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1934

775<sup>TH</sup> ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING,

HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOM B, THE CENTRAL HALL,  
WESTMINSTER, S.W.1, ON MONDAY, FEBRUARY 19<sup>TH</sup>, 1934,

AT 4.30 P.M.

DR. JAMES W. THIRTLE, M.R.A.S., IN THE CHAIR.

The Minutes of the previous Meeting were read, confirmed, and signed, and the HON. SECRETARY announced the election of the Rev. Karl Johan Oye, F. J. Bromhead, Esq., and Sydney Herbert Flook, Esq., as Associates.

The CHAIRMAN then called on Mr. Thomas Fitzgerald to read his paper on "The Christian Faith the Final Criterion of Philosophy" (being the Langhorne Orchard Prize Essay, 1933).

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*THE CHRISTIAN FAITH THE FINAL CRITERION  
OF PHILOSOPHY.*

By THOMAS FITZGERALD, Esq.

*(Langhorne-Orchard Prize Essay, 1933.)*

ALL who are acquainted with the history and doctrines of the various schools of philosophy must have observed, that no school has spoken authoritatively and absolutely of the *beginning* of things, or of the *ultimate purpose and end of the universe*.

What is philosophy? The question may sound commonplace, yet in treating of this subject, it is necessary to define our terms. Mr. G. H. Lewes has stated that "Definitions form the basis of all philosophy,"\* We, therefore, commence with the following definitions:—

- 1.—Philosophy consists of the accumulated thoughts of wise men seeking Truth.
- 2.—A philosopher is a wise man who, by study and reflection, seeks for Truth.

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\* *History of Philosophy.* Vol. I, 4th Ed., p. 236.

We do not here use the term *Christian philosophy*, for, as a term, it is open to serious objection.

The very substance of philosophy consists in the exercise of man's own unaided powers of thought and reason. Hence it has its origin in man, and, like water, will not rise above its source, while the term Christian, connotes what is *above* man and supposes a supernatural revelation. Here, too, there are terms we must define.

- 1.—A supernatural revelation we take to mean, that work of an all-wise Creator who, “at sundry times and in divers manners” throughout man's history, has made known what is Truth.
- 2.—A Christian, in the proper sense of the term, is one who belongs to Christ (Christ's man), and who becomes His disciple.
- 3.—A Christian philosopher is one who has received the Divine revelation of Truth, and reflects upon all else in the light of that revelation.

The subject is challenging in its character, for it is possible to be a wise man and a philosopher, yet not a Christian. Professor Tyndall has said that, “The physical philosopher, as such, must be a pure materialist.”\* This is true if he is nothing more than a *physical philosopher*.

The title of the subject takes for granted, that there exists what is known as philosophy, and as philosophy, it is still without a final criterion, and the title also supposes that there is such a thing as the Christian Faith, which is the *final criterion* that philosophy needs.

G. H. Lewes, in his *History of Philosophy*, frequently refers to the ancient philosophers searching after a final criterion. Writing of Plato's Method, he says: “Up to his time there had been dogmatism and scepticism; he first saw the necessity of controlling dogmatism by scepticism, while the final conclusions of research must nevertheless be dogmatic and *based upon a criterion of certitude*” (italics ours).†

There is no evidence that this criterion of certitude was ever found, but on the contrary we have the admission of one in our own time, that he does not think we should expect to find it.

\* See *Trans. Vict. Inst.*, viii, p. 87.

† Vol. I, 4th Ed., p. 243.

We quote from a paper read before the American Congress of Philosophy in 1926 :—

“ Many students of philosophy will be ready to acknowledge, as an actual fact that there are two conceptions which have become superannuated and almost foreign to the spirit of modern thought, two words which have lost all authority, and now even lend themselves either to suspicion or to derision : the conception of metaphysics, that is, of the research of a reality which should be above and beyond experience, and the conception of a systematic or final philosophy, that is, of *the construction of a closed system* which should *once for all* constrict reality, or the supreme reality, within its bounds ” (italics ours).\*

After reading this, we wondered if some concrete system could be found, apart from metaphysics or a systematic philosophy, but no, we must go on in a state of flux, for he continues : “ There is no doubt that philosophy is opposed to the transcendent and consequently mythological conception of religion ; but since the effectual religiosity of man is, and has never been anything but, a confident effort towards purification and elevation, a striving, through joy and sorrow, towards truth and goodness, this modern and human philosophy admits within itself all the earnest and sincere religion which can be in the world. And since it does not consider reality as a fact, but as *a continuous doing, a perpetual creation*, it does not impose any limit to new forms either of life or thought. The sacred mystery is after all but this infinite creative power, this divine life of the universe ” (italics ours).

These extracts are a sample of the ideas which are broadcast among the masses to-day, and we are told that they show one of the characteristic directions in which thought is exploring.

\* \* \* \*

What are we Christians doing to direct the minds of our fellows toward Him who is the Way, the Truth and the Life ? For “ What is the chaff to the wheat ? saith the Lord ” (Jer. xxiii, 28).

We must continue to look upon philosophy as an unfinished product, and still engaging man's thoughts in his search for

\* See *An Introduction to Philosophy*, by Leonard Russell, p. 78. Mr. Russell quoted these extracts in a series of wireless talks, which were published afterwards as one of an inexpensive popular series of books, which meet a widespread demand from working-class students.

Truth, therefore to ally the term Christian with it, only causes a confusion of ideas, and makes two things, which are distinct in aim and character, to appear as one. Even those who are wedded to the idea of a Christian philosophy, appear to be uncertain of their ground, for while referring to the conflicts, in which a Christian philosophy would be bound to engage, with modern theories of knowledge, it is urged that, "First of all, and above all, we must take seriously the New Testament doctrine of the self-revelation of God to the individual.

"It is better to hold this fast, in face of all sorts of difficulties, even as a shipwrecked man may cling to a rock from which the waves almost detach his hands, than to snatch at compromising theories and alien support. There are many philosophies which, in respect of their best elements and their ideals, *will fit into Christianity: there is no philosophy into which Christianity will fit*"\* (italics ours).

The man who starts with the New Testament doctrine of the self-revelation of God to the individual, does so, not on philosophical grounds, but on the ground of *Faith*. It has been truly said that you cannot "get up by means of reason, yet when you come down with the lamp of Faith into the sphere of reason, you perceive some truths that you saw not before."†

The uncertainties of scientific and philosophical theories which history records, render it impossible, even were it desirable, to attempt the formulation of the great doctrines of Christianity in terms of modern thought, especially when we are told that "at bottom philosophy is but the direct expression of the mind of the generation that produces it."‡

The attempts of the Early Fathers to meet the demands of philosophy; the Scholastic Theology of the Middle Ages; and in modern times the endeavours to reconcile the Bible and Science, have largely ended in failure, causing damage to the testimony of Christianity, without appeasing the hostility of the enemies of the Truth.

When the New Testament canon was closed, the doctrines of Christianity were fixed for all time. The truths which Christ and His apostles taught were enshrined in those sacred writings, and were to become the infallible guide of the Church's life and

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\* See *Trans. Vict. Inst.*, xliii, p. 67.

† "Rabbi" Duncan: *Colloquia Peripatetica*; p. 70.

‡ *Trans. Vict. Inst.*, xliii, p. 75.

witness, supported by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven at Pentecost.

Human philosophy cannot help us in the matter of a Divine revelation. In a reference made to Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*, picturing the fall of God and the resulting freedom and triumph of mankind, the Rev. S. C. Carpenter stated that "Shelley's 'humanism' was very far from being the same thing as Christianity. But there was in Shelley's creed little that Christianity has not been able to absorb, and find congenial to its best self."

Now we hold that such a view of Shelley's philosophy is derogatory to Christianity, for Christianity does not absorb anything which the human mind produces, and it has no need to do so. However, the writer practically contradicts his own view of Shelley's doctrine, for he adds: "Some people say that Christians always first denounce, and then pretend that they believed it all the time. What Christians really affirm is, not that either they or their forefathers believed it all the time, but that, *if it is true, it was there all the time* (italics ours). Christianity is always a much larger thing than any generation ever knows at the time."\*

We recur to a statement made earlier in this paper. We stated that the term *Christian Philosophy* was open to serious objection, and for this we have offered reasons. While, however, some may object to the term, there are others who hold that we are justified in speaking of a *Divine Philosophy*, and it may therefore be worth while to examine the term, in order to discover, if there is such a thing, what constitutes a Divine Philosophy. There could be no incongruity in the idea of God having His own philosophy, but it would be absolutely essential to affirm that it must be of an infinitely higher order than man's, and that its object, unlike human philosophy which *seeks* for Truth, would be to *reveal* what is the Truth.

We may confidently suppose that, if man, the creature, is endowed with a mind by which he reflects, then God, the Creator of man, possesses powers of thought and volition in an infinite degree. One has truly said, "We may paraphrase the words of the Psalmist: 'He that made the human intellect, shall He not think?' " (See Ps. xciv, 9.)

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\* *Daily Telegraph*, December 5th, 1932.

We have also the words of the Lord recorded by the prophet :  
 “ For my counsels are not as your counsels, nor are my ways as  
 your ways, saith the Lord. But as the heaven is distant from  
 the earth, so is my way distant from your ways, and your  
 thoughts from my mind.”\*

The true philosopher will never neglect any source of informa-  
 tion and will inquire, “ Has God made known to man this  
 Divine Philosophy ? ” “ In what form has it come ? ” “ Is  
 man so constituted that he is able to apprehend it ? ”

\* \* \* \*

Philosophy and natural science *assume* the existence of  
 material being, as the starting-point of their labours, but  
*how it came into existence* they are utterly unable to inform us,  
 and they cannot yet tell us the *real nature* of the substance of  
 which material being consists.

Let the Christian man lay firm hold of these two facts, and  
 he need not fear the attacks on his religion either from philo-  
 sophers or scientists. The origin of existence surpasses all the  
 powers of human conception, and when learned men pretend  
 to tell us that they are able to explain the mystery of the origin  
 of the world, we are justified in asking them to explain to us,  
 first of all, the mystery of their own being.

The fact is, that man cannot deny his existence, but after  
 centuries of research he is no nearer the solution of the mystery  
 of his own being than were the wise men of old. The *double*  
 mystery of generation still remains unfathomable, as it did when  
 Solomon wrote : “ As thou knowest not what is the way of the  
 spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is  
 with child, even so thou knowest not the works of God who  
 maketh all.”

We know not the connection of the human spirit with the  
 growth of the bones of the human embryo. We know not how  
 the spirit nor even the flesh of man comes into being. Some  
 things which man has discovered, such as the lungs of the foetus  
 in the womb which are of no immediate use, without doubt point  
 to the fact that many parts of the human constitution exist  
 “ latently and potentially ” long before they come forth, and that  
 they form part of a prospective arrangement in view of a destina-

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\* See *Isa.* lv, 8, 9. Eng. Trans. of Sept. Version (Bagster).



tion not yet reached. "The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein." (Ps. cxi, 2).

The philosopher and the scientist, as we have said, *assume* the existence of matter, and the Christian, who believes in revelation, does the same. The world is a fact which they all in common accept. So far then there is no conflict, and when each pursues his own investigations, for a Christian may be a philosopher and a scientist, they all discover not only a material universe, but life which animates, and laws which govern, within this region of sensible reality.

When, however, the question is raised, whence this matter, the laws that govern it, and the life that animates no man, whether he be philosopher, scientist, or a believer in revelation, can *from his own resources* tell us the origin of these things. Should the scientist offer us a theory of the origin of all things, then he at once leaves the region of sensible reality and passes into that of either speculation or faith. At this point natural science ceases to be natural science, and becomes either philosophy or religion. In other words, we enter the realm of mystery.

Science, as science, and human philosophy, as philosophy are dependent upon something outside of themselves to teach man the true origin of things. The Christian holds that this "something" is Divine revelation, which is discovered to faith by Divine philosophy. "Men cannot escape from mystery by rejecting revelation."

The conflict between "Modern Thought" and Christianity is one between two opposite views of the world. Both views rely upon outside sources, and each appeals to an authority they accept as a criterion, which means that the Christian's faith is in *Divine philosophy*, and the votary of "Modern Thought" puts his faith in *human philosophy*. There is no middle path.

Here, then, are two opposite views. We have reached the parting of the ways. Human philosophy has nothing certain to offer us. It cannot tell us whence we came, nor whither we are going. When we approach "the dark valley," it has no light to cast "amid th'encircling gloom."

\* \* \* \* \*

For our part our choice is made. We turn to that "True Light" for enlightenment and instruction, which shined upon the world in its full splendour nearly two thousand years ago, and which had long been expected throughout all the East, so that

when the unusual star did show itself in the heavens, the Magi sped to Jerusalem and found Him, whose name is called Immanuel—God with us—and who has brought the final communication of the Divine thoughts to man. “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son” (Heb. i, 1, 2).

To elaborate the subject of this essay would demand the work of a lifetime, and would form a whole library. Philosophy, how vast the range of thought! The Christian Faith, how transcendent in importance, how glorious in its character, how momentous the issues! We can attempt to indicate only some of the salient points in a theme of such magnitude.

We have taken a general survey of the ground occupied by human philosophy and we have noticed the admission that it has failed to discover a “criterion of certitude.” We have also called attention to what we have termed Divine Philosophy, which surpasses all that is human, and which has culminated in the Christian Faith.

It is accepted as an axiom, that a true science will take cognizance of *every fact* that bears on the subject in hand, and will not confine itself to those facts only which serve to bolster up a preconceived notion.

There are two facts which cannot be denied, the first, the fact of the Jewish race, and the second, the fact of the Christian Church.

To the first, a volume of sacred writings was committed, called the Old Testament. To the second, a volume of sacred writings has been committed, called the New Testament, the latter, however, having the closest connection with the former.

The Jews erred in supposing that the Old Testament was final, and that God had no further communications to add to their sacred writings. They were rigid, even to fanaticism, as to the eternal permanency of their ritual observances. Consequently, they placed a peculiar value on the books from which they were derived, that is, the Law written by Moses. This rigid adherence to outward ceremonial stands out prominently in the New Testament, where is recorded the conflict between Judaism and Christianity.

It is a matter of amazement to us, that leaders of Jewish thought are not more actively engaged in defending their sacred writings against the attacks of German critics, for to their race

“ were committed the oracles of God.” About the year 1840, some hope of their doing so was expected from the “ Reformed Movement ” among the Jews,\* but the defence of the Old Testament has been left mainly to Christians.

As to the New Testament, Christendom has erred in supposing that those writings are *not* final, and have introduced Patristical Tradition to be received with a pious affection and reverence, “ EQUAL ” to that with which we receive the Scriptures, while many scientists and philosophers claim that by their own unaided researches, they can dispense with both Old and New Testaments altogether, and even forge their actual and supposed results into weapons for attacking the Scriptures.

We have arrived then, at this position, that there are two undeniable facts, the Jewish race and the Christian Church. There exists an ancient literature, from which they draw their guiding principles, and their warrant for present conduct and future prospects.

Both Jews and Christians have passed through the severest fires of persecution, and no literature has ever been subjected to such close scrutiny ; such minute criticism and vile abuse at the hands of its enemies, or has been so mishandled and misrepresented by its friends, as those writings.

How can all this be explained ? Here are solid facts, but the scientist cannot account for them, nor can the philosopher explain them. We cannot be surprised then, if the material universe remains an unsolved problem to both scientist and philosopher. We have said that our choice is made, therefore we cannot allow the position we are to occupy to be pointed out to us by others, nor can we permit them to dictate as to what weapons we should use in our conflict for the Truth. We turn, then, to those sacred volumes in which Divine Philosophy is communicated and unfolded for man’s instruction, and we find there what is worthy of God, and what is suited to the condition and nature of man.

In the Old Testament we find the history and explanation of a promised *land*, a chosen *people* and a sacred *book*. All three—Palestine, the Jews, and the Old Testament—exist to this day, witnessing to the truth of this history, and pointing back to their origin. There is a unity of thought pervading the whole.

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\* These expectations, alone, were not realized, and the movement was diverted to Modernism, instead of leading to faith in Christ.

When we open the New Testament, the same three features are there. The same land, Palestine; the same people, the Jews; the same book in evidence—the Old Testament—and being searched diligently for an explanation of the mysterious and wonderful event, which brought wise men from the East to Jerusalem, and which became the occasion of the sublimest utterances in song, rising above all themes that human thought has ever conceived, and excelling in beauty of expression all that was ever uttered by human lips. The searchers found that Christ should be born; “In Bethlehem of Judæa: for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel (Matt. ii, 5, 6).

But we have something more, for the New Testament goes on to record the displacing of Judaism, and the origin and development of the *Christian Church*. Therein is recorded also the *present message* to be proclaimed by the Church among all nations. The principles and practices are plainly set forth, which Christians are to observe in their daily conduct and order of worship. The writings of the New Testament confirm, and show the fulfilment of the foreshadowings of the Old Testament, and enshrine in permanent form the Christian Faith.

It cannot be denied that the birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ, must needs take place as historical events, before there could be formulated what is termed The Christian Faith. The Four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles record the historical facts; the Epistles confirm those historical facts, and embody the doctrines which are based upon those facts, with the added communications of Divine Philosophy for the fuller enlightenment of men. The Revelation, or Apocalypse, brings the whole to a fitting close by revealing to St. John, in visible forms, the future glory of Christ's Kingdom; the glory of His saints, and the future state of the righteous and the wicked. As in the Old Testament, so in the New Testament, a unity of thought pervades the whole, which, merely from the human standpoint, appeals to every true philosopher.

We may add here, that as Palestine; the Jews; the Old Testament; abide as witnesses to-day, so also the Christian Church abides; the Message to the Nations is still preached; and the New Testament survives all the attacks brought against it by the enemies of Truth.

Now we maintain that what the ancients sought and what the moderns proclaim as unattainable, has been communicated by the unfoldings of Divine Philosophy in the Old and New Testaments.

The student of philosophy has first to collect his facts before he can build up his system. In the realm of natural science, the materials are daily increasing, and new laws are being discovered, so that no finality is possible. But the Christian has this advantage, that the accumulation of materials is at an end. The Divine Philosophy has been communicated in a complete and final form. The period of the progressive unfoldings of Divine Truth is passed, and the task set before him is to seek by the aid of the Holy Spirit a better and fuller understanding of what is written.

“ O Father, Son, and Spirit, send  
 Us increase from above ;  
 Enlarge, expand all Christian souls  
 To comprehend Thy love ;  
 And make us all go on to know,  
 With nobler powers conferred ;  
 The Lord hath yet more light and truth  
 To break forth from His Word.”

There is urgent need to-day for a more careful and diligent study of the Bible, but this does not mean that we are to cease our researches into the secrets of the Natural World, nor to allow the workings of our minds to become dormant. We shall be able to carry on our studies and researches more intelligently and profitably by the light of Divine Truth. “In Thy light shall we see light.”

\* \* \* \*

While Christianity is an entirely new fact, its roots are deeply embedded in the Old Testament, and its central and predominant theme is Christ. We use “fact” in the singular, because Christianity is summed up in the fact of Christ, as one has happily said, “Christianity is Christ.”

God reveals His *mind* in the Scriptures—*Himself* in His Son—and Christ is The Truth, and Christ is God. To Thomas our Lord said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me.” To Philip, He said, “he that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father” (John xiv, 6, 9).

We have said that it is impossible to elaborate the subject of this paper, but we would submit that what has here been brought under review, warrants the conclusion that man is now provided with a final criterion by which all human thought must be tested. One word seems appropriate by which the Christian Revelation may be characterized, that is, the word Finality, and for the following reasons.

1.—The Christian Revelation is *final* in its relation to THE TIME-STATE. It was “the fulness of the time”—a fixed, appointed period in the Divine economy—when God sent forth His Son (Gal. iv, 4). The condition which man had reached in his estrangement from God, and the darkness of his mind, constituted the circumstances which made the introduction of the Mosaic economy so evidently a Divinely appointed communication of the Truth to man.

In a similar way the state of mankind ; the Jewish expectancy of a Messiah, and the expectation of a Deliverer among the heathen, with many other facts well known to students of language and history, constituted the very circumstances on the human side, which coincided with “the fulness of the time” on the Divine side. There is, what has been happily termed “a philosophy of the dispensations” which, we think, accounts for the frequent use of the Greek word *aiōnios* in the New Testament. No other word in that language could combine the ideas of Time-events and human responsibility being related to God’s eternal counsels and to eternal consequences, even as the same word is applied to the results of Christ’s redemptive work and to the spiritual gifts bestowed on all who believe in Him.

When men talk and write of “the Christian belief that the Eternal has, as such, entered time” and of “age-abiding life” instead of eternal life, we doubt the accuracy of such statements, for they suggest the thought of “limitation,” an objectionable term when applied to the Son of God, and in the case of the gift of life a denial of its true character, which is not so much its *duration*, but of an abiding *state* or *condition* of life with God.

Divine Revelation unfolds the mystery that Time is brought into relation with the Eternal ; that the finite is embraced in the infinite, or in other words the greater includes the less. St. Paul, when making known the true God to the Athenians, spoke of Him as the One in Whom “We live and move and

have our being." "In Him" connotes the finite within the infinite, yet not identical.

2.—The Christian Revelation is *final* in relation to THE PERSON—THE REVEALER—"God, Who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son" (Heb. i, 1, 2).

God has made known the mystery and good pleasure of His will to gather together in one ("to head up," see Greek) all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him (Eph. i, 9, 10). Christ, the Son of God, supersedes all others, but none shall supersede Him. He shares none of His unique offices and titles with another. He alone is Lord. He alone is Head of the mystical body—The Church. He is the Last Adam, and He alone the High Priest of His redeemed family.

3.—The Christian Revelation is *final* in relation to MAN'S SALVATION.

(1) The sacrifices under the Mosaic Law are ended, on account of the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all (Heb. x, 5—10). The Saviour's last words on the Cross were, "It is finished."

(2) The Scripture declares there is salvation in no other than Christ (Acts iv, 12), and again, "by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts xiii, 39).

4.—The Christian Revelation is *final* because it supplies a true knowledge as to the questions of Origins and of Final Causes. Man has brought forward nothing in the course of his researches to shake the doctrines of The Christian Faith regarding the being of God and of man; the creation of the universe; the progressive unfoldings of Divine Truth; the probation of man and the final destiny of the righteous and the wicked.

While philosophy is still engaged in speculative thought, this poor world is groaning under the increasing burdens of modern civilization. Statesmen are faced with social problems which defy solution; the government of the peoples and the maintenance of civil order become more difficult; and beneath the sins, the sorrows and the restlessness of humanity, there lies deep in the human heart, as may be traced in the past history of mankind, the longing for the appearance of a Deliverer.

The Christian Faith holds out the hope to the Jew that his Messiah may be expected, and to the nations that the Christ, Whom men despised and rejected will return in power and great glory (Matt. xxiv, 30 ; Rev. i, 7).

One of the Fathers, who had read all that philosophers could tell him, said, "but none of them ever said, what Jesus said, 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'" He came, and he found rest.

The Christian Faith is indeed the Final Criterion of Philosophy, for it leads men to find Him, who is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last.

#### DISCUSSION.

The Chairman (Dr. THIRTLE) said : We have listened to-day to an essay which last year gained the prize awarded in connection with the Langhorne-Orchard Competition. This competition, as some will know, recalls the name and life of the late Professor Langhorne-Orchard, a Christian scholar of conspicuous attainments in the fields of science and philosophy, and one who was for many years a Member of Council of the Victoria Institute, likewise the author of an essay of great value which carried off the Gunning Prize a quarter of a century ago.

The Langhorne-Orchard foundation, set up in honour of a great friend of the Institute, has a well-defined *evidential* purpose, and the essay to which we have listened has supplied proof that our lecturer appreciates the purpose and approves the design of the foundation.

Whatever the avowed object of the Langhorne-Orchard Competition, there can be no question that the prize-man had before him a clear object, and has easily proved himself able to affirm and demonstrate a great and vital truth. On the strength of principles well defined and in pursuance of forms of truth that are widely accepted, Mr. Fitzgerald has vindicated the Christian faith, as supplying a Divine philosophy, and has found the same to be set forth in Scripture revelation and justified in a godly life.

In the thought of our day human philosophy asserts a large place ; and if we would counter such philosophy, with its various and evident deficiencies, in the hope of finding a place for a Divine philosophy—



a philosophy based on unchanging facts and principles—we are, so to say, shut up to the study of the Sacred Scriptures, otherwise “the oracles of God.” This, assuredly, is a consideration that stands out boldly in the conclusions of our Lecturer this afternoon. For such conclusions we do well to return thanks in cordial terms.

Mr. Fitzgerald has shown that revealed truth depends in a vital degree upon the Old and New Testaments, as they set forth the ways and purposes of God, and, further, as they contain records, authentic and adequate, of undertakings in grace for the present ennobling and the future salvation of men. The facts and principles yield the philosophy which the Faith of Christ supplies. In the nature of things many aspects of the theme have been left on one side, but in any case the object of the Essay will be attained if Members and Associates proceed to explore the various avenues of thought that tend to establish philosophic thought in the terms of Christian truth. Let us be assured that, according as we appreciate the Christian faith, we shall find our investigations to be safeguarded from error and folly; and shall we not, all the while, do well to cherish the conviction that the Christian faith furnishes the final criterion of Philosophy, as our Lecturer has shown so clearly this afternoon?

It gives me pleasure to move that the thanks of the meeting be accorded to the Lecturer; and having been duly recorded, the resolution was carried with acclamation.

Mr. WILLIAM HOSTE, B.A., while thanking the lecturer for his paper, recalled a remark of a well-known Christian American writer—Philip Mauro, who before his conversion to Christ was a diligent student of the great philosophic systems. Later, Mr. Mauro defined Philosophy, as he had known it, as an attempt of the human mind to explain the universe without the intervention of a supernatural power. Not a bad instance of this is the philosophy of evolution, which is a philosophy in this sense, rather than a scientific theory, not being based on proved facts. To go to philosophy to find truth seems like extracting gold from sea-water; you might perhaps find a grain in an Ocean, but it would not pay initial expenses. Philosophy seeks to extract truth from the depths of the human mind, but the results are either extremely elementary, of the *Cogito, ergo sum*

order. (It hardly seems worth while spending a considerable period of your life, proving that you exist, or are contradictory and inconclusive.) I am glad the lecturer has not attempted to give us an amalgam of human philosophy and Divine Revelation. It is not a choice between this latter and some system which professes to offer any solution as to origins and futures. The only possible alternative for thinking men is agnosticism—reverent or otherwise but which leaves us spiritual bankrupts and perfectly hopeless. On the other hand, we hear Christ calling to us: "I am the light of the world, he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life," and they who obey the call find it is not in vain.

Mr. GEORGE BREWER said:—Philosophy has been briefly described as the application of pure thought to the explanation of things. Mr. Fitzgerald's definition as the accumulated thoughts of wise men searching after truth, by study and reflection, gives, I think, a better idea of its scope. However, as the term is also used to include speculative thought based on human experience, it is evident that nothing should be omitted which comes within the range of our own experience or the testimony of others.

Philosophy which is only materialistic, and shuts out revelation and the experience which follows the reception of revelation, must necessarily be limited in its outlook, and with regard to origin and destiny will lead nowhere. The man who confines himself to the materialistic realm must be content to flounder in the morass of human speculation, without help or guidance as to past or future.

While it is true that by searching man cannot find out God (Job xi, 7) or discover the work that He maketh from the beginning to the end (Eccles. iii, 11), yet the Apostle Paul in his epistle to the Rom. (i, 20) reminds us that "the invisible things since the creation of the earth are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that men are without excuse," for "the heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handiwork" (Psalm xix, 1).

I think we must recognize a vast distinction between ancient Greek philosophy, much of which was a sincere search after truth, before the Light of the World had come upon the scene, and the Modern philosophy of Evolution, the acceptance of which is

justified on the ground of its being the only alternative to special creation. As the opener has pointed out, the only true philosophy is that which, while exploring all the results of human experience, past and present, interprets such results in the light of God's Word.

The origin of the marvellous triunity upon which the material Universe is constructed as well as the constitution of man, is revealed in the Old Testament but more clearly in the New Testament, and especially by our Lord Himself as the Triune God, Eternal Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Divine Philosophy is a revelation from God the Father by the Holy Spirit through the inspired Word, that by and for the Eternal Son were all things created in heaven and in earth, visible and invisible; that He is before all things, and by Him all things consist. While God has made foolish the wisdom of this world, to those who rest upon the all-atoning sacrifice of Christ, He is made "wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption." "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!" (Rom. xi, 33.)

#### LECTURER'S REPLY.

The success of my paper, and the cordial reception given to the reading of it this afternoon have been most gratifying, and I offer my warm thanks to the Chairman and to all present for their appreciation of this attempt to vindicate the demands which the Christian Faith makes upon man's highest powers of thought, and upon his most serious attention.

To what has been said in the discussion, I would like to add that I feel very strongly that the Victoria Institute has a unique opportunity, and is fitted by its constitution, to present to the world a powerful witness as to the moral and spiritual resources of the Christian Faith, which are Divinely capable of meeting the grave conditions of a tottering civilization.