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862ND ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING

HELD AT THE NATIONAL CLUB, 12, QUEEN ANNE'S GATE,
LONDON, S.W.1., AT 5 P.M. ON JUNE 25TH, 1945.

AIR COMMODORE P. J. WISEMAN, C.B.E., IN THE CHAIR.

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

The CHAIRMAN then called upon the President, Sir Charles Marston, F.S.A.; to deliver his Presidential Address entitled "The Bible and Present-Day Developments."

The following elections have been made: G. J. E. Askew, Esq., Fellow; Mrs. E. B. Titchener, Life Member; A. D. Norris, Esq., M.A., D.Phil., Member; R. Harkness, Esq., Associate; Rev. D. T. Poole, Fellow; S. J. Wooldridge, Esq., Member; Prof. A. C. Schultz, Ph.B., M.A., B.D., Th.D., Member; G. C. D. Howley, Esq., Member; Rev. C. F. H. Henry, M.A., Th.D., Life Member; J. M. Houston, Esq., Associate; George H. Ramsay, Esq., Life Fellow; Robert L. Woolley, Esq., Member; J. Eynon-Tiffin, Esq., Member; Stanley G. Browne, Esq., M.B., B.S., F.R.C.P., M.R.C.S., D.T.M., A.K.C., Life Member.

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS.

"*THE BIBLE AND PRESENT-DAY DEVELOPMENTS.*"

By SIR CHARLES MARSTON, F.S.A.

THERE is a prophecy in the Old Testament of a Famine, not of bread, nor of water, but of hearing the words of God (Amos, 8-11). As we study our Bibles, we sometimes wonder whether such prophecies have been fulfilled, or whether the time is now ripe for them. Because we actually live in this age, there is no need to dwarf our imaginations in estimating its importance. The time may be ripe now for *anything* to happen; our trouble is that we lack perspective by which to judge. What will future historians have to say about us? We may suspect that there has been a good deal fundamentally at fault. But little light comes upon underlying causes, from our Preachers, or from the Press, or through the Radio.

There is a saying that people are prone not to see out of the wood for the trees. I suggest that the brilliant discoveries of this Age have dazzled us. And that we have been eager to accept not only the facts but the conjectures made in the name of Science, without appreciating what this involved, or the limitations of scientific knowledge about the deeper issues of life.

So far as the Bible is concerned, I have endeavoured in my books to point out that the discoveries made by the Science of Archaeology during the past twenty years are all in favour of the authenticity of the Old Testament. Authorities on the manuscripts of the New Testament like Sir Frederic Kenyon are equally favourable in their verdict on that Book. In addition then to the traditional belief in Holy Scripture, we have these modern external endorsements of Science to further sanction the authority which the Bible had held in this country.

Nevertheless the Bible, and what is associated with it, is being treated as old fashioned and out of date by a considerable part of the community. In the course of this address, it will be seen that judging by the utterances of present-day leaders of Science, it is the so-called scientific outlook that has really become "old-fashioned," and "out of date," and is breaking down in the face of the new evidence that has come to light this century.

In order to observe the chasm that exists between our traditional faith and what may be called the present day outlook, let us start with fundamentals. No one can take exception to the use of the first Commandment—

“Thou shalt have none other gods beside me”

as a fundamental Bible statement. Now everywhere, all through the ages, the Sciences of History, Archaeology and Anthropology tell us there has practically been a universal belief or recognition of one or more deities. On Good Friday, for example, we pray specially for Jews, Turks, Infidels and Heretics. But they all believed in some God or gods. It was left to the last century to develop a belief in no god at all, and in effect to declare that everything just happens! And the strange thing is that our Churches either ignore or make ineffective attempts to combat these ideas. Let us consider how they affect present-day religion.

The modern preacher usually takes as his subject some incident connected with the Life of The Lord Jesus Christ on earth. He takes for granted that his audience believe in God the Father, and all that is implied by that Faith. He takes for granted that his audience believe in the Supernatural as well as the Natural. He ignores the fact that a large proportion of the so-called educated population really only believe in the Natural. So it has come about that such a text as :—

“He that cometh to God must believe that HE IS and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek after him.” (Heb. xi, 6.)

is treated in a conventional way, and the implications involved in a real belief in the existence of the Deity are shunned.

I remember the days when it was thought a mark of learning for a man to affirm that he only believed what he could see. People still reject the reality of the Unseen associated with the Bible, although they readily accept it when associated with Science.

Again we have St. Paul's statement to the Athenians :—

“In him we live and move and have our being.” (Acts xvii, 28)

affirming the Transcendent Nature of the Deity, and His Imminence to each of us. It may reverently be suggested that the æther of space, which we use daily in broadcasting, is a standing witness to the Immanence of the Deity. But people overlook the association.

And lastly, our Lord's Revelation to His Disciples :—

“Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And not one of them shall fall on the ground without your Father; but the very hairs of your head are all numbered.” (Math. x, 29 and 30.) (Luke xii, 6.)

These sentences testify to a Divine Care for the whole Creation, from the sparrows to the very hairs of our heads. Such reminders are precious in these present days of trouble. They lift us up, as it were, into an atmosphere where we would fain dwell. Yet small account is now taken in our conventional lives of the implications such statements carry with them.

All this mental opacity began with the materialistic suppositions of the last century. My 1943 Address quoted a celebrated Scientist, a Nobel prize winner, who defined these suppositions as follows :—

“The scientists of the nineteenth century blundered in supposing that they had found a fairly consistent and universally applicable scheme of interpretation of the physical world, a set of laws in conformity with which all phenomena everywhere must take place.”

Such was the standard of knowledge half a century ago. Despite

all that has since been discovered, it is still largely the standard of knowledge of so-called educated people. They have not even yet realised how futile this attitude has become in the light of to-day's scientific Evidence. In order to demonstrate this concisely, one has only to refer to what Sir Arthur Eddington wrote before this war :—

“ We have turned a corner in the path of progress, and our ignorance stands revealed appalling and insistent.”
(*Vide* “ The Nature of the Physical World ”.)

While, since the war began, Sir James Jeans has written :—

“ We are still like children playing with pebbles on the seashore, while the great ocean of truth rolls unexplored beyond our reach.” (*Vide* “ Physics and Philosophy.”)

This statement fully endorses the words of Sir Arthur Eddington. I have neither seen nor heard of any references to them elsewhere. Are they so unimportant ? Or should they not in the interests of Truth be broadcast far and wide ? For a great part of our educated classes are under the impression that through Science we have reached a standard of knowledge out of all proportion, greater than is really the case. So instead of there now being little room left for Bible Revelation, there is more need for it ; even as there was two hundred and fifty years ago when Sir Isaac Newton first wrote the words which Sir James Jeans has re-affirmed. The fact of the matter seems to be that in tacitly accepting the nineteenth century outlook, historians of the future may affirm that we in the twentieth century were guilty of a great act of credulity. For these words of Sir Arthur Eddington and Sir James Jeans, two of our greatest modern scientists, render the purely materialistic scheme of interpretation of the nineteenth century futile, its supposed laws inadequate, and its assumption of complete knowledge ridiculous. Yet these last century ideas continue to be treated as the basis of knowledge at the present time. The Deity was so left out of that nineteenth century scheme, that for the most part there are merely polite beliefs to-day that “ HE IS.” The idea of His Immanence is in a similar semi-moribund condition ; and it is imagined that His Care for His Creation would involve interference with the assumed uniformity of those supposed Laws of Nature, which according to these nineteenth century ideas were sacrosanct. Thus through assumptions of last century which were pure speculations, and limited us

to the finite, God has been denied the control of His Own Universe !

It has recently been asserted that the final blow to materialism was dealt by the discovery of ultra atomic corpuscles and the splitting of the atom. However that may be, phenomena, that do not accord with these 19th Century Laws of Nature, are no longer being laughed at, they are being recognised by men of Science. Indeed at least one distinguished authority declares that the ordinary actions of every-day life partake of the nature of miracles. Others who have studied the extraordinary manifestations of life, are reaching conclusions like those of Crookes, Richet and Lodge. Alexis Carrel of the Rockefeller Institute, New York, a most brilliant Scientist, who has recently died, affirmed that a negative attitude to miracles could no longer be sustained in face of the facts observed by science during the past fifty years.

Why in this century has there been such an ostrich-like disregard of History and Tradition ? Has it been because supposed laws "in conformity with which all phenomena must happen" are there conspicuous by their absence ? If we confine our observations on History to the immediate past, the result of the operation of the supposed laws "in conformity with which all phenomena must happen" has proved peculiarly disappointing to the German people. For consider their many years of most thorough preparation for this war ; of how they spared no endeavour to ensure its success. Consider further how we enabled Germany to bring about the natural result by our policy of disarmament. To-day, according to these natural laws, Germany should be occupying and governing this country, instead of our occupying and governing Germany.

After France fell, according to the laws of nature, the successful invasion of this country seemed inevitable. Then we had the miraculous escape of our armies from Dunkirk. And a whole series of events, culminating in the unforeseen attack of Germany on Russia, and the equally unforeseen attack of Japan on the United States. In this war, surely, the Supernatural has triumphed over the Natural. And the Revelation of the Bible is being amply vindicated over the supposed inevitable operation of natural laws of the last century. Let us hope that as a result of this war, men may arise who may be used to lead us out of the maze of our patchwork beliefs, and

unbeliefs, into a great revival of Faith in God. One feels that the mass of the people are ready for the message, but that unless we have Faith to renew and strengthen us, all material substitutes will be vain.

Let us consider the emphasis laid on Faith, in the Bible. Jesus Christ said :—

“ According to your faith be it done unto you.” (Math. ix, 29)

and again we read :—

“ He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.” (Math. xiii, 58)

a passage which suggests that a mass atmosphere of unbelief may actually counteract the faith of individuals. There has been a great falling off in the teaching, and the emphasis on Faith. Whether one reads the Old or the New Testament, the emphasis is there—and of a most marked character. Our Lord's utterances on the value of prayer are equally emphatic, and indeed, the late Dr. Alexis Carrel, to whom I have already referred, at about the time this war began, compared the power of prayer with that of terrestrial gravity. I drew the attention of a distinguished prelate to this statement, and he replied “ That is what the Church Teaches.”—Why then is it what the Church so rarely preaches ?

There are other passages in the Bible to which, for some unexplained reason, reference is rarely made. They stress the presence and power of the Devil. These references are rare in the Old Testament, but the New Testament abounds in them, beginning with the Temptations of the Lord Jesus Christ after His Forty Days Fast in the wilderness. And other occasions are recorded in His life which indicate the continued presence of the evil one. Finally we are told that Satan entered into one of the Disciples, Judas Iscariot, to betray our Lord. (Luke xxii, 3.) There are a number of other passages which refer to the devil in the later Books of the New Testament. Thus St. Paul tells the Ephesians to :—

“ Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly place.” (Eph. vi, 11, 12.)

And St. Peter warns us :—

“ Be sober, be watchful, your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.”
(1 Peter v, 8.)

But the more numerous references to Satan, or the Devil, are in the Book of Revelation. This Book, which purports to deal with the end of the Dispensation, represents the culmination of conflict between God and the Devil. Satan and his hosts are cast out of heaven (Revel. xii, 7 to 9). And the passage warns us :—

“ Woe for the earth and for the sea ; because the devil is gone down unto you, having great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short time.” (Verse 12.)

I suggest that the Bible teaches that there exists an age-old conflict between God and the Devil, in which all Humanity is involved. And judging by the signs of the times, it has certainly culminated in the present period. Yet men and women steeped in the materialism of the last century ignore this conflict altogether. Why the Problem of Evil puzzles us is, we do not realise its intimate connection with this conflict between God and the Devil. Man became involved because God sought to create human beings who were free to love Him of their own accord, and so he gave them freedom to choose. The Devil took advantage of this opportunity, and has been doing so all down the Ages.

The Bible is a unique Book. Since the Reformation it has been closely associated with the religious beliefs of this country. People complain to-day that while we are engrossed in the study of material sciences, we have neglected the most important of all—the study of the Science of Man. The Bible is the Text Book of that Science. I recently listened to a broadcast debate between two Professors in London University on the subject of whether a limit should be placed on the investigations of Science, so as to stop wider methods of destruction. The one referred to the evidence of increasing depravity of human nature, the other seemed certain that after the war, Science would remedy it. The latter conveyed the impression that something would be invented that could cure Sin, the most widespread and fatal disease of all.

According to the Bible something was done nearly two thousand years ago to cure Sin. But it involved Faith. Jesus Christ Himself once wistfully said :—

“When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find Faith on earth?” (Luke xviii, 8.)

The work of the Devil all down the centuries seems to have been to undermine and destroy Faith. We in this country have now reached the time when despite our grievous shortcomings as a nation, both before and during this war, the Hand of God has preserved us from invasion and given us the Victory over Germany. What are we going to do now about Faith in God and His Son, Jesus Christ? The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews has defined Faith as “The substance of things hoped for, the Evidence of Things Unseen.” We have reached the time when through Science, the Evidence of Things Unseen has become quite familiar to us, and along with it the appalling and insistent state of our earthly Ignorance has been revealed.

It may be suggested that the work with which I have been associated in connection with the Bible has caused me to take a prejudiced view of the so-called Philosophy of an out-of-date Science, and that it has not dimmed our national faith to the extent that has been suggested. Since the earlier part of this address was written my attention has been drawn to the following recent statement of a celebrated agnostic:—

“Here then is an age which is without beliefs in religion, without standards in morals, without convictions in politics, without values in art. I doubt if there has ever been an age which was so completely without standards or values. Upon some of the effects of this indifference and agnosticism I shall comment in later chapters. They are, I am convinced, disastrous. I have remarked that the modern generation suffers from a fund of unexpected seriousness. I now add that it suffers from a repressed need to believe. Its agnosticism, in short, is not only widespread, but wistful. Tell us what to think and how to act; tell us, in a word, how to be saved. Such has been the unspoken plea for the last ten years.”—(“Philosophy for Our Times”, by Prof. C. E. M. Joad.)

This striking description of a state of things said to exist in this country at the present time, reminds us of the prophecy to which reference was made in the opening words of this address. One wonders whether Professor Joad has unintentionally described the commencement of the Famine to hear the Words

of God. Has he not here voiced the inarticulate cry for the Spiritual? Is it not something that Jesus Christ expressed when he said—"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the Mouth of God" (Math. iv, 4). The Mystery in Life has not been explained by our new knowledge, indeed, it grows ever deeper and deeper. Let us recognise the fact that materialism moves in a world of make-believe, and we need something more real than what it has given us.

In the past few years it has been repeatedly postulated that the faculty of the Mind is all important; one even hears so-called authorities deny the existence of the faculty of Intuition. Yet it may be suggested that Intuition, and all associated with it, is at least as important as Reason. And that the over-emphasis placed on mind has obscured and given only a one-sided view of human nature. As we read the reports of the British and Foreign Bible Society we sometimes wonder why the Bible has in the past made such a wide appeal to all races educated and uneducated. It may be suggested that the immediate cause of this universal attraction is that the Bible appeals to our intuitive faculties as well as our mental ones.

Professor Joad's words reveal that there is now a great opportunity for the renewed study and teaching of the Bible. Is the Minister of Education going to use it? Or is the new Education going to propagate the old discredited philosophy of the last century? What are our Broadcasting Authorities and "Brains Trusts" going to do? They rarely seem to go beyond the nineteenth century ideas of Life. What is our Press going to do? If Religion has not been popular among its Readers in the past, we gather from Professor Joad's quoted statement that it is likely to be much more so in future.

And let us be under no illusions about the Future. We shall need more Faith than we have at present, to carry us through the times that lie ahead. How many thoughtful men feel satisfied with to-day's outlook? How many feel that the new League of Nations is likely to be more successful than the old one? Has the effect of this war already so changed Mankind that the old jealousies, the old misrepresentations, no longer exist? Or are they already breaking out again?

In the middle of the war, the United States sent over here an official with whom I discussed some of the differences between our respective countries. I enquired how we were going to

reconcile them. He replied "By goodwill." That was about the best answer that could be made. But we have had small emphasis laid on "goodwill," even between our own citizens. Take this General Election for instance as an example. Yet goodwill is surely one of the foremost Christian virtues and we shall need them all in the days to come; for the Devil will still seek to betray us, and against him we are required to "put on the whole armour of God."

I conclude this address with a few words concerning the loss we have sustained in the death of my most distinguished predecessor—Sir Ambrose Fleming. He was a man who was illustrious because of his great scientific discoveries. Yet he had a profound Christian Faith, and would, I think, have endorsed all I have said in this Address. He did not believe in the theory of Evolution because it did not accord with all the Evidence. I remember that some eighteen or twenty years ago, a well-known Bishop said something to the effect that Evolution guaranteed that we were progressing to better times! What a mockery that sounds to-day, after all we have endured in the last six years. And may have yet to endure. It is much more in accord with prophecies in the Bible that are nineteen hundred and more years old. But with these prophecies there is Hope. We read that:—

"When these things begin to come to pass, look up and lift up your heads; because your Redemption draweth nigh." (Luke xxi, 28.)

What are these things?—"Wars and rumours of Wars,"—"Nation against nation,"—"Earthquakes,"—"Famines,"—"Pestilences," etc. And we are slowly passing out of the greatest wars in all History, with every prospect of famines and pestilences in their train. The Hope has nothing to do with Democracy, or Leagues of Nations, or Social Security. It concerns the Redemption of Human Nature, and the downfall of the Devil.

The events of the past six years must sooner or later have their repercussion on our real Beliefs. Are they going to restore our Faith in the Bible? Or will they carry this Nation further away into the wilderness of materialism which we have been travelling with such disastrous results? We have heard

so much of Democracy, as though in some mysterious way it is going to replace the Faith of our Fathers. I suggest that without that Faith, Democracy is going to prove a more inadequate form of Government than any that the world has experienced in the past. The new President of the United States, in his inaugural address, has rightly shown his appreciation of what has to be faced, and what is needed for it, by quoting from the Bible the words of the prayer of Solomon for Wisdom.

REMARKS BY CHAIRMAN.

Air Commodore WISEMAN, said : I am sure that you would wish me, on your behalf, to express to Sir Charles Marston, our thanks for his timely paper. The famine of which he has spoken—a famine which results in spiritual starvation of the people—is due, I submit, to the sowing of a corrupted seed which produces a false growth called “tares,” having the appearance of the real thing, but lacking the all important ears of wheat. Surely the last six years of war should have taught us that there can be no authoritative basis for life apart from “the hearing of the words of God”—the Bible. More than a century ago the corrupted seed that produced the harvest of this war began to be sown. German philosophy taught that the supernatural had little to do with the lives of men, that miracles were impossible, and revelation in the Bible sense impracticable. Later developments in this country assumed that God was so distant from the unfolding of His world and of man on it, that they had been left wholly to themselves and the process of evolution.

There is, I suggest, general agreement that what is wrong with this world of men, is not so much in the sphere of the material, as in the realm of thought. As this paper says, man's ideals have been substituted for God's thoughts. During the difficult year in this country, when we stood alone against the false ideologies, I noticed that even the atheists abandoned their philosophic position and reiterated—as though it was a necessary part of their faith—that right must triumph over wrong. In saying this they were, of course, greater than their creed. For no atheist can have any rational foundation in material things, apart from God, for such a trust, for this confidence can only be derived from belief in God who acts

righteously. Where this faith is lacking there is at all times a tendency to pessimism.

Further evidence of the famine due to the sowing of a false seed is to be found in many of our pulpits so that "the hungry sheep look up and are not fed." Instead of the word of God modern alternatives are often substituted. It is incontrovertible that the pulpit has been used as a medium by which the people have been indoctrinated with the German sceptical philosophy regarding the Bible. It is in this connection that we owe our thanks to Sir Charles Marston for his books, which have done so much to contradict the destructive criticism of the Bible.