science but an art. It is in its nature selective, not exhaustive. Like painting or sculpture it chooses its subjects with a discriminating taste. An accurate portraiture of a dunghill is not artistic; it is the very denial or the contradiction of art. But science admits no reserves, no delicacies. Whatever is or appears to be the truth, science must find it out and speak it out. Its one object is knowledge; it scorns the veil which art throws over knowledge. Even in biography it aims at recording a man's whole life from his birth to his death; not an act of his, not a speech, I had almost said not a letter is omitted. What a contrast is presented by the ancient masterpieces of biography, *e.g.*, by the *Agricola* of Tacitus; may I not reverently add, by the Gospels themselves! The author of the fourth Gospel concludes his narrative by telling of the many other things which Jesus did, "the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose," he says, "that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written," but he does not tell them, and although he does not tell them, his Gospel has enthralled the interest of the world.

Again, science has invaded the province of morals. It is well to consider that creeds are the parents of deeds. Fifty years ago it was commonly assumed that, whatever might be the processes of human thought, morality, like civilisation, was immutably assured. But what is morality? It is impossible to judge the moral effects of one intellectual or spiritual order by the lives of men who have been educated under another. Society is not uniform all the world over; there is a Mohammedan society, a Hindu society, a Buddhist society as well as a Christian society. But Christian society cannot exist apart from the Gospel and the Person of Jesus Christ. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Christ Jesus." The land-marks of Christen-

dom He ordained, He established and He alone maintains and upholds. It is not difficult to-day to observe how, in such degree as the nations of Europe reject or neglect His authority, they drift, as in instances like the sanctity of marriage and the purity of the home-life, into a moral system which is different from His and may be opposite to His, and which, if it remains, must stand upon some other basis or principle than His.

The survival of the fittest as an article of the Darwinian faith is the antithesis to the Christian benediction of the poor, the humble, the suffering, the afflicted. It is not a moral doctrine at all. The late Professor Huxley saw and in his Romanes lecture owned that it did not, and could not, justify Christian morality. For it means the triumph of the strong, it means the suppression of the weak; it means the worship of the super-man or the super-nation—that worship which has made Germany the curse of the world. Nietzsche in his wildest hours sinned only by applying the Darwinian theory to international life. To-day the civilised nations of the world exhibit a reaction towards Christian morals. The Conference at Washington, and, indeed, the League of Nations, is a rebuke to the theory of the mailed fist. It seems as though by a striking paradox the triumph of Christ's moral law in international life is beginning just when it seems to be failing in social and even in personal life. But be it so or not so, there can be no doubt as to the absolute difference between the law of science and the law of the Gospel; and the law of morality, as Christians have always understood it, depends not upon science, but upon the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The spirit of science then, or of natural science, as it is sometimes called, was in the 19th century triumphant. Its incursion into the domain of letters and morals was an unmistakable evidence of its triumph. In its new-born pride it set no limit to its authority. The new heaven and the new earth of which men had dreamed, or at least the new earth, would, it was assumed, be created by the inventions of scientific research. Science, looking upon the world as it had been and as it was, conceived the audacious idea of revolutionising all the many activities of human thought.

It was in this spirit that science attacked the problems of ancient history. Literary criticism began to breathe a scientific air. For science does not merely observe and collate facts; it often asserts a hypothesis, which is itself a bold effort of imagination; then it examines whether the facts do or do not agree with the hypothesis, and, if they do agree, it accepts the hypothesis as true. That was the way in which Descartes dealt with his theory of vortices; Copernicus with his of the revolution of the heavenly bodies; Newton with his of gravitation. There is no

doubt that science in its loftiest flights, no less than art, demands the exercise of the imaginative faculty. The literary criticism of which I am speaking found its proper home in Germany; for the Germans, as Madame de Stael long ago saw, are more keenly addicted to theories, and more strongly affected by them, than any other European nation. Wolf set to work upon the dissolution and reconstruction of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. He broke up each of these poems into a number of disjointed ballads; then he recombined them in the name of Homer; but his Homer was no more than a mere name. The extraordinary effect of Wolf's treatise was due to its coincidence with the new spirit or temper of literary science. Then Niebuhr followed suit by attempting to re-write all the early chapters of Roman history. He believed himself capable of discriminating between truth and falsehood in that history. He traced it backwards to a number of ballads corresponding with the Wolfian ballads or rhapsodies, such ballads as Macaulay tried to reproduce in his well-known *Lays of Ancient Rome*. How far Niebuhr attained success or failed in attaining it is still an open question; but it is probable that the reaction against his conclusions has been stronger than against his methods of arriving at them. Still the history of ancient Rome according to Niebuhr is not the traditional history, but something widely different, and that something determined by literary criticism acting upon the principles of natural science.

Time passed, and it brought the inevitable consequence. The spirit of re-writing poetry or history passed from Homer and Livy to the Bible, and especially to the Old Testament. In its first representatives, men like Eichhorn and Ewald, it assumed a form of reasonable moderation; but the transition from them to Wellhausen and Weizäcker marks its progress towards extravagance; for as it acquired fresh courage, it aimed at re-writing, I might almost say at inverting, the history of the Jews. There was really no limit to its audacity. It was not content with splitting books like the Pentateuch or Hexateuch into fragments after the manner of Wolf's ballads; but at the hands of such a critic as the late Dr. Cheyne it aspired to fix the dates not only of particular books, but of particular chapters and even verses in the same book. Dr. Cheyne's method of treating the Psalter and the prophetic books falls little short of insanity. Germany was the centre of the new critical school, which somehow arrogated to itself the title of the higher criticism; and in Germany itself the centre of the school was Tübingen. Nobody denies the industry or the acumen of Ferdinand Christian Baur. But nobody to-day, I think, accepts his theory of the Pauline epistles. Yet the professors of Holland and Switzerland could not or would not lag behind the professors of Germany. Leyden and Zürich became the rivals of Tübingen. The zenith or the nadir of literary

criticism was reached, I suppose, in the Encyclopædia Biblica, especially in those articles in which Dr. Schmiedel practically repudiated every passage and verse of the four Gospels, except half-a-dozen expressions which happened to coincide with his own arbitrary conception of our Lord's Personality.

In my estimate of this wild literary criticism I do not profess to speak as a theologian; I speak as a scholar. It has been my fortune during many years to be concerned with classical scholarship; and I say there is not among classical scholars in Great Britain, if there is to-day even in Germany, one who would pretend to solve the problems of Greek and Roman literature upon the principles—if, indeed, they deserve to be called principles—of the higher criticism as applied to the Old and the New Testament. Nobody, except perhaps Father Hardouin, the Jesuit, who disbelieved in the authenticity of all or nearly all the writings which have come down to the modern world since the Renaissance under the names of the well-known Greek and Roman authors, has rivalled the audacity of the Modernists. It is easy to show, and in some essays which I wrote a good many years ago I think I did show, that the evidence for the books, at least of the New Testament, is considerably stronger than the evidence for the books of classical antiquity. But in the study of the Bible I was brought up at the feet of men, honoured and revered, who were far removed from the spirit of the higher criticism, men like Westcott and Lightfoot and Hort; and from them I learned that the office of true critics is not to indulge their fancies in speculation upon the words which a person living many centuries ago would have been likely to use, not to accept some of his recorded words and to reject others according to the canons of personal taste, but to search and weigh the evidence for his words and to accept or not accept them according as the evidence is sufficient or insufficient, and then to put upon the words so accredited the interpretation naturally suggested by common sense. External evidence, not subjective impression, was the law of literary criticism as those great masters enforced it. And, indeed, if subjective criticism once usurps control in literature, where will be the end? One critic, who can know little of human nature, will tell you that the same Psalmist could not experience the alternating moods of enthusiasm and depression or even of joy and sadness, as if the poet Cowper had not written both *The Strange Adventure of John Gilpin* and *The Castaway*. Other critics will tell you that our Lord could not have spoken of the Church or have ordained Baptism in the name of the sacred Trinity, or that He could not have uttered His eschatological prophecies, nay, that He could not have spoken the parable of the Prodigal Son. I say, and I say advisedly, that, if subjective criticism is a sound principle of Biblical exegesis, the Gospels

as credible authorities disappear, and the Person of our Lord, as the Church has believed and adored Him, vanishes. So competent a judge of history and so impartial a judge of Christian history as the late Sir John Seeley has declared, in *Ecce Homo*, that, if the miraculous element in the life of our Lord is expunged from the Gospels, He becomes a person no less mythical than Hercules. But if the Jesus Christ of the Gospels is destroyed, who and what remains? I think I may claim to have read every or almost every life of Jesus Christ which has been written in the last hundred years; and there is not one of them which, if it is naturalistic, is to my mind, satisfactory. For if it is possible to criticise the Gospels, it is possible to disbelieve them; but the one thing which is a sheer impossibility is to re-write them.

It is one of the paradoxes which were accepted in European life before the great war that the Germans were tacitly, if not expressly, acknowledged to be the intellectual leaders of Europe. Germany advertised itself; Germany eulogised itself; and, because the Germans had three times proved themselves to be efficient in the art of war, they were assumed to be efficient in all other arts. But the Germans, although they are industrious, have never been a very clever people. A comparison between France and Germany, whether in literature or art or science or even in spirituality, will at once demonstrate the superiority of the French. Yet certain schools of English divines seemed to hang with breathless suspense upon the pronouncements of German theology. When Dr. Harnack published his book upon the authorship of the Acts of the Apostles, a book not containing, I think, a single argument which had not been advanced by English writers before him, his admission that the author was a medical man, and that medical man St. Luke, was acclaimed as a triumph of orthodoxy. But German theologians are strangely ignorant of all such critical or exegetical work as has been done outside Germany. What is to be said of Professor Julicher, who can discuss the commentators upon the fourth Gospel without mentioning Bishop Westcott; or the commentators upon St. Paul's Epistles without mentioning Bishop Lightfoot? Nay, in the field of Christian apologetics so great a name as Bishop Butler's is practically unknown to Germany.

But the circumstances of intellectual and still more of academic life in Germany have tended in a remarkable degree to the production of heretical, and I may say extravagant, writings. Whenever freedom of thought is prohibited in politics, it tends to run riot elsewhere. It is pretty sure to be guilty of excess in literature, above all in theology. Before the war it was a capital offence to say a word against the Kaiser; but any one who was

a professor or, indeed, any one who was not a professor could say whatever he liked to say against Jesus Christ. It is probable that every nation, like every individual, is partly Conservative, partly Radical; and, as in Great Britain political Radicals have not seldom been Conservatives in academical or social life, so the military discipline of Germany was counter-balanced by its speculative liberty. It was generally expected that a student of theology looking forward to a professorial career would signalise himself by some novelty of hypothesis in the dissertation which he submitted with a view to his academical degree. Such a student could easily achieve an ephemeral success, as indeed students have achieved it in Great Britain, by collecting all the available evidence in support of his novel theory and ignoring all the evidence which told against it.

A familiar proverb indicates the danger of failing to see the wood because of the trees. The higher critics are or would appear to be at times so deeply occupied in watching for small particular features, such as contradictions or omissions, in a literary work that they lose sight of the effect which the work as a whole is calculated to produce. Let me then cite two features of commanding significance.

One is the history of the Jewish people. It is a history without parallel, without rival in the world. The few historians, such as the late Mr. Goldwin Smith, who in their love of paradox have tried to prove that the Jews are only one among a good many outcast and nomad peoples, have signally failed. There is not, nor has there even been nor will there in all probability ever be, a people comparable with the Jews in their historical continuity, their isolation, their privileges, their sufferings, their world-wide dispersion, their peculiarity of aspect and custom, and their complete refusal of assimilation to other peoples. Still as ever, in accordance with the prophetic words, they "dwell alone" and are "not reckoned among the nations." But Jewish history is inseparable from Jewish literature. The Jews have been the most vigilant custodians of their own sacred books. They have literally guarded every jot and tittle of them all. They have gladly endured persecution, martyrdom, rather than compromise the authority or the sanctity of those books. Let their adherence to the Sabbath Day, to the Passover, and to the distinction between clean and unclean meats be my witness. I sometimes think that God has providentially kept the Jewish nation alive, that it may by its very existence confirm the substantial truth of the Old Testament. For if the literature of Judaism falls, what is the truth of the Jewish people? If there was no migration of Abraham, no sojourn in Egypt, no conquest of the land which is called holy

alike by Jews, by Christians and by Mohammedans; no captivity in Babylon, no age-long anticipation of the Messiah, then who are the Jews? Whence came they? What is the truth of their history? I venture to assert that, if the stories of the Patriarchs in the Book of Genesis are not extremely ancient stories, however the Book of Genesis may have assumed its present form, they defy every test of literary criticism. But it is not credible that the Jews should be and should always have been mistaken as to the character or the origin of their own sacred books. Does anybody tell me that the Jews misconceived the relative dates of the Pentateuch and the Prophecies? You might as well tell me that an Englishman could suppose Tennyson to be a poet of an earlier date than Spenser or Chaucer. The Jews knew, and they must have known, better than any German critic, which of their sacred books represented an earlier, and which a later, stage of their national history. I do not insist upon the details of a literature so ancient as the Hebrew; but to me it seems that the Jews are sufficient witnesses to their own literature, as that literature is to the anticipation of the Messiah and the advent of Jesus Christ is to the fulfilment of that anticipation.

The fact is that the existence of the Jewish people confirms the Old Testament as the existence of the Christian Church confirms the New Testament. It has been well said, and it should always be borne in mind, that the Church preceded the Gospels. If the Gospels and the Epistles and all the sacred writings of the New Testament were blotted out, it would still be necessary to account for the origin of the Christian Church. There are people who talk as if no task on earth were easier than the foundation of a Church. Why, there are only three great progressive religions in the world; and they are all properly Oriental. The West, with all its pride of achievement, has never been able to originate a religion. How, then, was the Christian Church born? How did it lift its head among its enemies? How did it conquer the civilised nations of Greek and Rome? Everybody who knows Gibbon's famous five explanatory causes of Christianity knows that the judgment of a great historian may be warped by an unhappy prejudice. The Church of Christ dates back to Christ Himself. If He was human, it may fail; if He is Divine, it cannot fail. He has not promised that it shall not be wounded, stricken almost to death; but He has promised that it shall not die.

Jesus Christ Himself is a unique figure in the history of mankind. There is none like Him; there is no second to Him. He is the undisputed head of the whole human family. His whole life, as the Gospels record it, passes on a superhuman

plane. His words are no less miraculous than His works. For what is the use of denying that He walked on the sea or healed the sick or gave sight to the blind or even raised the dead to life, if it is true that He lived Himself without sin, that He forgave the sins of others, that He could minister comfort to all the weary and heavy-laden souls of earth, above all that He shall come again in the glory of His Father and the holy angels to be the Judge of all the living and the dead?

There is a danger that Modernism, like Agnosticism, may forget certain positive laws of human nature. One of them, in the domain of religion, is that, if a person does not hold one belief, he does and must practically hold the opposite belief. Belief is not a mathematical certainty; it is the choice of one among two or more possibilities; it is the inclination of the logical scale to one side or the other. Tennyson was fond of saying, "It is difficult to believe, but it is more difficult not to believe." He meant, for example, that the theistic position, difficult though it might be, was less difficult than the atheistic position. Agnosticism may not unfairly be described as intellectual cowardice, if not as intellectual impotence, because it refuses to pronounce a judgment in a domain where it is essential that a rational being such as man is should be a judge. It is impossible that such a being, finding himself placed in a universe so orderly yet so wonderful as it is, should refrain from asking himself, How did it come into existence? Who was its author and what is his relation to myself and to all other human beings? For if a man does not believe that there is a God, he believes that there is no God. If he does not act as believing in God, then he acts as disbelieving in God. Similarly, if a man does not believe that Jesus Christ was Divine as well as human, he believes, or practically believes, that Jesus Christ was only human. Then he discards from his creed the supreme qualities which distinguish Jesus Christ from men who are only men. He discards also the supreme obligation of humanity to Jesus Christ. The Modernist, I think, is open to the same criticisms. He will tell you what he does not believe; he will suggest grounds of doubt if not of disbelief; but he will not tell you what he does believe. Yet if he refuses to believe in the Virgin birth of Jesus Christ, then he believes that Jesus Christ was born of human parents in the natural order. If he does not believe that Jesus Christ rose in His bodily presence from the grave, then he believes that the body of Jesus Christ mouldered in the grave. If he does not believe that Jesus Christ left the earth by a mysterious process which is theologically called the Ascension into Heaven, then he believes that Jesus Christ still lives only in the sense in which all men who have ever been born, or at least all the redeemed of Christ, live also after death. It may be admitted that the phrase,

“ He ascended into Heaven,” like the phrase “ He descended into Hell,” is metaphorical, but at least the metaphor enshrines a vital truth. I have sometimes thought that, if Jesus Christ was seen alive after His resurrection by His disciples as the Gospels narrate, then no account of His passing from the earth could be more probable than that of the simple words “ A cloud received Him out of their sight.” At all events, the Modernists, standing face to face with the orthodox faith and creed of the Church, cannot justly maintain an attitude of neutrality; they cannot say, as Professor Gardner says in his *Exploratio Evangelica*, that “ the open grave presents a problem which objective criticism can never solve.” For as the Jewish people survive to attest the general truth of the Old Testament, so the Christian Church survives to attest the general truth of the New Testament. It is not the New Testament but the Church which is the standing witness to Christianity. The Church would exist if no single book of the New Testament were existent to-day. Nay, the Church lies always behind the New Testament, behind the Gospels themselves. For nothing is more remarkable than that the faith, as appears in all the New Testament, is always and everywhere the same; St. Paul in his Epistles shows no need of recommending the faith in its fundamental articles to his converts, wherever they may be; but the faith is one and the Church is one everywhere, and there is everywhere one and the same attitude of devotion to Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.

There is reason to think that Modernists tend to misrepresent or at least to misunderstand the nature of the Scriptural language, especially in the Old Testament. God is frequently depicted there under the conditions of human nature. It is perhaps inconceivable during the childhood or youth of humanity that He should be depicted in any other way. But the language of such representation has long ceased to be literally accepted. No intelligent Jew can have imagined that God rose from His bed early in the morning; no such Jew can have supposed the mighty hand and the stretched-out arm of God to be other than figurative expressions. Nobody can have taken the breath or the fire of His nostrils to be a literal fact. Similarly in the New Testament our Lord's Ascension into Heaven, like His descent into Hades, was a phrase symbolical of a certain spiritual experience; it was not a physical reality. Even to-day it is no less natural to speak of Heaven as over our heads, and Hell as beneath our feet, than it is to speak of the sun as rising in the morning and setting in the evening. The doctrine which represents our Lord as sitting at His heavenly Father's side or at His right hand no more implies that God possesses a side than that He possesses a hand or an arm like a man. But if such

expressions as I have quoted were figurative or metaphorical, or just because they were figurative or metaphorical, they implied a reality lying behind them. The wrath of God was not less an awful verity because it did not show itself in His mantling cheek and His burning eyes. The figure, it is true, disappeared; yet the fact remained. But, according to the Modernist theory of the Virgin birth and the Ascension and the Resurrection, what does remain? Is it anything which distinguishes Jesus Christ from the generality of mankind or anything which accounts for His personal influence upon His disciples or for the creation and diffusion of His Church? It is impossible to help feeling that there is all the difference between a metaphor which, like a veil, covers a solemn truth and a metaphor which covers nothing at all. The Resurrection may or may not have taken place, as it is recorded to have taken place in all the Gospels; but if it did not so take place, how did the earthly life of Jesus Christ differ in its ending from the life of any other human being? The Ascension, too, may or may not have taken place, as it is recorded to have taken place in the Gospels; but if not, how can Jesus Christ be said to be living now in any other sense than that in which all men live after their deaths, and how is He able to succour His Christians as He succoured St. Stephen in the hour of His martyrdom? How, too, is it legitimate or possible to offer Him the homage of worship and prayer?

Yet again the Modernists must, I am afraid, be said to deceive themselves, and at times to deceive other people, by an unnatural use of language. They freely speak of Jesus Christ as Divine; they resent somewhat angrily, as the Dean of Carlisle has resented, the imputation that they do not believe in His Divinity. But when they speak of His Divinity, what do they mean by it? Do they mean that He is Divine only in the sense of being supremely excellent, as Raphael may be called a divine painter or Shakespeare a divine poet? Or do they mean that He stood in a relation in which no other person who has lived upon earth has ever stood to Almighty God? Was He in fact only a Son of God, as all men are His sons, or was He in a unique sense *the* Son of God?

It is here that the Modernists seem to me to occupy much the same ground as the Positivists a generation ago. For the Positivists, while they denied the truth of Christianity, were only too eager to employ Christian formulas and Christian phrases. The service which used to be conducted by the late Dr. Congreve in the so-called Church of Humanity in Lamb's Conduit Street in London, was almost a parody of the Liturgy of the Church of England. The grace of humanity, the love of humanity, and the fellowship of humanity stood instead

of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost.

The Positivists profess, like the Christians, a belief in immortality; but the immortality of the Positivists is not such an immortality as Christians have always conceived, i.e., the unending survival of personality. It is no more than an immortality of remembrance; and such an immortality, so far from being a guarantee for the reward of the good, and the punishment of the evil in the future life, lies and must lie open to the suspicion that posterity may forget and ignore its benefactors, or may never recognise who they had been, or, worst of all, may misjudge its enemies or its benefactors, as often happens in life, and may even mistake its benefactors for its enemies.

It is well that writers and speakers should deal honestly with themselves and with the world. Words, as Bacon hinted long ago, are only too likely to recoil upon the persons who use them. Nothing is gained, and everything may be lost, if the representatives of different modes of thought use the same language, but use it in wholly different senses.

It may be worth while to say a word upon the question of evidence. For critics of the Bible and of the revelation which the Bible enshrines do not seem always to treat the question of evidence fairly. It is, of course, possible to declare, in the spirit of Hume's famous canon, that miracles cannot occur or cannot deserve to be believed, because it is more probable that the evidence for a miracle should be false than that the miracle itself should be true. But such a declaration, if it is made, is tantamount to a denial of God; for if there is a living God, there can be no doubt that He can, if He will, alter or affect the course of Nature, or, to speak more accurately, He can reveal the course of Nature in a new light. The theory of Einstein, if it is accepted, is a departure from the theory of Sir Isaac Newton or a modification of his theory in relation to the natural universe. For a miracle may be not contrary to Nature, but, as Augustine defines it, contrary to Nature as man has hitherto conceived Nature. But upon Hume's canon a miracle, if *ex hypothesi* it should occur, could not be believed. No evidence would be sufficient to prove it. If so, then the argument that the evidence is insufficient to justify belief is hardly straightforward, when no evidence possible or imaginable would be sufficient to prove it. A good many years ago I asked a distinguished agnostic professor in the University of Cambridge what amount of evidence would satisfy him that such an event as our Lord's Resurrection had taken place. He did not answer, and I do not think he could answer my question. But two points are easily established. One is that the evidence for the authenticity of the books of the New Testament is far stronger than the

corresponding evidence for the authenticity of the books of classical literature. The other is that the critics of the Bible and of the New Testament particularly are sometimes disposed to acquiesce in comparatively slight evidence for a scientific theory and to demand unreasonably strong evidence for the story of the Gospel. I do not profess to speak as a man of science; but I have long felt that the absence of the missing link, as it has been called, *i.e.*, the gap occurring between man and the anthropoid ape or the animal next in order to him, just at the point where the gap ought most easily to be bridged, as it might be anticipated that the animals next in chronological order to man would, next to man himself, be the most frequently discoverable, is a weakness in the evolutionary doctrine. The Piltdown skull, although I was present when a learned professor expounded its significance to the British Association, was and is in my eyes an unsubstantial basis for the elaborate superstructure which was built upon it. But what is to be said now when the world of science has been lately called to reconstruct its doctrine of man's origin and his history upon the strength of one decayed tooth which has come to light in the wilds of the North American Continent or elsewhere. I do not wish to prejudice scientific evidence. I only ask that it may not be wholly different in quality and quantity from the evidence demanded in the domain of literature. There is, in fact, only one outstanding miracle, and that is the Person of Jesus Christ. It is impossible, I think, to mistake His personal claim. If His own words respecting His own nature and office are accepted as true, then it cannot be denied that He asserted His own superiority to the conditions and limitations of ordinary human life. But every student of the Gospels must recognise the necessity of accounting for the extraordinary influence of Jesus Christ upon His disciples. That a poor Galilean peasant should have conquered both the Jewish theocracy and the Roman imperial polity is a marvel in itself. But how did He win His disciples? Why did they at once obey His summons? and how did He inspire them with the enthusiasm of which the Acts of the Apostles is an abiding witness? The more Jesus Christ is divested of His superhuman authority, the more difficult of explanation becomes His success in founding the one universal religion upon earth.

There is, in fact, only one miracle; it is Jesus Christ Himself. His life has been written in the four Gospels, above all, in the three Synoptic Gospels. It may be true or false, but it cannot be written again; and Modernists, if they seek to re-write it, will be driven to the necessity of discarding in a wholly arbitrary spirit, all such works and words of His as do not accord with their preconceived idea of His Person.

The Incarnation of Jesus Christ is indeed a miracle; nay, it is the miracle of miracles. But, if it is believed, it carries with it the possibility of other miracles, especially the miracles of His own life. It would be wrong to pretend that these miracles are all supported by equal evidence or all equally affect His Divinity. There can be no reason why criticism should not carefully scrutinise the documents which attest His miracles. His Resurrection is clearly more important to the Christian Church, and therefore to the Christian faith, than His birth of a Virgin Mother. But Christians, who believe His Incarnation, will not be prone to disbelieve His Virgin birth; for the lesser miracle is, as it were, involved in the greater. *Mirabilis mirabiliter natus est*, as Augustine says; His birth was miraculous, because He was Himself miraculous. The denial of His miracles, then, is so far, but only so far, serious, as it imports the denial of His Divinity. It is a fair demand, then, that a writer or thinker who rejects the miracle of the Incarnation, and therefore rejects all other miracles of Christ's life, because he rejects the miraculous element in human nature no less than in Nature itself, should explicitly state his position.

But Modernism, in so far as it assimilates Jesus Christ to common humanity, entails a loss of which Modernists seem to be often unaware. The new interpretation of the Christian creeds may be said to eviscerate them of their spiritual value. Not seldom it is more destructive than Socinianism, at least the Socinianism of Faustus Socinus himself. For if the pre-existence of Jesus Christ before His human birth is denied, then the Incarnation is not a voluntary act of self-humiliation evincing the Divine sympathy with human kind. If the superhuman powers of Jesus Christ are denied, then His life loses the impressive dignity of the self-restraint which made Him unwilling to use for Himself the powers which He used, although under severe limitation, for others. If His crucifixion was inevitable, or, in other words, if He had no power to lay down His life and to take it again, or if the legions of angels would not at His bidding have sped to His deliverance, then the sacrifice upon the Cross is robbed of the spell which has in all the Christian centuries appealed to the hearts and transfigured the lives of innumerable men and women. If there was no Resurrection, and His body when it had been laid in the earth remained there like the bodies of all other human beings, then His Church was built upon a chimera, and it becomes necessary to account for the motive which within a few days converted His disciples from apostates into apostles, and nerved them with a strength, a zeal, a confidence, and a devotion adequate to the evangelisation of the world.

To conclude my paper, then; I believe that Modernism is a retrograde and not a progressive movement. I believe that it tends to materialise man's view of the universe, at a time when science itself is beginning to spiritualise that view. I believe that it is inconsistent with the realities both of Jewish and of Christian history. I believe that it is critically unscientific, as it is religiously undevotional. And I believe that Christianity must be understood and embraced either in the sense of the ancient Catholic creeds, or that it cannot be understood and embraced at all.

The Chairman, in proposing a vote of thanks to the lecturer, voiced the general feeling of the meeting by emphasising the value and importance of the paper, to which he added weighty words of confirmation. This vote was seconded by the Rev. Prebendary Fox and passed by acclamation.

A vote of thanks to the Chairman was then proposed by Dr. A. T. Schofield.

Lieut.-Colonel Mackinlay said, I have much pleasure in seconding the vote of thanks to our Chairman. Bishop Welldon has given us a very admirable paper to-day, we are thankful for his scholarship and for his adherence to the plain straightforward meaning of the words of the Bible. We are most thankful also to Dean Wace, the Chairman of the day, and now our honoured President. The weighty words of the two, to whom we have listened to-day, give a very practical denial to the shallow criticisms of some who say that those who hold to the old beliefs are either ignorant and unlearned, or else intellectually dishonest.

Dean Wace has helped the Victoria Institute very much for many years as one of our Vice-Presidents, and now he has crowned his efforts for us by accepting the office of President. His career is well known. I have been in the habit for the past year or two of reading to a blind clergyman, and some months ago he selected Dean Wace's searching replies to Professor Huxley's fallacies. These were written a good many years ago, but they are still most valuable, as the situation nowadays with the Professors is very similar to what it then was with Huxley. The Dean has ever since valiantly and learnedly contended successfully for the truth, and he has courageously opposed those who have given way to the uncertain changing beliefs of the day.

We rejoice that we have such a President, who is endowed with spiritual-mindedness, influence, learning, common sense and a saving sense of humour; may he be long spared to fill his important and responsible post. Let us all loyally support him, and may the Lord abundantly bless all his efforts.