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## 900TH ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING

HELD IN THE LECTURE HALL OF THE NATIONAL SOCIETY FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION, 69, GREAT PETER STREET, WESTMINSTER, S.W.1, ON MONDAY, 2ND APRIL, 1951.

ERNEST WHITE, ESQ., M.B., B.S., IN THE CHAIR.

The Minutes of the previous Meeting were read, confirmed and signed.

The following elections were announced :—Dr. Randal Herbert Wood, Ph.D., B.Sc., A.M.I.C.E., A.M.I.Mech.E., Member; Desmond Hector Jones, Associate; Miss L. M. Mackinlay, Honorary Life Member (formerly Member).

The CHAIRMAN then called on R. E. D. Clark, Esq., M.A., Ph.D., to read his Paper, entitled "Prophecy and Psychical Research."

### PROPHECY AND PSYCHICAL RESEARCH

BY ROBERT E. D. CLARK, M.A., Ph.D.

TO the modern Christian few subjects are more perplexing than that of prophecy. Repeatedly, the New Testament presents us with claims that certain prophecies of the Old Testament have been fulfilled in the life of Christ and yet, when we examine these prophecies in their context, we find that they refer to events taking place in the life-time of the prophet, and it is sometimes difficult to suppose that any other reference could have been intended. St. Matthew's Gospel, in particular, abounds with difficulties of this kind and even orthodox scholars have now largely ceased to defend them.

What, for instance are we to make of the assertion that when our Lord was a child, his parents brought Him for a while to Egypt "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt did I call my son" (Matt. 2: 15)? The reference here is to Hosea (11: 1) where it seems plain that the words do not refer to the future at all, but to the past history of Israel: "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt." Other instances of a similar kind might be given: they are familiar enough to students of the Bible.

Obviously the difficulty is not one which concerns the prophecies of the first coming of Christ alone. We are faced with the same problem when we consider the prophecies that relate to the so-called "last days" or the "day of the Lord". Here also prophecies which until recent times have been regarded by Christians as predicting events in the closing period of our era were written to people who lived thousands of years ago and were intended to apply to *them*. So much is clearly stated in the book of Revelation where, both at the beginning and end of the book, John says that "the time is at hand" (1: 3; 22: 10).

And scholars have found no difficulty in showing that the symbolism of this strange book had reference to the contemporary world in which its author lived.

Obviously we must consider the problem as a whole. If, with the modern critic, we think that most of the prophecies of the Old Testament, declared to be fulfilled in the New, related *only* to events in the days of the prophets concerned, we shall almost certainly take the same view with regard to the prophecies of the "end of the age," and shall claim that these were in no way intended to foretell a detailed history that still lay aeons ahead. If, on the other hand, we believe that the New Testament writers made a right use of Old Testament prophecy, we shall probably feel that, despite the fact that prophets wrote of contemporary events, their words may often have referred also, at times perhaps even *mainly*, to events that still lay in the dim and distant future.

The nature of Biblical prophecy is still a matter on which there is no agreement among Christians. An older generation insisted upon a theory of "verbal inspiration," while the modern theologian tends often to suppose that the Biblical writer was no more inspired than a Shakespeare or a Blake. Musty volumes attempting to thrash out this issue have collected in their hundreds—or thousands—in our great libraries. But the very intensity with which the controversy has been waged in the past seems to have diverted attention from an altogether different way of regarding prophecy—or to be more accurate, of regarding *some* kinds of prophecy—of which hints are to be found in many parts of the Bible. It is these hints which, as we shall see, will help us in our quest.

Consider, for instance, the story of the journey which Elijah and Elisha took together before Elijah was carried up into heaven. As the two prophets passed through Bethel and Jericho, they were met by the "sons of the prophets" who resided in these places. And the latter, when once they saw Elisha, said to him: "Knowest thou that the Lord will take away thy master from thy head today?" (2 Kings 2 : 3, 5).

In the New Testament we read of similar occurrences. Paul was on his way to Jerusalem and as he passed through numerous villages and towns he conversed with the local disciples. And the record he leaves us is this: "The Holy Ghost testifieth unto me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me" (Acts 20 : 23).

Here are prophecies in a blatant form. Verbal inspiration? Hardly. Would God have directly inspired hundreds of prophets to tell Elisha and Paul what they knew already? Inspiration of the Shakespeare-Blake variety? Certainly not. It seems clear that prophecy of the kind we are considering differs greatly from the types which theologians are wont to discuss. The implication is rather that there are times when God "speaks" and that prophets are then often able to "pick up" His thoughts, by a kind of telepathy or extra-sensory perception. As a result, the prophets who prophesied, did not always do so in a useful way. "Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace," said Elisha; and Paul often had occasion to speak in the same vein. The fact was simply this: that God had "spoken" of the future and all sensitive people, everywhere, were capable of "picking up" the message. This, surely, is what the prophet Amos means when he says (3 : 8) : "The Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy?"

Let us take the passages we have quoted at their face value. If we do so we must suppose that there is in nature what we may conveniently call a "realm of ideas" where concrete information is stored. This realm is real in the fullest sense of the word; it is as real as books or microfilms. And sometimes God pours into it His own thoughts. Here He may enshrine prophecies of the future or plans and messages for His people. Those who are endowed in a special way, about which we know little or nothing, are then able to pick up the ideas which the "realm" contains and to translate them into the ordinary language of the day.

If we take this view, we shall perhaps want to add that the ideas contained in this mysterious psychic "realm" may not all be good ones. Not only may God cause His voice to be heard in it, but evil men and perhaps evil spirits may do the same. With one consent Ahab's prophets told him to go up to Ramoth Gilead and prosper, for there was a lying spirit in the mouths of all of them, so that they all "picked up" a false prophecy (1 Kings 22 ; 2 Chron. 18).

There are several passages also in the Bible which resemble Paul's significant remark: "God sendeth them a working of error, that they should believe a lie" (2 Thess. 2 : 11). In these passages it seems to be presupposed that human beings may pick up false conceptions and ideologies from a non-human "realm of ideas," and we are left to conclude that the nature of the ideas which are picked up depends very largely upon the character of those who pick them up. Perhaps it is that the good "pick up" what is true and the evil what is untrue.

One more point before we close this discussion of Biblical prophecy. In the examples cited it is obvious that before a prophet can prophesy, he must be in some kind of relation to the person which the prophecy, already present in the "realm of ideas," concerns.

It is when the prophets meet Elijah or Paul, and not till then, that they spontaneously sense what God has "said" about these men. In other words, prophecy (or at least prophecy of this particular kind) obeys a *law of association*.

The power of this association is often seen in the Bible records. The terror of natural calamities, including an earthquake in the days of Joel, brings prophecies of similar days in which the Lord "shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem" (Joel 3 : 1). Our Lord rejoices when the seventy cast out demons: is it not the thought of this limited triumph over Satan that conjures up in His mind a vision of the day when Satan shall fall from heaven quick as lightning? (Luke 10 : 17). And prophecy, as all recognise, is not concerned with the future alone. When the heart of the prince of Tyre was so swollen with pride that he thought himself divine, Ezekiel prophesies not only against him but—just as if there were no hiatus—tells also of past ages when pride resulted in the condemnation of the devil (Ezek. 28). And because prophecy obeys the law of association, it is sometimes telepathy pure and simple—the ability to know what another man is thinking—as when the prophet Elisha told the king of Israel the words that the king of Syria spoke in his bedchamber (2 Kings 6 : 12).

Some such view as that here suggested must long have been familiar to many readers of the Bible. At all events, though he cannot remember having seen it expressed in print, it has commended itself to the present writer for many years past. But until recently it seemed so "theoretical" and difficult to substantiate that it was scarcely worth while raising it in public. It was difficult to believe that ideas could have an independent existence—that they were as "real" as physical objects—or that concrete information could be stored in something that was neither mind nor matter.

Today, however, the position is completely reversed. A few years ago the late Mr. Whately Carington, who was, incidentally, an avowed agnostic, submitted all the theories which had hitherto been advanced to explain telepathy to an exhaustive analysis.

There is no space here to discuss the subject fully—Carington's book (*Telepathy*, 1945) may be referred to for this—but a short summary of his arguments can scarcely be omitted.

Like others before him, Carington points out that the degree of success obtained in telepathic experiments is independent of distance—results obtained across the Atlantic were as successful as those within a few yards, or within a mile or so. This seems to show quite definitely that telepathy is not caused by the transmission of any *physical* influence—for physical influences all obey some kind of inverse law (such as the inverse square law).

Secondly, every method we know of by means of which a message can be transmitted to a distance, involves some kind of coding followed by a de-coding at the other end. We may turn our ideas into letter of the alphabet, into sounds, into dots and dashes, into electrical fluctuations, etc., but both the sender and the receiver must first of all agree on the code and learn it properly before any transfer of thought can take place. Now in telepathy, there is no shadow of evidence that anything of this kind is happening. It seems to be ideas themselves and not "codes" which enter the mind of the person who is at the receiving end—in other words ideas themselves, though clearly not *physically* real, do seem to possess a reality of their own; and in order to account for telepathy we must hold that in some sense they pervade space.

Thirdly, we have to consider the degree of resemblance between the original idea and the idea as it is picked up. The evidence goes to show that a subject does not "see" and then proceed to draw, say, a hand. It is often the idea or shape or meaning of the original that gets across, not its exact form.

Suffice it to say, then, that *all* theories which seek to explain telepathy in terms of physical ideas seem to be doomed to failure. But there is one line of explanation which, however startling it may be, at once brings it into line with facts with which we are already familiar.

In our minds, ideas often become linked or associated with one another. Thus, when we think of the word "wine" we tend to associate it at once with "women and song" or again, the letter "O" may at once suggest "K". Often, however, the associations are peculiar to ourselves—thus a particular book may suggest its donor.

So, then, our minds obey the "law of association". Ideas which have once been presented to us together tend to become

so grouped that, later on, when one of the ideas is presented, the other may also vividly come before us.

Now let us suppose that the "law of association" does not merely apply within a single mind, but that it can also apply between two or more minds. Then it is clear that we shall at once have something very like telepathy. For if you and I both decide to conduct an experiment in telepathy, and I then endeavour to connect the idea of my experiment in telepathy with, say, a particular kind of animal, then you also, presented with the one idea, may tend to think of the second idea with which it is now become associated.

This theory at once explains a formidable difficulty which seems to be insuperable on any other view. We have said that telepathy is not dependent on distance. This seems to imply that we are liable to "pick up" any or all of the thoughts of any of the millions upon millions of people in the rest of the world—or at least those within the range of the few thousand miles or so over which telepathy has been proved to work effectively. Clearly, even the most receptive person does not pick up all those thoughts. Therefore the existence of the "sender" is not by itself enough. But what else is required? The view that the "law of association" holds between *different* minds at once answers the question. Telepathy cannot take place unless there is a chance for "association" to operate.

Nor is the "law of association" the only law to which telepathy appears to conform. We are all familiar with the "law of recency" in psychology. In telepathy, too, the "law of recency" holds good—successful scoring in telepathic experiments is at a maximum at the time when association is established in the sender's mind and, after that, it falls off gradually. Similarly, the "law of repetition" also applies—the more often ideas are presented together, the more they tend to stick together.

Telepathy, in short, does not fall into line with physical laws, but it does seem to conform to psychological laws. And it would seem that not only telepathy, but many other curious psychical happenings, can be profitably regarded in the same light. Psychometry—the ability of certain people to say something about the past history of objects which they handle—might well be explained along the same lines. Then again, the evidence for ghosts and haunting is exceptionally strong, but in a majority of instances ghosts appear only to be "hallucinations"; for, although they appear to walk about, they rarely interact



with the physical world. Here again, then, we may imagine that when people have been associated with certain surroundings for a long time or in very emotion-stirring circumstances, an association of ideas is established in an independent "realm of ideas," and we may suppose that association is so strong that acquaintance with a locality may bring up a vivid hallucinatory image of a person who once lived there.

The same explanation may be advanced for much of the circumstantial evidence which seems to point in the direction of spiritualism. There are good grounds for scepticism concerning the spiritualist interpretation—the theory that it is dead people who manifest themselves at séances. In the well-known Gordon Davis case, Davis, who was thought to be dead and had produced much startling evidence that he had survived the death of his body, turned out later to be alive—nor was he at all interested in psychic matters (*Soc. for Psychical Research Proc.*, 1925, **35**, 560). But if we suppose that two people know one another so well that their thoughts and personalities become linked, and that one of them dies, Carington's theory would certainly explain how the living partner might find apparent "evidence" of survival of his friend as a result of messages through a "medium."

Here, at all events, we have the only rational suggestion that appears yet to have been made with regard to these extraordinary happenings. And even if we remain sceptical about the reality of psychometry, hauntings, and the goings-on in the séance-room we can scarcely afford any longer to be sceptical about telepathy, for which the evidence is now so strong that few who have studied it have for long remained unconvinced.

From this point Carington goes on to make the suggestion—an old one in philosophy—that our minds are not really as individualistic as they seem. There is, he says, a universal subconscious mind, common to all of us, and it is out of this so-to-speak higher mind, that thoughts come welling up into our consciousness. He goes on to make a vigorous attack on all religious faiths on the ground that all that they stand for that is of importance can be adequately accounted for by postulating a "group-mind" of humanity. Even immortality can be explained, he says, by supposing that the associations of ideas which have come to us, as a result of our individual experiences, will continue to remain intact in the world-mind after we are dead.

Along these lines, Carington proposed to found a new religious

faith which would altogether do away with the need for postulating God or a belief in Christ as divine. Moreover, associations of ideas in the world-mind—"psychon systems" as he pleased to call them—would do all that had ever been claimed for devils, so that there would be no need for devil-worship or Black Mass either! In fact religions of the orthodox kinds, both good and bad, would, he thought, have to beat a hasty retreat before the rapidly advancing tide of his new psychon-system religion.

All this is ingenious and impressive. But what, in fact, has been established and what is mere conjecture? The suggestion has been made that *if* we postulate the independent existence of ideas and of their associations, *apart* from the human mind, we shall throw light upon a wide variety of curious and unexplained phenomena. So far so good. But Carington did not adduce the slightest reason for going further than this. He produced no reason whatever for belief in an all-pervading unconscious *mind*, a world-mind of humanity.

At this point, of course, questions of definitions of words become very perplexing. According to Carington, *sensa*, together with associations of ideas, constitute a *mind*. But he did not say why he thought that his world-mind experienced *sensa*. Moreover he believed, apparently for no reason at all, that, provided they became large enough, psychon-systems, or groups of associations of ideas, would automatically develop consciousness as an epiphenomenon.

It seems clear that Carington made the mistake of defining mind in terms of one or two of its attributes. This is, of course, akin to the mistake of those biochemists who have defined life as a conglomeration of proteins, carbohydrates, lipoids, nucleotides, etc., in dynamic equilibrium. None of us can define either *mind* or *life*, but we may fairly entertain more than a shrewd suspicion that definitions of this kind are coverage for ignorance!

In short, Carington's supposed universal mind possesses only one or two of the many attributes which ordinary people associate with mind. It can merely store ideas and their associations. Self-consciousness and ability to experience *sensa* have been added gratuitously. In fact, one cannot help suspecting that this whole theory arises, not from reason and fact at all, but out of Carington's strongly marked theophobia. He seems to have been bent, at all costs, to discredit religion rather than to put forward a balanced philosophy.

We may, then, safely set aside the world-mind theory and adhere rigidly to the ascertained fact. And the ascertained fact brings us back precisely to the point at which the Bible leaves us. There is a "realm of ideas" which exists quite independently of man. And man's own thoughts and associations of thoughts can be transmitted to and stored in this realm, from which also man is able, at times, to draw ideas in the reverse direction.

Thus, far from discrediting the Christian view of the world, developments in psychical research have done a great deal to confirm it. And for this extremely interesting development in our understanding we must, above all, be grateful to Whately Carington.

We started by pointing out the well known fact that Biblical prophecy shows some curious features which, at first sight, are likely to make us highly sceptical of its reality. Why was it that Biblical writers seemed to show no sense of the context in which the "prophecies" were written? Why did it never dawn on them that the principle of "two-fold fulfilment" is a mere playing fast and loose with the sacred text?

In the light of the conclusions we have reached we may now turn to study this problem anew. Let us accept the teaching implied throughout the Bible, that there is a "real" but non-physical realm of ideas with which man—or at any rate the prophet—is in partial contact. So when we build up associations of thoughts in our minds, these associations are not private: they become stored not in our minds alone but in a cosmic "realm of ideas." And we may well suppose that God's thoughts—His plans and intentions for the future of our race—also form part and parcel of that realm. Nor is it unreasonable to suppose that God's thoughts and associations are far more indelibly impressed upon that realm, than are those of angels and men.

With this picture in our minds let us see what we can learn about prophecy. Firstly we may say at once that the prophet himself need not necessarily be God-fearing. The Bible itself makes this abundantly clear. Saul prophesied among the prophets. The pious Jew was warned that false prophets might arise who were able, nevertheless, successfully to predict the future (Deut. 13 : 2). Gazing intently upon the hosts of Israel, Balaam, against his own will, was obliged to prophesy blessing for God's chosen people (Num. 23-24). Again, scholars have often remarked upon the amazing similarities between the Biblical pro-

phesies of the King who is to reign in righteousness and the similar (though less exalted) but apparently independent passages in the sagas of ancient Egypt, Greece and Persia. Coming to more modern times we think also of Nostradamus. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to suppose that God gave the prophets of His chosen people a power that was unexcelled by false prophets or by the prophets of other nations.

The Bible makes it plain that from the beginning God had determined upon the way in which He would redeem mankind. Prophecies of the First Advent were fulfilled literally and in great detail and there hardly seems room to doubt that those relating to the Second Advent will be fulfilled in like manner. In early days little was revealed but, as time went by, more and more of the Divine Plan was unveiled. This was because, in the long history of the Jews, it often happened that the various situations in which the chosen people found themselves resembled situations which would arise again as the plans of God unfolded themselves in history. And of these plans those which related to the Advents—the most direct by far of all encounters between man and God—were naturally of supreme importance.

Thus it happened that, whenever there was an earthquake, a famine, an invading army, the eruption of a volcano, widespread unbelief, idolatry and so on, prophets prophesied of these things, warning their generation of the judgment of God. But as they did so their minds made contact with the "realm of ideas." Hardly realising the fact they began to link their thought about the contemporary situation with the ideas with which similar thoughts were most powerfully linked in the plan of God. They spoke of Antichrist, of Armageddon, of fearful catastrophes, of a king meek and lowly and riding upon an ass, of a king scattering his enemies and establishing his Kingdom. All these associations were present and are still present in the "realm of ideas"—a timeless realm. And prophets too lost their sense of time. Without knowing it they mixed the immediate with the distant future. But as the ages passed more and more of the details of that distant future became revealed.

These are the main features of prophecy which we should expect to find if the theory that we have advanced be true. And it conforms exactly with the pattern of Bible prophecy with which we are so familiar. The lack of sense of time in the prophetic utterance—so that millenniums can be interspersed in the middle of a sentence with no warning of the fact (see Luke 4 : 19 and Acts

2:17 for familiar instances); the apparent unawareness of the prophet as to what is contemporary and what is not, the gradual unfolding of the Divine plan: all are there. What more could we demand?

If this view be true, prophecy is indeed enigmatical and hard to interpret. That we may freely grant. But why should we expect it to be otherwise? It was no part of God's plan to make His secrets known to experts in the logician's art. The numerous and astounding little details fulfilling the prophecies in the life of our Lord are a sufficient vindication of the source of the prophecies. It is a faithless generation that demands more—and no more will be given.

We may approach our subject from another point of view. How did those who *wrote* the Bible think of prophecy? It seems clear that they must have held a view that differed not greatly from that which we have advanced. Even regarded from a purely human standpoint, St. Matthew was no fool. He was extremely familiar with the Old Testament writings, and it is difficult to credit the view that, although he knew full well the various contexts in which the passages he quotes occurred, he was always so perverse as to take them out of their context! It is manifest that neither he nor the other writers of the Canon approached the subject from the angle of the writer of the modern commentary. Without doubt St. Matthew would have laughed at the critic, saying that God was catching the wise in their own craftiness—and surely he would have been right.

Two further comments seem called for. In the first place we must remember that if this idea of prophecy seems strange to us, it will hardly seem strange to the psychologist. In our everyday thinking we pay far less regard to context than we are apt to suppose.

Here is an illustration given in a modern book on psychology.<sup>1</sup> Shortly before World War II, a business man was talking about the frightful injustice done to small nations. He went on to speak about his tailor with an equal sense of annoyance, for a very long time ago a coat he had ordered had not been delivered on time. Next he talked about a doctor with whom he was also angry, because the latter had withheld information about the nature of a drug he was prescribing. Now the immediate contexts of each of these complaints are easy to understand, yet they

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<sup>1</sup> K. Horney, *Self Analysis* (1942), p. 127.

are almost totally irrelevant. The man was busy and his lady secretary had stayed away from the office with a bad attack of 'flu. Obviously, he could not blame her for this nor could he do anything effective about it. So he showed his annoyance by thinking of other instances in which annoying things had happened about which he could also do nothing. The connexion between these thoughts and their cause did not dawn upon him; it was there none the less.

Now if, in everyday life, it is only too easy for the words we utter to have practically no relation to their logical context, we must not be surprised if we discover something of the same kind in ancient writers also. A prophet might, in his consciousness, be entirely engrossed with the affairs of his day, yet the choice of his ideas and the form they took might be largely under the control of forces about which he knew nothing. His prophetic power (or however else we like to describe it) might, indeed, ensure that the immediate context of his words was of very secondary importance.

The example of the man and his secretary affords a homely illustration which serves to show how easily logic may lead us astray. Indeed, though we often hardly realise the fact, a large amount of our thinking is conducted by means of analogies. All our thinking in dreams and much of our waking thinking too, is of this character, and it ill behoves us to complain if, at times, we find evidences of allogical thinking in the Bible also.

Secondly and finally, a word of caution is necessary. If these ideas appeal to us, we may be tempted to think that psychical research has presented us with a comprehensive theory of prophecy. No idea could be more dangerous. It is rare indeed that any theory, however convincing it may be, will comprehend all the facts which it was advanced to explain. We have good reason to think that some of the prophecy in the Bible may be explained in the way we have described—but it is impossible to read the Bible intelligently without realising that much Biblical prophecy is of a different kind. The value of the present theory is not that it explains all that there is to be explained, but that it explains *some* of the facts and that, in doing so, it removes at one stroke many of those difficulties which, in the past, have so often turned the devout Biblical scholar into the sceptical Biblical critic.

## DISCUSSION.

The CHAIRMAN (Dr. E. WHITE) said: Dr. Clark has presented what to most of us, perhaps to all of us, is a new and original conception of prophecy. He has used his scientific imagination to some purpose in the way he has dealt with a difficult and obscure subject.

Carington's theories of the nature of Telepathy rest upon the assumption of the existence of a group mind common to humanity. This is somewhat akin to Emerson's conception of the Over Soul, and it is faintly reflected in Jung's theory of the Collective Unconscious. If this theory is dismissed as false, then the explanation of Telepathy on the grounds of association of ideas must be given up.

Quite apart from Carington's theories, it seems to me that the association of ideas is not a satisfactory ground of explanation of prophecy, even if we grant the realm of ideas postulated by Dr. Clark. Each individual mind forms its own particular association of ideas connected with any given object or event. For instance, a book on my bookshelf will bring to my mind certain ideas and feelings which I have obtained and selected from its contents, but it does not follow that another person seeing the book would associate the same feelings and ideas with it when he saw it.

Associated with every object or event in our environment, each one of us forms a constellation of associated ideas peculiar to himself and different from the constellation formed by others. This is because any given object does not automatically produce the same association in the mind of each beholder. The associations formed depend upon the particular interests and attitude of mind of each beholder, and depend, not only upon the perception of the object itself but on all the past relations of each person to that and similar objects. For example, I go to see a house in which I lived for many years in my childhood; that house will bring to my mind a flood of associated memories and feelings which could not possibly exist in the mind of a stranger who saw the house for the first time.

The conception of a realm of ideas seems to have some affinity to Platonic conceptions. Plato described a heavenly sphere in which the ideas of things we see on earth had eternal existence. Things on earth were the embodiment of these eternal ideas. For example, there was a real "Chairness" of which all chairs were the visible

expression. In other words, universals were not abstractions, but were actual entities.

Why should we postulate a realm of ideas? Is it not simpler to suppose that God communicated ideas directly to His servants rather than to suppose that He first of all put His ideas into a kind of separate realm where they remained stored up until they were tapped by somebody who became in some way sensitized to them? However, having said all this, I must express gratitude, shared no doubt by all of us, for a very interesting and ingenious paper.

Mr. TITTERINGTON said: Dr. Clark has given us a very interesting theory. About the theory itself I am hardly competent to express an opinion; but there is one remark I would like to make: that, in spite of what Dr. Clark has said, I cannot conceive of a repository of ideas that can be tapped by the human mind that does not in itself partake of the character of mind. What can this "mind" be? It cannot be the Divine mind, certainly not the Satanic; and if we reject—and as Christians I think we are bound to reject—Carington's concept of a collective human mind, what remains?

It is the proposed application of the theory to Biblical prophecy, however, in which I am more interested. Now, the Bible teaches us that there are spiritual beings—angels and demons, as well as the Holy Spirit Himself and the devil—who are able to communicate directly with the human mind. With regard to the major prophecies of Scripture, Dr. Clark himself admits that these are directly divinely inspired. Peter tells us that "holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Pet. 1:21), and that their prophecies were inspired by "the Spirit of Christ that was in them" (1 Pet. 1:11). Is it not, after all, the simplest assumption that the minor prophecies to which Dr. Clark has called our attention were inspired in exactly the same way? Dr. Clark asks: Would God have directly inspired hundreds of prophets to tell Elisha and Paul what they knew already? Why not? The very Scripture Dr. Clark quotes in this connection says: "The Holy Ghost testifieth." And we must remember that in the days of Elisha and Paul the gift of prophecy was very widely diffused.

The main difficulty I feel about the theory is this: that if the



prophecy comes about by a sort of "picking up" by the mind, it depends to a large extent on the accuracy of the percipient. The message might be picked up partially or indistinctly; it might be confused by a sort of "interference" from some other source; or it might be vitiated by the admixture of something from the mind of the recipient himself. This would do away with that characteristic of prophecy to which Peter again calls attention that we have a "*more sure*" word of prophecy. This certainty comes about because the message is *not* so confused or vitiated, but is communicated directly by God Himself: False prophets are similarly inspired by evil spirits, but here the spirits can for their own ends convey a true or false message as they desire, and the certainty is not there.

One further point. We must guard against the idea that there is only one way in which prophecy can be given. The Bible shows us the contrary: the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says that God has spoken by the prophets "at sundry times and in divers manners." Of these "divers manners" Scripture gives us abundant examples. God has spoken by angels (Daniel, John, the Virgin Mary, Manoah, Gideon—and see Heb. 2:2), by dreams (Joseph, Daniel), and visions (Ezekiel, Isaiah, Zechariah, Peter), and sometimes by direct speech—"opening the mouth" (Ezekiel), and perhaps in other ways as well. But the point is that in each and every case there was a direct, objective communication that did not depend upon the recipient, and was not liable to be mutilated in the transmission.

Mr. B. C. MARTIN said: I would like to express my appreciation of Dr. Clark's thought-provoking paper. There is one comment, however, which I would like to make in regard to the suggested unconscious use of the timeless "Realm of Ideas" by the prophets. Dr. Clark says that this may account for their loss of the sense of time—"without knowing it they mixed the immediate with the distant future."

But this feature of the immediate and distant futures being telescoped together is found also in the prophecies of our Lord (*e.g.*, Matt. 24, which deals with the Destruction of Jerusalem, which took place in A.D. 70, and the Second Advent). There is surely no suggestion that He had need of recourse to a "Realm

of Ideas" but spoke rather from His Own omniscience: it was only the "hour" that He chose, as man, to be ignorant of (v. 36).

It would seem probable, therefore, that a better explanation is that the near event adumbrated the distant.

Mr. W. E. FILMER said: There are a number of examples in the Bible of a series of events or experiences happening to one set of people at one time repeating themselves in the lives of other people at another time. For instance, a number of unusual things happened to Moses which also happened to Jesus Christ: both were law-givers who worked signs and wonders, both as children were providentially saved from death under an edict for the destruction of all male children, both fled their country to escape the king, and so on through a remarkable series of parallel events (see Newton, *On the Prophecies*, Vol. I, pp. 90-101).

It is evident, therefore, that if a prophecy is made regarding the one series of events, it would of necessity be equally applicable to the other series. This provides an adequate explanation of the dual fulfilment of prophecy and the apparent vagueness of the time element without recourse to Dr. Clark's theory. What still requires explanation is the fact that a series of historical events does repeat itself.

#### WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS.

Rev. J. STAFFORD WRIGHT wrote: I am afraid that, owing to my being away from home, I have to make these comments from my memory of the original MS. of the paper without having been able to see the galley proof.

I can see no harm in our trying to investigate what one might call the mechanism of prophecy. In fact, if we are to have a total view of reality, we are bound to hold some hypothesis, even if later we have to revise it. Dr. Clark's paper is an excellent attempt to state a hypothesis in the light of modern investigations into the workings of extra-sensory perception. The late Mr. Whately Carington's book is a most stimulating piece of work, and even if one cannot agree with all his conclusions, one can admit that his theory of the persistence of psychon systems is worthy of careful consideration.

So long as Dr. Clark does not regard his theory as covering all prophecy, it would account for many of the things that he mentions.

My difficulty is that there need be nothing of specifically divine inspiration in the picking up of the psychon systems attached to people, places, and situations. Could not any person with clairvoyant ability have done the same? Perhaps he could, and this would account for the recognised ability of even false prophets to predict accurately (Deut. 13 : 1, 2). But experience shows that ESP gifts are very much of a mixture; their percentage of accuracy is small, even though the accuracy is there. With regard to precognition, I take it that the inspired prophet would still need something more than natural gifts to sift the true from the false, though God might well make use of these natural gifts of ESP in the same way as He obviously used the poetic and literary ability of men to convey His truths.

What I think is specially valuable is the light that is thrown on the time element in predictive prophecy. The prophet is not debarred from making definite statements about time (*e.g.*, Daniel 9 : 24-26—though, of course, this is something revealed directly by an angel, and may be different), but it seems clear that we cannot look normally for precise sequence such as we are accustomed to in daily life. The time element in predictive prophecy seems to be of the same sort of quality as time in our dreams. After all, 1 Peter 1 : 11 suggests that the prophets themselves were doubtful about the dates to which their prophecies applied.

We can be grateful to Dr. Clark for a most thought-provoking paper.

Mr. F. F. BRUCE wrote: I am in no way qualified to pass any comment on the main suggestions in Dr. Clark's very interesting paper. But a professional exegete may make some remarks on the Biblical passages mentioned.

I agree that St. Matthew was no fool. He knew what he was doing in selecting Old Testament quotations to illustrate his nativity narrative; he was, in fact, interested in showing how the fortunes of the messianic people were recapitulated in the experience of the infant Messiah, that He might be seen to be afflicted in all their affliction. As Israel went down into Egypt and was called thence by God (Hosea 11 : 1), so must Messiah go down thither and return. And in the tears of the bereaved mothers of Bethlehem he sees repeated the sorrows which had attended so much of Israel's history.

in which the matriarch Rachel had so much cause to weep for her children, as on the occasion when Jeremiah pictured her as bewailing their deportation from the homeland (Jer. 31 : 15). If a modern writer wished to trace this parallelism he might use another method, but this was St. Matthew's method. The concept of "corporate personality" (on which Dr. Wheeler Robinson insisted so), and what Father Lattey calls the principle of "compentration" in Biblical prophecy, are, of course, very relevant in this regard.

As regards Peter's quotation of Joel 2 : 28-32 in Acts 2 : 17-21, the apostle seems to regard the whole prophecy as fulfilled in the events of Pentecost and does not suggest that millenniums are "interspersed" in the middle of any of the sentences he quotes. That idea, in my opinion, does not emerge from the consideration of Acts 2 : 16 ff. in its context but from reading the passage in the light of a certain scheme of prophetic interpretation.

On the whole question of Old Testament quotations in the New Testament, Professor R. V. G. Tasker's book *The Old Testament in the New Testament* (1946) may be consulted with profit—not to mention a paper on the textual aspect of the subject by Dr. Basil Atkinson in our *Journal of Transactions* 79 (1947), pp. 39 ff.

Mr. L. D. FORD wrote : (1) The prophecy by Hosea, "Out of Egypt have I called my son," was literally fulfilled when Joseph was advised by God in Egypt that he might take the Holy Babe back to Palestine. Our Lord as an infant traversed the same path that Israel ["my firstborn," Exod. 4 : 22] traversed many years before. Why say, "What are we to make of the assertion?"

(2) "The so-called last days." Why "so-called"? This suggests some fallacy somewhere. Are not the "last days" a familiar Old Testament subject of prophecy from the time of Jacob (Gen. 49 : 1) onwards? They relate to the day when Christ shall come as the Lord God and Messiah to reign and judge.

(3) Dr. Clark suggests a kind of floating pool of ideas to which God also contributes and from which the prophets, who were *en rapport* with God, drew their inspiration and messages. St. Peter says that "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Pet. 1 : 21). There is no intermediate state of "ideas" but a direct giving from the Holy Ghost, Who Himself is God, to the prophets. Has Dr. Clark drunk from those popular

streams of thought—popular in all ages—in which some kind of intermediary is interposed between God and His creature? The Bible teaches that human souls can have direct access to God in the Person of Jesus Christ and are indebted to no intermediary whatever; and God throughout the ages, as shown in the Old Testament abundantly, has Himself appeared and spoken to men (“By Myself have I sworn,” to Abraham, Gen. 22 : 16; and “*I am* hath sent thee,” to Moses, Ex. 3 : 14).

Lt.-Col. L. MERSON DAVIES wrote: I am very glad to see a paper by Dr. Clark, and hope that he has recovered from his most serious illness. I cannot discuss all that he says; but as a student of Bible Prophecy for over 50 years, I heartily agree with his statement that “Prophecies of the First Advent were fulfilled literally and in great detail and there hardly seems room to doubt that those relating to the Second Advent will be fulfilled in like manner.”

I discussed the former Prophecies in my booklet *The Credentials of Jesus*, published thirty years ago; and the latter Prophecies in ten articles on “Signs of the Times” in *The Life of Faith*, beginning with the issue for November 30th, 1949. The literal fulfilment of 2 Peter 3 : 3-4 by the rise of the modern geological doctrine of Uniformity (*alias* Continuity) with all its consequences, beginning with denial of the Flood—exactly as Peter foretold—was also discussed in my article, “The Philosophical Basis of Modernism” (*Trans. Vict. Inst.*, 61 (1929), pp. 191-222).

The subject is vast, and it is difficult even to take up certain points in a letter; but the symbolism of Revelation certainly did not refer to the world of John’s day. The writings of the earliest fathers prove that they regarded it as referring to a future state of things. Their views were very like those of our “futurist” school.

I also accept Matthew’s claim that the latter part of Hos. 11 : 1 refers to our Lord. Hosea repeatedly switched from Israel the man to Israel the nation (*e.g.*, 12 : 2-3, 12-13); and the first part of Hos. 11 : 1 seems to refer to the man (*cf.* Mal. 1 : 2). How could the *nation* be a “child”? And the words “called My Son out of Egypt” cannot refer either to Jacob or to the nation. Remember that the Jews of our Lord’s day equated God’s SON (in the singular) with “The” Christ; and our Lord was crucified for calling Himself that SON (Matt. 26 : 63 ff.; *cf.* Ps. 2 : 7, 12; Heb. 1 : 5-8).

Thus, Hosea's unique reference to God's Son (in the singular) being called out of Egypt does not fit the national exodus, although it might—as Dr. Clark suggests—come in here by association of ideas. And note that it is Matthew, the most legally trained of all the Apostles, who claims this as a prophecy about our Lord.

#### AUTHOR'S REPLY.

I should like to thank those who have participated in this discussion and I am sure that we shall all agree that useful points have been raised. Some of the questions put to me have, I think, been answered—so far as they can be answered—in the paper itself. Some of the others are beyond my wit to answer. But one cannot help feeling that a good deal of the criticism of the view put forward in the paper would take a different turn if Christians would seek to understand prophecy in general rather than Biblical prophecy alone.

Several critics suggest that St. Matthew's gospel and the facts of prophecy generally are perfectly intelligible without recourse to the views I have put forward. Even if they are right (and I would not in the least detract from Mr. Bruce's comments) that is no reason for shutting our minds to a new approach. A bad harvest may be due to bad weather, but late sowing or lack of fertilizer are not thereby ruled out.

When we look back on the prejudices of former ages we find, every time, that men were prejudiced because they were so contented with current explanations that they did not bother to look for new approaches. Truth, like error, can dull the mind. We Christians must never forget that the sin of dullness turns more of our generation away from Christianity than those other sins into which Christians are at times prone to fall. Clearly we must explore every hopeful avenue of approach. The Jews were satisfied that the prophecies referred to their nation. They were right. But St. Matthew opened the eyes of those who were not too blind to regard the same fact in a new light. In the same way our theory of prophecy may be convincing and right—but let us not therefore refuse to consider another theory.

Turning now to specific points that have been raised. Dr. White argues that private associations "could not possibly exist" in alien minds. But we cannot argue *a priori* in this way. The fact that seemingly private associations *do* at times exist in the

minds of others is surely an incontrovertible finding of psychical research. Is not the "realm of ideas" conception the simplest explanation we can offer?

Several speakers ask whether the theory is consistent with 2 Peter 1 : 21 and similar passages. I think it may well be. If we said we had heard a friend speaking directly to us on the wireless, we should not be lying because we knew that he was hundreds of miles away or even if we knew that it was a recording of his voice that we had heard. The Bible constantly speaks in the same way. God is said to send the sun and the rain : with Old Testament prophets we may hear His voice in the thunder. He is behind the natural order which He uses to accomplish His ends. The Bible stresses the ultimate spiritual facts and often omits to mention the natural order of which God's spirit makes constant use. We must not jump to the conclusion that the natural order is therefore excluded ! The "realm of ideas" may well be a part of that natural order. To suggest, as Mr. Ford does, that on such a view nature is a mediator between man and God in the sense of 1 Tim. 2 : 5 is surely as disingenuous a way of proving a man a heretic as was ever invented !

As for Mr. Titterington's main point, do not most of us agree that, in fact, the details of prophecy are "partial," "indistinct" and seemingly if not actually confused by "interference" from other sources—especially contemporary events? If not, why do we differ so in their interpretation? It is not in the details but in its general tenor that we may speak of the "more sure word of prophecy."

Mr. Martin asks if these theories would apply to Christ. Of course they would. Our Lord had command even of the winds and waves—why not of the "realm of ideas" too? Does Mr. Martin suggest that He was unable to do what prophets of the Old Testament could do with comparative ease? Or is it suggested that our Lord, who humbled himself to become a mere baby and to learn from *men*, never partook of the nature of man sufficiently to learn from one of man's main sources of inspiration down the ages? Surely such a view is not compatible with the teaching of the New Testament.