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823RD ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING,

HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOM B, THE CENTRAL HALL,
WESTMINSTER, S.W.1, ON MONDAY, JANUARY 9TH, 1939,
AT 4.30 P.M.

THE REV. H. A. EDWARDS, L.Th., IN THE CHAIR.

The Minutes of the Meeting of May 23rd, 1938, were read, confirmed and signed, and the Hon. Secretary announced the following elections:—
As Fellows: The Rev. G. B. Myers, LL.B., B.D.; A. da Rocha, Esq., F.R.S.A.; W. M. Clayton, Esq.; W. Wardle Sales, Esq.; Lieut.-Col. A. C. MacDonald, D.S.O., late R.E., and the Rev. Harry T. Rush. As Members: the Rev. J. J. Blomerus, Miss F. L. Ovens, Major A. N. Skinner, M.V.O., R.A., Lieut.-Col. G. B. F. Turner, D.S.O., Lieut.-Col. J. A. McQueen, D.S.O., M.C., late R.E., Lieut.-Col. E. W. S. Mahon, late R.E., Maj.-Gen. H. S. Sargent, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., late R.A.S.C., F. W. Jameson, Esq., D.S.O., M.C., M.A., Rear-Admiral Errol Manners, R.N., the Rev. J. P. Macqueen, the Rev. T. C. Hammond, M.A., and Frank Fitzgibbon, Esq., K.C., B.A. As Associates: R. D. McAllister, Esq., A. J. Stubbs, Esq., K. N. Shelley, Esq., C. Craven-Sands, Esq., Graham Delbridge, Esq.

The CHAIRMAN then called upon the Rev. F. D. Wilkinson to read Sir Ambrose Fleming's paper entitled "A Discussion on the Recent Report of the Commission on Christian Doctrine appointed by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York in 1922."

The meeting was then thrown open to discussion in which the following took part: Mr. A. W. Payne, Mr. Sidney Collett, Mr. J. Harrison Hill, Mr. H. R. Kindersley and the Rev. F. D. Wilkinson.

A DISCUSSION ON THE RECENT REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE APPOINTED BY THE ARCHBISHOPS OF CANTER- BURY AND YORK IN 1922.

By SIR AMBROSE FLEMING, M.A., D.Sc., F.R.S., President.

I.—THE DIVISIONS IN THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

IT is probable that many of the Fellows, Members and Associates of the Victoria Institute have seen notices or reviews of this Report published at the beginning of 1938 or have perhaps read the document itself.*

As there are many statements in it with which the Members of the Victoria Institute will no doubt disagree, it seemed to your Council that an opportunity should be given to them and others

* The Report is published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (S.P.C.K.), of Northumberland Avenue, Charing Cross, London. Price 2s. 6d. net.

for expressing their opinions on this Report in a discussion opened upon it. The present writer therefore undertook to facilitate this expression by giving a brief statement on the origin, aims and conclusions of the Report and indicating those points on which there is likely to be strong disagreement with its statements by Members of this Institute.

There have been for quite a century or more three schools of belief and practice in the Church of England denoted by the terms High Church, Low Church, and Broad Church. These divisions have become more sharply separated in recent times by the influence of that attitude of mind towards the Bible called the Higher Criticism, as well as by the popular, but erroneous, conviction that scientific investigation has proved the unquestionable truth of the hypotheses of absolutely necessary uniformity in natural events and of the development by evolution of all nature, organic and inorganic, by processes which are automatic, and operate without the immediate control of any supernatural Power. These opinions widely diffused have destroyed the faith of many in the historical actuality of those events related in the Bible which are out of accord with present experiences of the processes of nature. This has brought into existence a forceful group of teachers and adherents who regard all accounts of so-called miracles recorded in the Scriptures as mythical and not to be taken as literal fact.

On the other hand, there has been in another section of the Church an augmented attention to beliefs, ritual and forms of worship approximating to those in the Roman Catholic Church. Hence the three divisions now existing in the ambit of the Church of England are generally denoted by the terms, Modernist, Anglo-Catholic and Evangelical.

II.—THE ORIGIN OF THE COMMISSION.

These divisions in faith and practice caused the Archbishops of the Church of England to nominate in 1922 a Commission composed of learned theologians and laymen to consider and report upon "the nature and grounds of Christian doctrine with a view of demonstrating the extent of the existing agreement within the Church of England and with a view to investigating how far it is possible to remove or diminish existing differences" (see page 19 of the Report).

The Commission as originally appointed consisted of 25 members

chosen to represent the different schools of thought and practice now included in the Church of England. But death and changes reduced the number to 20 final signatories comprising the Archbishop of York, the Bishops of Chelmsford, Derby, Glasgow and Galloway, 5 Professors of Theology, 7 Canons and Deans, and 4 Laymen. The considered opinions of such an imposing group of learned theologians and leaders of the Established Church must therefore exert an immense influence on the minds, not only of English Church members but also on those of Christian believers generally. Hence any differences from them must be based on very adequate reasons.

As the terms of reference included the consideration of the removal or diminution of differences of opinion, the Commission devoted its attention largely to the discussion of those matters on which there is marked difference of opinion. But as they explain in the Report (page 25), the majority of the Commission do not desire there should be any system of distinctively Anglican theology. They say (p. 26) that "the removal or diminution of differences within the Church of England can only be rightly effected by the discovery of the synthesis which does justice to all of them." But this statement of the Commission seems to give insufficient weight to the fact that whilst on some points of faith or practice differences may be necessary or allowable because sufficient knowledge or revelation to remove them has not been given to us, yet on a large number of matters there must be some absolute truth, departure from which is error. In these things it is not a solution to compromise or by the skilful use of language to endeavour to bridge the differences. We must try by all means to ascertain that truth and then earnestly contend for the faith "which was once for all delivered unto the saints." If the Church speaks with an uncertain voice on fundamental facts or condones or permits irreconcilable opinions to be uttered it thereby loses power to arrest the attention of the careless or ungodly and its message tends to be reduced to the mere inculcation of philanthropy and what are called the social implications of the Gospel.

In addition to a special introduction by the Archbishop of York as Chairman of the Commission and a general introduction by the Commission itself, the Report is broadly divided into two parts. The first part comprises the Doctrines concerning God and Redemption, and the second part the Doctrines relating to

the Church as a Body and to the Sacraments. Your attention in this opening to our discussion will be restricted to the consideration of the first part as the writer does not feel qualified, nor is time available, to discuss the second part of the Report.

III.—THE SOURCES AND AUTHORITY OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE.

Following on the Prefaces above mentioned, the Report passes on to consider some fundamental questions, the first of these being the Inspiration and Theme of Holy Scripture and the authority to be attributed to it.

With some of the statements made it is possible entirely to agree but to others we think some exception must be taken. The Commission rightly assert that the Bible is the inspired record of God's self-revelation to man and man's response to it. Also it is stated that "the Bible is not only about God but is of God. God speaks to man through the Bible which is therefore rightly called the Word of God."

Whilst agreeing that all parts of the Bible do not stand on one spiritual level, they admit that all parts have their place in contributing to the completeness of the revelation as a whole.

On the other hand, we meet here with some statements with which many will disagree or which may mislead some. Thus on page 29 it is said that "the tradition of the inerrancy of the Bible commonly held in the Church until the beginning of the nineteenth century cannot be maintained in the light of the knowledge now available." But the Report fails to state in what parts, or in what subjects this error in the Bible exists which is disclosed by modern knowledge. The Bible contains besides its spiritual teaching much history, biography, prophecy, and accounts of events we call miracles. We may then ask, in which of these departments has modern knowledge discovered error? On the contrary, we can now say with confidence that the archæological explorations in the Near East in recent times have confirmed in general the truth of much of the Bible history and disproved some of the confident assertions of the so-called Higher Criticism formerly made.

On page 29 of the Report we meet with an assertion which is not adequately proved. It is as follows:—"We cannot now regard as a principal purpose or evidence of inspiration the giving of detailed information about the future." Let us contrast this assertion with some given by Scripture itself, in Deuteronomy

(xviii, 22) where it says :—“ When a prophetspeaketh in the name of the Lord if the thing follow not nor come to pass that is the thing the Lord hath not spoken but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously.” The clear deduction from this verse is that prediction of future events is an exclusive prerogative of God. Hence fulfilled prophecy is a proof of Divine inspiration.

Bible students have always held as one important proof that the Bible is not a mere man-made literature its remarkable and exact predictions of events then far in the future. Thus we have concerning the appointed Messiah precise details of his birth, native place, teaching, rejection and sacrificial death given 700 years previously by Isaiah (liii), in Psalm xii and other places. Also we have many predictions of the history of the Chosen People and especially of one part, the Jews. So accurate is all this that when the chaplain of Frederick the Great was suddenly asked by his master to give the shortest possible proof of the inspiration of the Bible he replied, “ The Jews, your Majesty.”

The Old Testament contains predictions of the downfall of great empires and cities made when they were at the height of their power, and this could not have been done by the light of any merely human knowledge. Then on page 32 we meet with another assertion to the effect that “ The authority ascribed to the Bible must not be interpreted as prejudging the conclusions of historical, critical and scientific investigation.”

This seems to mean that a God-Inspired literature must not be taken as an accurate witness of fact until confirmed by secular human testimony. But experience decides quite otherwise and shows us that in certain things the Bible has long anticipated the results of subsequent human investigation. As regards the teaching of our Lord, we have on pages 32 and 33 of the Report statements which may seriously imperil the faith of unlearned readers of the Gospels of the New Testament. These are as follows :—“ The record cannot be accepted as always reproducing the words themselves of our Lord.” Also “ There is some reason to think that in some cases the words attributed to our Lord reflect rather the experience of the primitive Church or utterances of Christian prophets than the actual words of Jesus.” It would be interesting to learn what evidence there is for this confident statement. Again it is stated that “ appeal to isolated texts in our Lord’s teaching is liable to error.” Now against these vague suggestions of possible error and uncertainty in the transmission

to us of the *ipsissima verba* used by our Lord we can set the assurance given by Himself, that there should be a supernatural preservation of his utterances by the Holy Spirit, for He said (John xiv, 26): "But the Comforter which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name he shall teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you." Even if the accuracy of the above quotation is impugned, we have yet much evidence to show that we *do* possess substantially correct records in the synoptic gospels of our Lord's words. The astonishing originality, authority and Divine power of his words impressed all hearers of them. The popular verdict was "Never man spake like this man." (John vii, 46.) Hence, as St. Luke tells us in the preface to his gospel, many had taken in hand the making of written records of them. Scholars recognise the existence of one such record called Q, where this letter stands for *Quelle*, the German word for *source* because it is considered that it was a source used by Matthew and Luke in the compilation of their gospels. Professor K. Lake of Leyden said in 1909: "Every year after A.D. 50 is increasingly improbable for the production of Q." This means that within twenty years of the Crucifixion there was a record in written documents of much said by our Lord. As at this time (A.D. 50) many persons must still have been living who heard His discourses it would be highly improbable that quotations not entirely correct could have been included in Q or other written records made at the time when they were spoken.

The suggestions in the Report of possible inaccuracy or imperfection in our Gospels of our Lord's sayings give a very one-sided view of the facts and do not sufficiently emphasise the truth, for the sake of unlearned readers of the Report, that there is the highest probability we *do* possess in our English Bible a substantially correct record of our Lord's teaching on all important matters concerning human conduct and salvation.

We then pass on to notice some very serious statements with regard to the Creeds of the Church, found on page 37 of the Report. It is there said, with regard to the Creeds, that "it is not their purpose to affirm either historical facts or metaphysical truths as such." Also it is said that in the above sense "every clause in the Creeds is *symbolic*." "Statements affirming particular facts may be found to have value as pictorial expressions of spiritual truths even though the supposed events did not actually happen."

It is difficult to reconcile the above statement with the practically unanimous resolution of the Upper House of Convocation of Canterbury passed on April 30th, 1914, "That this House is resolved to maintain unimpaired the Catholic faith as contained in the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds and in the *Quicumque vult*" and also: "That the denial of any of the historical facts stated in the Creeds goes beyond the limits of legitimate interpretation."*

Most instructed Christians hold to the belief that the purpose of the creeds is to state in simple language the historic facts and supernatural events past and to come which are the essential basis of the Christian faith. They are not symbolic in the sense that anyone is free to read into them some meaning other than that implied in the words themselves as commonly used. They were intended to preserve the faith of the Church and not to afford an opportunity for deviations from it or permit those who disbelieve in the supernatural to put their own "symbolic" meanings to the words and statements made in the creeds.

IV.—CREATION OR EVOLUTION.

On pages 44 and 45 of the Report are a set of statements with which some of the Members of the Victoria Institute will no doubt strongly disagree. The Report says (page 45) quite truly:—"The universe depends upon the Creative Will of God. Any such view as that the universe proceeds by emanation from the Divine nature, as opposed to the view that it originates in the Creative Will of God is non-Christian." This is a definite repudiation of the view called Pantheism. But then the Report goes on to say: "It is to be recognised that the Christian doctrine of Creation as thus generally stated leaves abundant room for a variety of theories as to the Evolution of the World." "No objection to a theory of evolution can be drawn from the two Creation narratives in Genesis i and ii since it is generally agreed among educated Christians that these are mythological in origin and their value for us is symbolical rather than historical."

This is a most astonishing statement to be made by a Commission of learned theologians in face of the immense amount of refutation given of late years to the theory of organic evolution

* See The Preface to *The Present Controversy on the Gospel Miracles*, by Dr. F. R. M. Hitchcock. S.P.C.K., London.

and especially to any inclusion in it of the origin of the human race. Not only have we had many such papers and books written by our Victoria Institute Members but also many competent biologists have rejected it in whole or in part. To read the above statement in the Report would lead one to believe that there had been no such refutation given at all. Even strong evolutionists such as Alfred Russell Wallace and T. H. Huxley have admitted that no theory of evolution has given any valid account of the origin of the actual or potential spiritual and mental qualities of man. There is a gulf between animal and man that no evolution hypothesis has been able to bridge.

The bald statement about the mythological origin of the creation narratives exhibits a singular indifference to the strong disproof, given by Dr. W. Schmidt of Vienna and the late Dr. S. H. Langdon of Oxford and others, of the fashionable evolutionary theory of religion. This is especially emphasised in Sir Charles Marston's book *The Bible Comes Alive*.

V.—ON MIRACLES.

A section of the Report which will no doubt also meet with widespread disapproval on account of its insufficient character is that on pages 50 and 51, dealing with the subject of miracles. The Report there says :—“ It is felt by many that miracle has a special value in that it is a striking demonstration of the subordination of the natural order to spiritual ends and affords particular points at which God's activity is manifested with special clarity and directness.

“ On the other hand, it is to be recognised that many others feel it to be more congruous with the wisdom and majesty of God that the regularities such as men of science observe in nature and call the Laws of Nature should serve His purpose, without any need for exceptions on the physical plane.”

It should have been pointed out in the Report that the question whether there have been any exceptions to the so-called uniformities in Nature is a matter for evidence and not for opinion or presuppositions. Our experience or knowledge of these Laws of Nature has been acquired over such a comparatively brief time that we are not entitled to say *a priori* whether any exceptions are possible or not. Hume's argument against miracles depends, as Charles Babbage has shown in his *Ninth Bridgewater Treatise*,

upon the assumption that the improbability of the falsehood of the testimony against a miracle having happened *must* always be greater than the probability of the occurrence of the miracle itself. But Babbage proved mathematically that if sufficient evidence is available an exception to any uniformity can be proved.

If there is an Almighty Creator by whose word and will the universe has come into existence, and those uniformities of action we call the Laws of Nature, surely it is presumptuous to say that He cannot vary or has not varied their operation for special purposes! It is true that this may be effected by certain natural agencies specially guided for the purpose or by a direct exceptional exercise of Almighty Power. If the walls of Jericho were cast down by an earthquake, that event was controlled to happen at a particular moment and is therefore not less a miracle. But in other cases there must have been a supernatural manifestation of Divine power—as in raising the dead, multiplying instantly food or stilling a storm.

Then as regards the supreme miracle of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the grave there is a vast amount of direct and indirect proof as to the literal truth of the account of it in the New Testament. This proof is partly documentary, partly circumstantial, but the space at disposal inhibits our giving it in any detail. Suffice it to say it has convinced an immense number of acute minds. It is satisfactory to find from the Report “the majority of the Commission are agreed in holding the traditional explanation,” namely the bodily resurrection of our Lord and that the tomb was found empty because He had in fact been restored to life. But nevertheless the body of His resurrection was not limited in its powers as are our human bodies but possessed exalted powers of movement although perfectly real in actuality and not a subjective illusion of the witnesses of His post-resurrection appearances.

As regards the other great miracle of the Virgin Birth, the members of the Commission seem to be more divided. It is stated on page 82 that some of them adhere to the actual event as narrated, but others do not accept it. Bearing in mind that one item in the reference to the Commission was to investigate how far it is possible to remove or diminish differences of opinion or belief it is difficult to see how the mere statement of opposing views satisfies the requirements of this part of the reference. It is clear, however, that when as in this case there is no half-way

house between acceptance of and disbelief in the statements of Scripture the attempt to find a *via media* is futile. On page 89 of the Report the position taken up with regard to the Ascension is also unsatisfying.

The Commission say :—“ They have not felt called upon to discuss in detail the narratives of the Ascension or allusions to it in the New Testament. Whatever may have been the nature of the event underlying those narratives and whatever its relation to the resurrection its physical features are to be interpreted symbolically since they are closely related to the conception of heaven as a place locally fixed beyond the sky.” The phrase “ interpreted symbolically ” may induce some readers to think that the Commission intended to imply that the event itself never occurred. The expression is not happily chosen.

We know that in explaining physical phenomena to persons of limited intellectual powers we have to use words which convey ideas to their minds but are not necessarily strictly scientific. Thus we speak of the times of “ rising ” and “ setting ” of the sun and the moon being “ full ” or “ new ” without being accused of untruth. Now although it is the custom to speak of the abode called “ heaven ” as if it were some region in our space of three-dimensions, yet scientific analysis has shown that our space may be only as it were one section of a larger four-dimensional space-time continuum, and that passage from one to the other is by a movement in a fourth dimension. It has been more than once pointed out that the sudden appearances and disappearances of our Lord in His post-resurrection period are all consistent with such movement in a fourth dimension in space. At His final departure from earth He could no doubt have vanished as He did to the disciples at Emmaus. But such act might have perplexed the simple disciples who witnessed it. Hence His initial movement was a short one in our three-dimensional space until a cloud received Him out of sight. There is nothing in the New Testament account of His Ascension which conflicts with scientific truth or need cause its rejection.

In this connection it is noteworthy that the Archbishop of York, the Chairman of the Commission, says in his Preface to the Report, “ In view of my own responsibility to the Church I think it right here to affirm that I wholeheartedly accept as historical facts the birth of our Lord from a Virgin mother and the Resurrection of the physical body from death and the tomb.” On the

other hand, the Report asserts that belief in this event (*i.e.*, Virgin birth) cannot be independent of the historical evidence and they think that this evidence is inconclusive.

VI.—GENERAL CONCLUSIONS CONCERNING THE REPORT.

Taking the first Part of the Report as a whole, it is evident that whilst stating clearly the matters on which the Members of the Commission are divided in opinion no effective reconciliation between these different schools of thought has been effected, and indeed it seems almost impossible that agreement should be reached when certain statements in Scripture and in the Creeds are taken by some to be records of historical facts and by others to be merely "symbolical." It can hardly be denied that the general tone of the Report is more in sympathy with Modernist views rather than with the so-called Evangelical or Fundamentalist beliefs. The doctrines of the Church of England, judged by her official documents, the Articles of religion, the Creeds, and the words of the book of Common Prayer are precisely scriptural and wholehearted in acceptance of certain miraculous or supernatural events as historical facts with a tone of certainty pervading them all. The Report, on the other hand, is somewhat non-committal and inconclusive on these same matters. In his short preface to his gospel, St. Luke tells us that his object in writing it was "that ye might know the *certainty* of those things wherein ye have been instructed," but it is to be feared that the general effect of this Report on the minds of many people may be to produce a feeling of *uncertainty* as to the actuality of events of supreme importance. The ultimate test of any system of religion is the pragmatic test, that is how does it work in practice? Can we go down into the slums and alleys of a great city and hope to achieve any results by presenting a non-miraculous Christ? Let practical evangelists give us the answer to this question. Can Modernism show any achievements such as those of the London City Mission, the Church Army or Salvation Army in raising the degraded, converting the sinful or giving faith and hope to those in the hour and article of death? The foundations of the Christian faith are laid in miraculous events. The forgiveness of sins is miracle, for there is no such thing in Nature. The new birth, the gift of the Spirit of holiness and of eternal life are all supernatural events. Hence the denial of the supernatural, which is the main element in

Modernism, cuts away the foundations on which the Gospel of the Grace of God rests.

That there are deep mysteries in connection with the facts of human salvation cannot be denied, but assurance about them cannot be reached by the human intellect alone. It requires also the exercise of faith without which it is impossible to please God.

It is hardly possible to say that the Commission has fulfilled that part of its reference concerned with removing sharp differences of opinion. It has stated very fairly the opposed opinions but left them, in short, existing as before.

It is the opinion of many competent minds that this Report will not bring about unity of thought and belief in the Church of England but will emphasise those differences and perhaps increase the uncertainty in some minds as to the things which should certainly be believed.

REMARKS BY THE CHAIRMAN, THE REV. H. A. EDWARDS, L.T.H.

I feel it a very great honour to have been asked to take the Chair this afternoon. It would be a great privilege to take the Chair at any meeting of the Victoria Institute ; but I feel that the importance of the subject, and the eminence of the distinguished Author of the paper to which we have just listened, constitute this a rather special occasion.

You will all agree with me, I know, in expressing sympathy and regret at the unavoidable absence of Sir Ambrose Fleming ; we fully understand that it is impossible for him to be with us, and I feel that I may assure him on your behalf that his absence does not in any way detract from the deep debt of gratitude which we owe to him for the clear and concise way in which he has presented the subject to us. We are all grateful, too, to the Rev. F. D. Wilkinson for undertaking what is always a very difficult and responsible task, namely, the reading of another's paper.

As we want to leave as much time as possible for discussion, I will take as little time as I can in these remarks. Certain points in Sir Ambrose Fleming's treatise strike me as being very penetrating—

His statement—

“ . . . yet on a large number of matters there must be some absolute truth, departure from which is error,”

seems to me to hit the nail right on the head. There must be some foundation body of revealed truth on which a Christian can stand firm. He cannot go on retreating before the attacks of unbelievers for ever ; there must come a point at which he can say " Here I stand, and here, if need be, I will die."

This foundation body of Truth—" to depart from which is error "—I have always understood to be contained in the three great Creeds of Christendom. I still believe that to be so, and there is nothing in the Commission's Report to persuade me otherwise. Indeed, no arguments are put forward to that end ; we are simply told that some of the Commission do, and some do not, believe things which are contained in these ancient Confessions of Faith. But, gentlemen, these things about which some of them confess disbelief, *are all things which each one of them swore by solemn oath before God and Men, that they DID believe.* They took this oath before they could be ordained Deacon, again, before being ordained Priest, again, before being instituted to any Benefice or Office in the Church. They are all, as has been pointed out by Sir Ambrose, men of great eminence in the Church ; they have, therefore, solemnly sworn this oath many times. It is permissible to ask, therefore, are their signatures to these solemn declarations merely so many scraps of paper ? or have they only now—after having gone from preferment to preferment, changed their minds ? and if they have changed their minds, is not the only honest course to resign those positions which they hold only in virtue of a sworn declaration which has become untrue ?

They are in a position which to honourable men must be intolerable ; and I think that this is at the bottom of that strange and sinister statement about " symbolic belief " to which Sir Ambrose has drawn attention. The Creeds and Articles of the Church contain positive asseverations concerning the Virgin Birth, the Resurrection, Ascension, and future Return of Christ. Every Priest holding Benefice or other Ecclesiastical Office in the Church must swear that he believes these things, that he will teach them to those committed to his charge, and that he will banish all contrary teaching. It is illegal for him to hold office unless he does so swear.

Two attempts have been made to abolish the present Book of

Common Prayer containing these Creeds and Articles, and substitute another. They failed. Now, for the first time in Anglican history, the doctrine is promulgated that every clause in the Creed is "symbolic" and that it is legitimate to give assent to them, even though believing "that the supposed events did not really happen."

That, to my mind, is the most important part of the whole Report, because it is the most dangerous and deadly. Under such a sanction, an atheist might become Archbishop of Canterbury, or head master of one of our great schools; it smacks of the casuistry of the Schoolmen, and I am persuaded—whatever the officials of the Church may do—that the rank and file, the devout laymen of England, will repudiate it.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I wish to propose a very cordial vote of thanks to Sir Ambrose Fleming for his thought-provoking Paper.

[The vote of thanks having been carried with acclamation, a discussion followed in which seven Fellows, Members and others took part, in strong support of the criticisms of the Doctrinal Report. Two written communications to the same effect were received later.]

DISCUSSION.

Rev. A. W. PAYNE expressed himself as very grateful for Sir A. Fleming's valuable paper. He seemed to be taking the part of the Good Samaritan. When the poor parishioner or member of the Church had been robbed and wounded by the Higher Critics, he had come nobly and boldly to his aid while the priest, the Levite, often passed by on the other side.

He thought that the Commission's report was a threefold disloyalty. It was disloyal to the Lord of Glory who was not only the Logos, the Word of God made flesh, but who also declared that He gave us the Rhemata, the very breathings from His Heavenly Father in every message.

Then there was the disloyalty to the Church, for with the prayer in such common use when the people assemble and meet together, it is to "hear His most Holy Word"; hardly the attitude taken up by this finding of these distinguished Anglican divines. Thirdly, it was disloyalty to the King who is called "By the Grace of God the Defender of the Faith," and that Faith is contained in the Holy

Scriptures, the living oracles of the Old and New Testaments presented to His Majesty at his coronation as True Wisdom.

Mr. SIDNEY COLLETT said: We are always delighted to have anything from the pen of our gifted, and I may say beloved, President, Sir Ambrose Fleming. This latest paper is no exception. In it he has called timely and solemn attention to some very serious statements in the Report of the Archbishops' Commission on Christian Doctrine.

So serious are some of these statements that one wonders what our National Church is coming to when its authoritative leaders can hold so loosely, and treat with such indifference, some of the most fundamental doctrines of the Word of God, when they ought to use their great influence to encourage faith in its divine teaching!

On the one hand they go too far by saying:—"The Bible is not only about God, *but is God!*"—a foolish and manifestly incorrect statement. Then they swing right round the other way, and many of their "conclusions" tend to undermine the vital doctrines of God's Holy Word. For example, Sir Ambrose shows how the authors deny first the inerrancy of the Bible. If that goes, then we have no sure foundation for our faith. On this subject I see reference is made to Luke's preface to his gospel. I should like, therefore, to call attention to what does not seem to be generally known. When Luke, according to our Authorised Version, tells us that he had "perfect knowledge of all things from the very first," the correct translation from the Greek is "*from above*"—a wonderful claim to inspiration! That same Greek word occurs several times in the New Testament, and is always elsewhere translated "from above." See, for example, John viii, 23: "Ye are from beneath, I am from above."

Secondly, they deny the accuracy of its prophetic teaching. Yet there is nothing more manifestly true than the prophetic teaching of the Bible—especially in the present day.

Thirdly, they say "the Gospel records of our Lord's words are unreliable!" Thus they would rob us even of our blessed Lord's own words!

Then, we learn also that they definitely favour the theory of Evolution, which has been proved again and again to be without

foundation, while they treat the sober and scientific account of Creation, as given in Genesis, as mythological! Also it is shown that they practically deny the miraculous in the Bible. Then it is stated that the members of the Commission were divided on the vital doctrine of the Virgin Birth of our Lord! Surely nothing could be more serious than that, for if Christ had had a human father He would have been a descendant of Adam, and, as such, would have inherited Adam's sin—for "in Adam all die" and, in that case, He could neither save Himself nor anyone else!

Even the Ascension of our Lord is to be interpreted symbolically! While the paper also shows that the members of the Commission were largely in sympathy with modernism, which plays havoc with the Bible.

Mr. HARRISON HILL said:—I speak as a member of the Church of England and particularly as a member of the Church Schools Committee of a London parish. I desire to thank Sir Ambrose Fleming for his paper, and I feel sure that all who, like myself, are interested in the religious education of our young people will share that gratitude.

In Section IV of his paper, the President discusses the subject of Creation or Evolution in regard to a set of statements on pages 44 and 45 of the Report, and to the immense amount of refutation given of late years to the theory of organic evolution. On that subject, I hold in my hand a small but important pamphlet by Lt.-Col. L. M. Davies, M.A., F.R.S.E., F.G.S., entitled *Scientific Opponents of Evolution*. (Covenant Publishing Co., Ltd., London.)

The pamphlet contains an impressive list of eminent scientists in France, Germany, and Italy who are opposed to the theory of Evolution. Though Col. Davies needs no confirmation from me, I have myself read the biographies of these scientists in the Encyclopædias of the three countries mentioned, and I hope soon to give at least an extract in *The National Message*, to which I contribute articles.

It was my duty recently to review in that journal an excellent book by Mr. Douglas Dewar. It is entitled *More Difficulties of the Evolution Theory*. It is dedicated to one of the scientists mentioned in Colonel Davies' pamphlet, Dr. Albert Fleischmann,

Professor of Zoology and Comparative Anatomy in Erlangen, "who for thirty-seven years has openly opposed the theory of organic evolution."

On the page opposite to the title are these words by Professor Lemoine, Director of the National Museum of Natural History, Paris (translating freely) :—

"The theory of evolution is impossible. It is a sort of dogma in which those who teach it no longer believe."

Mr. H. R. KINDERSLEY said :—All Christians who stand unashamed for "the Faith once delivered to the Saints," and have had the advantage of hearing or reading his address, must feel deeply grateful to Sir Ambrose Fleming for his vigorous and masterly denunciation of the treatment in this Report of the essentials of the Christian Faith by many leaders of the Church of England. In this Report two items in particular have evoked from Christian people widespread feelings of amazement and indignation, viz., "The Virgin Birth" and "Prophecy."

Though said to possess value as a parable, yet the story of the "Virgin Birth," as found in the Gospels and hitherto regarded by the Church of Christ as the keystone to the whole Christian edifice is declared by an important section of the Commission to have no historical foundation.

Then what do these sceptics make of the Gospel records of the Incarnation? This great doctrine is dismissed in the Report with a bare page and a half of comment which leaves nothing clear but the distressing fact that many leaders of the Church, holding modernist views, simply regard the Gospel records as fiction. But the minute details of these records are either true or false. If false, who is responsible for these shocking fabrications? Clearly the only person in a position to give first-hand evidence was the Mother of Jesus. Are the leaders of the Church of England, signatories to this Report, prepared to charge her with these foul inventions? For obvious reasons Modernists have never ventured to face this question; for instead of her prediction being fulfilled that all nations would call her "blessed," no language would be too strong to mark their sense of disgust at her supposed attempt to cover the fact of her sin.

But if this crime is not to be laid to the door of the gentle Hebrew Mother of Our Lord, then will anyone in their senses believe that the writers of the Gospels were guilty of inventing the amazing details of the Birth of Christ; a work which offered for them no better prospect of reward than persecution and death?

As it has been pointed out, "Jesus was either God-made man or man-made God." The modernists adopt the second alternative, asserting that He was the natural Son of Joseph and Mary. But "Natural generation always and necessarily produces a new person." Moreover, "Christ's Birth . . . is not the origin of His Personality, but only its entrance into the conditions of a human life (Orr)."

There is no place here for the Eternal Son of God!

But what of prophecy? The wording of the Report on page 29 is incapable of misunderstanding:—"We cannot now regard as a principal purpose or evidence of Inspiration the giving of detailed information about the future." Then how do they explain Micah v, written 750 B.C.:—"But thou Bethlehem Ephratah though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting"? True prophecy, as distinguished from intelligent anticipation, lies outside the capabilities of human beings. To God alone belongs the power to predict the far future in detail. This agrees with the verdict of Isaiah xvi, 23:—"Show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods."

The proof of prophecy lies in its fulfilment. Unlike the sacred writings of the other great religions of the world, which according to Dr. H. A. Ironside do not contain a single instance of the fulfilment of a genuine prophecy, the Bible stands unique in being "sealed with prophecy in all its parts."

The Rev. H. K. BENTLEY said:—Might I be permitted in all humility to call attention to a slight blemish in the otherwise wonderful paper prepared by Sir Ambrose Fleming. There is one statement that needs slight modification. On page 5 Sir Ambrose draws a slightly incorrect deduction of Deut. xviii, 22: "When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not,

nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously." Sir Ambrose goes on to say that "the clear deduction from this verse is that prediction of future events is an exclusive prerogative of God."

Might I venture to say that this not so. Deut. xiii, 1-3, warn against being led astray by men who, under other inspiration than that of God, foretell the future in a successful manner. "If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder come to pass whereof he spake unto thee saying, Let us go after other gods which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the Lord your God proveth you to know whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul." In other words, a man speaking under demonic influence may be able to predict the future with a certain degree of accuracy, and this success may be a means in the hand of the enemy of souls to draw people away from the truth of God. This passage is given us as a warning of that danger. Prophets must be tested in other utterances to see whether they are in accordance with the whole revealed will of God.

In the next place, with reference to the Virgin Birth of our Lord, which has already been mentioned, I venture to suggest that no one who believes the Creation story should have any difficulty in believing the Gospel account concerning our Lord's miraculous birth. If God could create with a word a man who had neither father nor mother, surely it would be a simple matter for Him to give us His Son without the aid of a human father. Whilst our Lord had a human mother, Adam had neither father nor mother.

May I also say that the Bible and our Lord stand together. In each case we find that they owe their existence on earth to the power of the Spirit of God acting miraculously on chosen human vessels which thus received the God-given and supernatural ability to bring forth His Word for the salvation of men.

Might I further say that seeing that Christianity is based entirely on the teaching of the Apostles, any departure from the clear meaning of Apostolic teaching is a departure from Christianity. Anyone who does not agree with the Apostles thereby proclaims

himself to be faulty in his Christianity, and those who are against the Apostles' teaching are anti-Christian, to that extent.

With regard to verbal inspiration, it is clear from many passages of Holy Writ that God gave not only the thoughts but the very words. Have we not read, "Behold I have put My words into thy mouth"? Furthermore, when we turn to such passages as Lev. i, 1 and 2, we see that what is written there is clearly what God actually said: "The Lord called unto Moses, and spake unto him out of the tabernacle of the congregation saying, speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, if any man of you bring an offering unto the Lord, ye shall bring your offering of the cattle, even of the herd, and of the flock." We see there, Sir, that we are given not merely what Moses said to Israel, but what God said to Moses. God told Moses exactly what to say, and what follows is not between the mouth of Moses and the ear of Israel, but between the mouth of God and the ear of Moses. The words are God's words, and not Moses'. I submit, Sir, that it is a clear case of dictation, and there are many such instances. Besides, was it not Dean Burgon who said that, as you cannot have music without notes, nor arithmetic without figures, neither can you have thoughts without words? Let anyone here present try to think without words, and see how he succeeds.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS.

Rev. Principal H. S. CURR wrote: Many of the statements contained in the document with which our President has dealt so effectively must rouse grave concern in the minds and hearts of all who care greatly for the progress of true religion in this realm. The Church of England is by law established as the national church, a fact which invests with unusual importance and influence such pronouncements on Christian doctrine as the Report of the Archbishops' Commission. Dangerous concessions are made to humanistic modernism which is virtually a different religion from Christianity, if indeed it be a religion at all.

There is, however, one sentence quoted in the paper which has rejoiced my soul. It is concerned with that event which Sir Ambrose justly describes as "the supreme miracle of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the grave." The words in question

are these: "the majority of the Commission are agreed in holding the traditional explanation." In conjunction with that, there may be taken the explicit declaration of Dr. William Temple, the Archbishop of York, a great scholar and philosopher, that he wholeheartedly accepts the historic teaching of the Christian Church on the rising of Our Lord from the dead. We need not be unduly disturbed by the obvious inference that there was a minority of members who refused to believe in the empty tomb. We read that when Our Lord appeared to His followers after His Resurrection, some doubted (Matthew xxviii, 16-17).

The connection which has troubled me is that a company of theological specialists has been constrained to accept the teaching of the New Testament regarding the literal reality of Our Lord's Resurrection. His Virgin Birth seems to have been a stone of stumbling. The Ascension is regarded with some degree of dubiety but of the physical return to life of Jesus of Nazareth soon after His Crucifixion no serious question is raised, and that by scholars who challenge the inspiration of the Bible, and accept the evolutionary theory regarding the origin of the universe. The evidence must have been simply overwhelming to secure such a verdict in favour of the time-honoured belief of the Christian Church that Our Lord actually rose from the dead, and appeared again to His disciples. Sir William Robertson Nicoll was in the habit of saying that there is no fact in history so well attested as the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. The conclusions of the Archbishops' Commission bear out that contention. They express themselves as dissatisfied with the historical evidence for the Virgin Birth and for the Ascension, but the many infallible proofs of the Resurrection seem to have convinced them. As to the significance of that, let Paul be heard, "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept" (7 Cor. xv, 14, 20).

Mr. GEO. BREWER wrote: I feel that our President has rendered a valuable service in his masterly dealing with the first part of this Report, which although it has served a useful purpose in revealing the wide differences existing in the Church of England, Sir Ambrose has conclusively proved to be a very humiliating and inconsistent document.

Putting aside the fact that in the New Testament no mention is made of a universal visible Church, nor of any body representing a confederation of local assemblies (the invisible Church as the Body of Christ being one and indivisible), the fact remains that the Church of England at the Reformation declared unmistakably for the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith, as set forth in the New Testament, which with the Old Testament Scriptures they regarded as the inspired Word of God, and affirmed the historical accuracy of the events recorded therein.

Sir Ambrose also refers to statement on page 29 of the Report, that the evidence of the "inerrancy of the Bible commonly held in the Church until the beginning of the nineteenth century cannot be maintained in the light of the knowledge now available." Here the impregnable rock of Holy Scripture is surrendered as an untenable fortress to the enemy; for while, as Sir Ambrose says, it fails to state which parts are erroneous, it leaves to each individual or group to decide, and to expunge or explain away such portions which militate against their preconceived opinions. In fact, the way is carefully prepared for the unbeliever to treat the inspired Word with indifference.

Luke, the intelligent physician, in writing to his friend Theophilus, assured him in the opening verses of his gospel, that having himself obtained the testimony of those who were eyewitnesses, he had received from above perfect understanding of all things, and writes in order that he might know the certainty of those things wherein he had been instructed.

Of the signs and miracles recorded in his gospel, the Apostle John says in the closing verses of twentieth chapter: "Many other signs did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name."

The contention that many events recorded in both Old and New Testaments as historic facts, and as such, some were quoted by our Lord Himself, are merely symbolic, reduces Holy Scripture to a book of fables.

Our Lord spoke as one having authority, and not as the Scribes. These would appear to include scribes of the present day as well as those of our Lord's time