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498TH ORDINARY MEETING.

MONDAY, MAY 17TH, 1909.

PROFESSOR H. LANGHORNE ORCHARD, M.A., B.SC., IN THE CHAIR.

The Minutes of the previous Meeting were read and confirmed.

The following paper was then read by the author :—

AUTHORITY.

By The Very Rev. H. WACE, D.D., Dean of Canterbury.

IT will hardly, I think, be questioned that the subject of Authority, on which I am venturing to offer a few observations, is one of urgent practical importance at the present time. An indisposition to defer to authority is a conspicuous feature of life at the present day. The family life, the authority of parents—to modify a well-known phrase—has diminished, is diminishing, and grievously needs reinforcement. In politics we witness the growth of movements which, if not directly anarchical, propose to reconstitute life on bases of equality, from which the old authoritative organization would be excluded. Agitations, even by women, are conducted by means which involve violent repudiation of existing rules of order. In the Church, of which it has hitherto been considered a special duty to set an example of order, and of obedience to authority, we find clergy disregarding the directions of their ecclesiastical superiors, and openly and avowedly repudiating any obligation to obey the civil authority by which they and their Church are established. Abroad, particularly in France, we see the order of society threatened with entire subversion in the name

of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. Not merely the Church, but all supernatural sanctions whatever, are repudiated by the French Government, and the spectacle offered by political and social life in that country seems simply that of a struggle for physical supremacy between various classes and interests and the Government of the hour. Italy presents a too similar spectacle, partly in spite of, and partly because of, the existence within it of a Church which claims absolute authority over all spheres of human life and thought. Amidst such confusions it would seem worth while to remind ourselves of what authority means—what is its source, and by what methods may it best be exercised.

If we look for the source of our idea of authority, we shall, I think, find it in the experience of our conscience. The sense of moral obligation, that we ought to do certain things, independently of the question what those things are, is the fundamental fact of moral life, and a primary instinct. The art of moral education depends upon the development and cultivation of this instinct. A child, indeed, soon finds that it must obey its parents because they can make it obey them; but if its obedience were based solely on that sense of superior force, it would acquire no sense of authority. It has been said that the first step in the moral battle of life is gained or won in the first conflict between the wills of mother and child. If the mother resorts at once to force, if she drags the child, for instance, away from the fire, the first battle is lost, for the child has learned only to yield to superior force. But if, as wise mothers know how, she can restrain the child by the influence of her voice or look, the child has learned to obey a moral authority and the first moral skirmish is won. The Scriptures go straight to the heart of human life when they represent our first parents as placed under a moral obligation to obey a superior command. When that moral obligation was disregarded, nothing remained but to enforce it by the compulsory obligation of physical consequences, and that is the cardinal reality of human life to the present day. Disregard or disparage moral authority, and sooner or later you have, for the time, to resort to physical compulsion in the general interests of society, until you can work slowly backwards, as God has been doing throughout human history, to the re-establishment of moral supremacy.

But if our conscience thus affords the experience from which we derive the idea of authority, we may be led by means of it to recognize the ultimate source of authority itself. It would

oe impracticable on this occasion to pursue the full course of reasoning which justifies the conviction, expressed thousands of years ago in the 139th Psalm, that the voice of conscience is the voice of a personal God, a God who is in direct personal relation to us in our inmost souls, and from whose presence we can never escape. Nothing else, as has been shown with peculiar force by the late Dr. Martineau, will adequately explain the features of our moral consciousness. But, as the psalmist felt, this apprehension of God as the Lord of our conscience, as speaking to us in tones of authoritative command, involves the immediate recognition of Him as our Creator, and as knowing all the secrets of our frame and of our constitution. If this be the case, we are led to the recognition of there being one only living authority in the world, that authority being God Himself. Our Christian faith, indeed, establishes a supreme authority for us in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. But that, as He Himself says, is because as the Son of God, and authorized by His Father, He exercises His Father's authority. As St. Paul describes the constitution and course of the world, "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the Kingdom to God, even the Father, when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. . . . And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all."

Thus the authority of our Christian Faith rests on the personal authority of Jesus Christ, and His authority rests on the personal authority of God the Father, whose voice, by His Spirit, speaks to our consciences. Our Lord accordingly treats our acceptance of His claims as dependent on our antecedent submission to the voice of God. "He that is of God, heareth God's words; ye therefore hear them not because ye are not of God." The whole history of human thought and life thus becomes a continued variation of the narrative of the third chapter of the Book of Genesis. God is perpetually speaking to men and they are either obeying His words, or hiding themselves from Him, or rejecting Him. Even their purely intellectual history is of the same nature if, as Dr. Martineau so impressively urges, Nature is but the display of His will and His laws within the physical sphere. When the Greek geometers developed the laws of the conic sections, they might seem, for long afterwards, to have been spinning purely speculative webs of little practical import. But when Kepler ascertained that the heavenly bodies

moved in ellipses, it proved that Euclid and his fellows had been learning the Divine Geometry, and that the truths they had discovered were the utterance of the Divine Mind. Through Nature, God is perpetually impressing one aspect of His own nature and will upon the human mind, and ever since the reopening, at the Reformation, of a sense of free communion between God and man, and the consequent encouragement of free communion with Nature, we have been learning more, not so much of her secrets, as of His.

It should be observed that the advance of our knowledge of the laws of Nature affords a strong analogy to our apprehension of God's will on other subjects, and illustrates the nature of the ultimate authority in the sphere of morality and religion. The only authority respecting Nature is Nature herself. Men put forward from time to time theories of her constitution and hypotheses of her action, theories like the Ptolemaic system and hypotheses like that of Darwin, and these become subjects of acute controversy. But no controversial arguments can ever decide the issue. Theologians or philosophers may dogmatize on either side; but what settles the matter is the voice of Nature herself, heard in further observations or experiments. Men may, at first, misunderstand God's voice in Nature, but He goes on speaking, and to those who go on listening, the misunderstanding is sure to be removed. Only four centuries ago, the Church was considered an authority on Nature. Sometimes great schools of scientific thought have exercised a paramount authority for a while, and have delayed advances in the interpretation of Nature. But the scientific world is now, probably, for ever emancipated from any such control, and all scientific thought is in the attitude of Samuel—"Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth."

But the idea still lingers in others spheres of life and thought that there exists some human authority to which we can resort for the decision of questions of thought and action, and to which unquestioning deference is due. There is no doubt that men and women are constantly feeling after some such authority with a dim instinctive craving, and it is their very longing for it that too often renders them the victims of the first bold authoritative voice which asserts a claim over them. This constitutes, to a large extent, the strength of the Roman Catholic Church, and of that section of our own Church which so nearly approaches the Roman Church in character. In each case, the alleged authority is that of the Church. In the case of the Romanist, that authority is plain, visible and accessible. The Roman

Church is now concentrated in the Pope, and every Bishop or Priest represents and enforces his authority. For the section of our own Church to which I refer, there is no such visible and definite authority to be appealed to; but none the less the word "Church," and the supposed authority of what is called "The Church," exercises an almost magical influence. Practices are introduced among us, and enforced as matters of moral obligation, on no other ground than that they have the alleged authority of the Church. Other practices, which have seemed to many good men not merely convenient and harmless, but highly conducive to the maintenance of spiritual life among large and laborious classes, are not only discouraged, but vehemently denounced, on no other ground than the alleged authority of the Church. Above all, a certain system of doctrine, and a certain tone and character of worship, are alleged to be "Catholic," or in a special sense characteristic of "The Catholic Church"; and those who do not adopt this system and these customs are treated as defaulters to a recognized ideal. This ideal of the Church, or of the Catholic Church, assumes an imposing shape in the imagination, and Societies are formed, and religious newspapers conducted, with the definite object of making this ideal supreme in the English Church.

And yet there exists no reality, and since early times there has existed none, for which this ideal authority can be claimed. For a period, indeed, which has been limited by the present Margaret Professor at Oxford—no harsh judge on such matters—to about four centuries after Christ, concluding with the year A.D. 451,* there was a sufficient unity and continuity in the teaching, practice, and government of the Church to render it possible to recognize that that teaching, practice, and government had the marks of Catholicity. At the same time, it cannot for a moment be admitted that the rites and ceremonies then prevailing are, by reason of their Catholicity within that period, binding upon ourselves now. Some of the most conspicuous ceremonies then practised, alike at Baptism and at the Lord's Supper, are by general consent disused, and their re-introduction would never be suggested, even by those who are most urgent in asserting the authority of the Catholic Church. Many of the early Canons are quite impracticable for

* See Dr. Sanday's Letter in the *Report of the Fulham Conference*, 1900, p. 40.

enforcement among ourselves; and on some important doctrines, such as the Atonement and the Resurrection of the body, views were put forward, even by Fathers of high authority, which no English theologian of any school in the present day would support. Even with respect to a peculiarly solemn document, the Creed of Chalcedon, the Western Church has not scrupled, without the authority of any similar council, to introduce momentous words, by which the East has ever since been divided from the West. If it be consistent with due reverence for the Catholic authority of the early Church to modify its definition of the doctrine of the Trinity, what statement or ordinance of that Church can there be, with respect to which a similar modification is not permissible?

But pass beyond this period of substantial unity and Catholicity, and where is the Church, the one visible Church, to whose authority and voice we can appeal? In the words of the Margaret Professor, "from the date A.D. 451 onwards the Christian world came to be so broken up into its several parts that the movement of the whole has practically lost its containing unity. Although the formal separation of East and West was delayed, the development of each was continued on more and more divergent lines." Before long, the East was actually divided from the West, and except from the point of view of the Roman Catholics, neither can be said to be "The Church." They are divided parts of "the whole congregation of Christian people dispersed throughout the whole world," and neither of them can claim that exclusive guidance of the Spirit of God, which is the necessary basis for any such unquestionable authority as is tacitly assumed. After some six more centuries the whole congregation of Christian people suffered another deep division; and since the Reformation, half of Christian Europe, and not the least spiritual or least enlightened half, has renounced communion with the other. Amidst these divided communities of Christian men, where, except upon the theory of the Romanist, is that Church, that special Catholic Church, to be found, which is to be recognized as having a right to a predominant authority over all our belief and our practice? Does it not seem as if, in the Providence of God, after the Church had once begun to admit error in doctrine and practice, He had allowed the fair unity of the primitive Church to be shattered into fragments, expressly in order to prevent men falling into the Roman error, and settling on some one visible community of fallible men as their supreme authority, and so supplanting an ideal by an idol? If, moreover, an appeal is to be made to

the general authority of the Christian Church, by what right do you cut out of the continuous life of that Church four whole centuries, since the Reformation, of the history of some of the most vigorous and devoted Communions which the whole history of Christianity can show? The English Church, in particular, has existed in this land for thirteen centuries. By what right do you cut out of the experience and example of that Church nearly one-third of its whole existence, the four hundred years since the Reformation, and say that they shall not be taken into account in determining what catholic practices and doctrines are? This supposed Catholic Church, to which appeal is made by the extreme High Churchmen of our day, is, except so far as it can be identified with the primitive Church, a phantom of the imagination. In the mouth of the Romanist, the appeal to the Catholic Church has a clear and definite meaning. To adapt Bellarmine's words to the present day, the Romanist appeals to a Communion and an authority which is as visible and tangible as the Republic of France or the Kingdom of Italy. But in the mouth of an English Churchman, an appeal to the Catholic Church is an appeal to an authority which does not exist as a real authority, except so far as it is an appeal to the primitive Church; and even that Church, as we have seen, is not an absolute authority, even in its Creeds.

The ideal, no doubt, of the Christian Church is that the whole congregation of Christian people, dispersed throughout the whole world, should be so united in Christian charity, as to be able to bring their united wisdom and spiritual experience together in council, and so to guide, under the influence of the Spirit of God, the belief and the practice of the various local Churches. But no such authority has existed since the time of the primitive authority already mentioned. No General Council can now be appealed to; and in the absence of such general authority, each Church must exercise its own authority, on its own responsibility. But this being the case, the authority of my own Church is the only one that exists for me; and the only way in which I can discharge the duty of obedience to those who are set over me in the Lord, which is the acknowledged duty of every Christian man, is by dutifully submitting myself to this authority, so long as it requires nothing of me which I may be persuaded, on my conscience, is absolutely contrary to the Law of God. The only hope for the establishment of order in the Church at large consists in the cultivation of the habit of obedience to the authorities immediately over us. To appeal, from that authority, to some imaginary authority which has

now no real existence, and which has had none for at least 1,400 years, is simply to shelter the spirit of disobedience under an imaginary and fictitious ideal.

But if no such visible authority in matters of doctrine and practice can be found in the Church, it is certain that it can be found nowhere else, and in fact no other institution claims to possess it. No one but the Pope claims to be infallible. We acknowledge that even General Councils may err, and every secular authority would admit a similar impeachment. Yet for the practical guidance of mankind, and for the due control of human society, it is essential that there should be recognized standards of right and wrong, which exact a practical authority among us. How are such standards to be established, and in what custody are they to be maintained? To find an answer to this question we must recur to the fact that the Divine hand and voice, which are the only ultimate authority, are to be found in all great human organizations. That authority is to be found in its most immediate moral action in the Church. It is to be found also, in only less immediate, but not less direct action, in the State; and the natural authority, which, by the universal practice of mankind, is inherent in the governing powers of such States, must be regarded as Divine because it is, in the best sense, natural. It is a very remarkable fact that no State and no government has ever yet been established with the avowed intention of upholding wrong or immorality. The most iniquitous governments in practice that have ever existed have been obliged, by the very law of their nature, to claim to be established on righteous principles and for righteous ends. There is thus a universal testimony on the part of human nature that States, no less than Churches, exist for the enforcement of Divine laws of right and wrong, and consequently that there is an inherent authority in their rulers. This is the principle asserted by the inspired authority of St. Paul when he says that "there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God . . . For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil."

That is the ideal of all secular government, and any ruling power which fails to make this its chief object is false to its great trust. It follows that every individual who is subject to a government, whether in Church or State, is subject to a Divinely established authority, and is bound to live and act in a spirit of deference to it. But, at the same time, since none of these authorities are infallible, occasions cannot but arise when each may fall into error, and attempt to enforce rules of conduct which

are inconsistent with true morality and religion. Moreover, the existence of the Christian Church within modern states has established another authority to which the individual's deference is still more urgently due; and cases consequently arise, and exist among us at this moment, in which the moral rules enforced by the Church are in direct conflict with those enforced by the State. It is a condition very injurious to the welfare of Society, because such a visible and practical conflict between two great authorities tends to shake, among people in general, the sense of the stability of moral law. Further than this, cases have arisen in which both Church and State have agreed in the moral and spiritual rules which they enforce, but in which they are nevertheless wrong, and no occasion thus arise in which, as at the time of the Reformation, individuals are obliged to stand by their own private convictions of religious and moral truth, and to assert the moral authority of their private consciences, with results which are of incalculable value to the future life of mankind.

The question, then, is—and it is a question which presses urgently for solution at the present moment—how are such conflicts of authority to be settled, and how are individuals to act when they arise? In the first place, if what has been said of the Divine nature and origin of all human authority be true, they cannot properly be decided by assuming that one of the conflicting authorities can claim divine sanction, and that the other cannot, and that the latter must therefore be overriden by the former. We may, indeed, reasonably think, as a general principle, that the Church which is, or ought to be, in special and constant communion with the Lord who is the source of all law and all authority, of all morality and religion, should be specially qualified to form a true judgment on such questions, for example, as those of the marriage law. But history proves conclusively that this general principle cannot be treated as an absolute one, and that the Church as well as the State is capable of erroneous action on such matters. In short, the two authorities are each Divine in origin, each may claim Divine sanction, and yet each may be in error; while the individual, whose obedience is distracted between the two, is himself more liable to error than either.

If so, the second rule we may lay down for our guidance in such difficulties is that the conflicting authorities should maintain the most scrupulous respect for one another, and should, before taking any action in such a conflict, do their utmost to come to an understanding on the point at issue

between them. It may be permitted to an English Churchman to think that the best example, at least in idea and intention, in this respect, is exhibited by the establishment of the relations of Church and State at the English Reformation. The object steadily kept in view by the secular and ecclesiastical statesmen of that time was to maintain a complete co-operation, almost amounting to identity, of action between the authorities of Church and State, and thus to maintain a permanent and universal standard for individual action. In proportion as the ties between the State and the established Church have been loosened, and the State has assumed a more and more secular complexion, this has become increasingly difficult; but a due regard to the good order and harmony of Society would indicate the necessity of continuing this old English habit of mutual consideration between Church and State as constantly and earnestly as possible. Nothing can be more injurious to the social peace of the community, and to the moral authority of law, than for statesmen to legislate on questions like marriage without regard to the existing law of the Church and without consulting its authorities; on the other hand, ecclesiastics are guilty of a similar fault if they peremptorily resolve that in whatever point the law of the State has come into conflict with the law of the Church, it is their duty, and that of the individuals who look to them for guidance, to enforce the law of the Church without hesitation and with the utmost rigour. If, in particular, the conflict arises, as at present it does, on points on which Christian men, and even Christian Churches, have been and are divided, it becomes a still more urgent duty to act with moderation, and to seek some course of action which will involve a reasonable mutual deference.

In a word, the only indefeasible authority in the world is that of the will of God, which is manifested through various sources, such as the Church under the guidance of the Scriptures, the State, and the individual conscience. The happiest condition of human society is when the first two, the Church and State, coincide. When, unhappily, they differ, neither of them has any absolute or Divine right to override the other, and the individual cannot escape the responsibility of his private conscience by an absolute submission to either. Each particular problem must be gradually worked out in a spirit of patience and mutual respect; and our consolation and hope must be found in the grand fact which underlies all these considerations, that the Divine authority is a living authority, constantly at work alike in the Church, in the State, in

families, and in the individual conscience, and that in proportion as we all submit ourselves to its influence with true and humble minds, we may be confident that the great promise will be fulfilled that we shall be guided into all the truth, not only of thought and belief, but of life and action.

DISCUSSION.

At the conclusion of the paper the CHAIRMAN called on Sir Robert Anderson, K.C.B., to open the discussion.

Sir ROBERT ANDERSON said that as citizens it was their duty to obey authority. But in the religious sphere there was a question of conscience behind the question of authority; and looking at the matter in a practical way the point in dispute was whether they should obey the Bible or the Church. If the claim of Rome be just, that the Church is the oracle of God, their part was not to search the Scriptures for themselves but to obey the Church. Now while it was only among the spiritual that they looked for spiritual intelligence, they were entitled to expect ordinary intelligence and common sense in men of the world. And they demanded why should they believe that the Church is the oracle of God? It must be either because the Church made this claim for itself, or because the Bible taught it. If the former, it was a flagrant case of the "confidence trick." If the latter let them appeal to the Bible. And what do they find? The figment that the Church of the Old Testament dispensation was an oracle, was grotesquely false. The revelation always came, not from or through the Church, but *to* the Church, through men divinely appointed to that ministry. Not only so, but these men were too often proscribed and persecuted by the Church. And the New Testament would lead them to a like conclusion respecting "the Christian Church." Rome confused the issue by confounding the Church as a vital unity—the "invisible Church, with the outward organisation, and by taking as addressed to that Church much that was spoken to the Apostles as such. But even this could not conceal the plain truth that the Church was the recipient and not the source of the revelation.

Another question arose here, could any organisation now on earth claim the position held by the Church as first founded? They rejected the figment of an historic sequence, save a sequence in guilt; and adopted the position of the Reformers, that the Holy Catholic Church is the whole company of Christian people dispersed throughout the whole world—the people of God scattered over the earth. Their study of the past history and present condition of Christendom would thus lead them back to the conclusion that the only authority they could acknowledge in the religious sphere was the Bible. Everything else was superstition or worse.

Rev. A. IRVING, D.Sc., B.A., regretted that he had not had the opportunity of following the paper as a whole, but so far as he could speak of it he thoroughly appreciated the line that the Dean of Canterbury had taken. He was glad to find that the author of the paper had come to realise the fact that there is no finality in Science, and therefore no room for dogmatism, even on the part of those who were most qualified to speak in the name of Science. He was the more interested in the paper, as, most opportunely, it had much in common with the ground taken by Dr. James Gairdner, C.B., the distinguished historian, in a correspondence on "Disestablishment" in the *Guardian* during the last few weeks. The speaker had himself taken a subordinate part in the controversy, and had been led to quote what he himself put into print some twenty years ago, to the effect that the Royal Supremacy properly understood implied no dictatorial powers on the part of the State towards the Church, but was rather the expression on the part of the English nation of its consciousness of the continuity of its national life on the religious side.

With regard to Sir Robert Anderson's remarks, which were not easy to follow, he held that it was in the continuity of the life of the Church that we recognised its teaching authority; and that this had been embodied for all time in the Greek Testament Scriptures, which had come to us on the authority of the Church and on that alone; while those Scriptures carried their own inherent evidence to a sympathetic faith. He was thankful that the New Testament had had to run the fires of criticism and had survived the ordeal; since it now stood before the world on surer ground than it did previously as a sufficient record and guarantee of what Christ instructed His Spirit-taught Church to deliver to the world for its regeneration;

while that Church was His own creation as a divinely-constituted society for leavening the outer society of the world at large; that in fact the hermeneutical tradition of the Church, purified and adapted in the progress of the Christian age by learning and criticism under the illumination of the Spirit, as human thought widened, was the unbroken chain which carried us back to its Divine Founder, who had placed the *magisterium* of His Church on a higher plane than that which the old Hebrew prophets occupied. Thus we come to recognise the ultimate source of all authority in the Son of God Himself, who had transmitted His authority through His chosen witnesses, and had not centred it in any visible head on earth. "Believe Me for the very work's sake," is His appeal to evidence. "All authority is given unto Me," is His age-long claim.

Colonel T. H. HENDLEY, C.I.E.—The Dean has spoken of the loss of reverence for authority in Europe, but it is not confined to this part of the world, for, except perhaps in the far East, rulers and parents in Asia also grievously lament the universal want of submission to, and respect for, experience and old age. The wisest Indian parents feel it; Indian princes regret it, and both classes attribute it to the modern systems of education, and especially to European education, unaccompanied as it is by religious training, which is given not unfrequently by men who are either indifferent or even, it may be, who openly scoff at the old paths. He gave instances in proof of his contention, and referred to the opinions of some of the manliest Rajputs, who attributed the decay of authority to the facile pens and glib tongues which were encouraged in the present day, whereas such men as they had little opportunity of showing their loyalty. Turning to the Church, he quoted his own experience, in which a young clergyman, on succeeding a venerable and most successful man, had begun his pastorate by preaching from the words, "But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you or any man's judgment," and had almost immediately turned everything upside down in the church. He understood that the only thing the Bishop could say was that no doubt that the places of those who were dissatisfied would soon be filled up. He asked what the laity could do when there was such a disregard for continuity and for even their own authority, as they were as much members of the Church as the clergy themselves.

If he turned to the authority of the Scriptures he was reminded

of a still more recent experience, when the previous week he had attended at a conference of school managers. A speaker on that occasion said he preferred Biblical teaching in schools to theological training, whereupon a clergyman asked what Bible he wished to teach. It was quite clear that the audience, which appeared to be earnest and religiously-minded, sympathised with the astonished speaker and not with the priest.

If then, the rank and file of the clergy cannot be relied upon to preserve authority and continuity of ritual and the like, and if the ordinary Bible is not authority, to whom is the unfortunate layman to turn for guidance? The Bishops sometimes tell us that the clergy will not obey, though they ask the laity to help them. Perhaps they might take a lesson from another church.

A few years ago an old friend who lived in Venice, whom he accompanied in his gondola across the Lagoon, had pointed out a certain island where there was a small convent. He said that it was said that sometimes the Patriarch called there with a young priest who had proved a little difficult, and left him with the head of the establishment until he called again. The call might be soon or might be late, but it was generally long enough to be effectual. Even if this story of the present Pope is too good to be true, might it not be a useful hint to some of our religious leaders who are anxious to preserve authority and respect for the Church?

The Rev. H. J. R. MARSTON said: They were probably all of one mind as to the need for and the beneficence of the results of authority. When they engaged in questions as to the sanction of authority in the Church their concern was rather with the practical continuance of the succession than with any speculative continuity. Undoubtedly there existed a real and tangible stream of Christian authority, not always flowing through councils or even through episcopal channels, but none the less real and persistent.

The question, What is the ultimate authority? was one that every age had claimed to answer, and every church, not always in the same way. Looking to their Holy Scriptures, they were entitled to say that the Greek Testament had, to a large degree, its own authority. down to the succeeding ages. They need not claim for it an authority, scientific and philosophic, as many had done. All the evidence clothed the New Testament with a real authority which had existed from the beginning of Christianity. The belief in

the divinity of Scripture was coeval with Christianity. It did not depend on the Fathers, it was prior to Irenaeus, for this belief was an aboriginal and essential part of the Christian faith.

Dean WACE, in replying, said the discussion had unfortunately missed the main point of the paper—the conflict between the Church and the State as to their respective spheres of authority. Both had great claims, and too often the rules as to moral duties laid down by the one were found to be in conflict with those laid down by the other. This led, as was continually being shown, to injurious as well as inconvenient results. Nor could the Disestablishment advocated by some do anything but aggravate the injury. At present both Church and State were restrained by their association with each other. Any authority left alone and unrestrained would lead to ruin. The Supremacy had held all the forces together till now, and prevented one from overriding another.

The CHAIRMAN, in summarising the paper and discussion, said the Society was indebted to the learned author for the most suggestive and able consideration of a subject the importance of which, at the present time especially, received too little practical acknowledgment. Without authority there could be no religion, there could be no morality—for morality is founded on religion. Take away authority, and the social order and fabric would be shattered and fall to pieces—a concourse, not fortuitous but shapeless and incoherent, of human atoms.

At this point the Chairman called for a hearty vote of thanks to the Dean of Canterbury, who had to leave the meeting. This having been given by acclamation, and acknowledged, he said there could be no doubt that (as was pointed out on p. 222 of the paper) it was in conscience or, as he preferred to call it, the moral faculty, that they were given the idea of authority, and that "the voice of conscience is the voice of a personal God." It had historical authority. It had, too, the inherent claim, at every point, to a divine authority. There was contained the actual record of the words and works of the divine Word Himself, transmitted by those who were acknowledged to be the most fitted to hand them on. Authority was inherent in the moral relationship subsisting between God and man; it was connected with the ought. The notion of authority was not of an intellectual, but of a moral character—mere opinions were destitute of authority, even though professing to be

held "*semper, ubique, et ab omnibus.*" And they were reminded (pp. 227 and 230) that the voice of conscience has authority greater than that of the Church. As regards science they would cordially concur with the statement (p. 204) that all true scientific thought "is in the attitude of Samuel—'Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth.'" Nothing was more reverential than science. In view, however, of the manner in which a powerful scientific school was endeavouring to impose upon students an acceptance of the evolution theory, the belief that their advances in interpreting nature were no longer to suffer obstruction from unproved theories put forward by some scientists, appeared too optimistic.

Might he suggest that the word "Romish" (instead of "Roman") would better express the author's meaning in speaking of the "Roman Church" and the "Roman error"? The Romish Church referred to was not synonymous with the Christian Church to-day existing at Rome, nor with that of the Christian Church there in apostolic times.

One of the most interesting parts of the paper was that which discoursed of the delegated or derived authority of Church and State. Probably the historic conflicts between these powers might be largely accounted for by an endeavour on the part of each to usurp an authority belonging to the other, *e.g.*, the ecclesiastical has sought to bear the sword and to obtain the worldly possessions of the civil power; she had sought to wield an authority to which she had no right; it had not been given her.

It was important to distinguish authority from infallibility. Authority was not infallibility, nor were they necessarily conjoined. The authority of the civil power did not secure from error in its use, nor did the authority of those who were over them "in the Lord" give them always "a right judgment in all things." "Even general councils may err." Authority must not be stretched beyond the limits within which it has been given.

Infallible authority was from God alone. It was found in conscience—which is the inward standard, and in the outward standard—which is the word of God, the Bible interpreted to the humble and obedient heart by the Spirit of Truth.

The following communications have been received from Dr. W. Woods Smyth, Mr. T. W. E. Higgens and Bishop Thornton.

Dr. W. Woods Smyth writes:—I regret to have to differ from the views of Dr. Wace. What constitutes authority? In answering this question we may perceive that authority may be either impersonal or personal. Science as a body of verified facts is impersonal, and is an absolute authority. The pronouncement of God, of man, or of the Church is personal authority. Now it is not said that God doeth everything according to His own will, but that He doeth all things according to the counsel of His own will. That is according to Supreme Reason, of which He has made us partakers. God's will is, therefore, not the ultimate formation of authority, but the counsel or Reason is. The authority of man upon any subject depends upon his knowledge, and still more upon his having seldom or never having made a mistake. An erring man has no authority. When we turn to the Church, which is a body or congregation of men, we find, as a matter of historic fact, that it is a tragedy as well as a "comedy of errors." We are, therefore, unable to accept its authority; and the reason lies in the fact that the counsel of God's will as expressed in His word and His works is not faithfully followed.

Now, inasmuch as the word of God is a written expression of the works of God in nature, the knowledge of which is presented to us in ascertained science, we are, therefore, shut up to the position that authority is founded in the word of God, viewed in the light of verified natural science, and interpreted by the reason which God has given us.

Mr. T. W. E. Higgens writes:—I venture to utter a protest against what appears to be the teaching of Dr. Wace on the duty of Christians as regards obedience in religious matters. And I do so the more reluctantly because he bases his argument on such a solid foundation on page 223, namely, on the personal authority of our Lord. Yet, he appears to teach an almost blind obedience to priestly authority in religious matters, and this I unhesitatingly repudiate.

On page 227 he informs us that the Catholic Church is a "phantom of the imagination," and on page 228 he says that authority is to be found "in its most immediate moral action in the Church." What Church? Again, on page 227, I am told that each church must exercise its own authority, and that the only way in which I can discharge my duty of obedience to those set over me in the Lord is by submitting myself to the authority immediately over me, "so

long as it requires nothing of me which I may be persuaded on my conscience is absolutely contrary to the law of God!" The authority in religious matters immediately over me is my parish priest. Am I to submit myself dutifully to him? Is it to be to the vicar of the parish in which I reside, or the clergyman of the church to which I go, or am I wrong in going anywhere but to my parish church?

Again, I am perplexed on pages 229 and 230. The English Church and State are in conflict on the law of marriage. Is it suggested that on such a vital matter there should be "reasonable mutual deference"? Is the deference to be also shown in America, or are the rules which are suggested for guidance only of local application?

I suggest with all deference to the learned Dean that more stress might have been laid upon the necessity of private judgment when dealing with the commandments of men, provided that we first acknowledge our need for the personal direction of the conscience by our Lord Himself.

Lastly, I do not think that justice is shown to those churchmen who, differing from the Dean, have opposed what they deem to be State encroachments into the sphere of religion. They have opposed the authority of the State because they conscientiously believe it to be an usurped authority, and there is very little doubt that such resistance on the part of churchmen must increase when we have judges calmly informing us, as one did in the case of *Banister* v. *Thompson*, that the law of God varied according to Act of Parliament. It is not likely that any churchman who believes in the "Holy Catholic Church" of the Apostles' Creed will substitute for it the Houses of Parliament.

Bishop THORNTON writes:—The Dean of Canterbury's paper on authority is very timely and interesting. A special question it raises is, What, for a Christian, is the supreme criterion of religious truth and duty? The answer must be that which the paper implies: the mind and will of God. He is bound to act on his conviction of what that is. And the organ through which that authority speaks to him is his own deliberate private judgment. In the absence of miraculous manifestations of it, the ultimate right to decide what God's mind and will is on any particular point of truth and duty must rest with the individual, and cannot be abdicated. "Him only shalt thou serve": on questions of right

and wrong we are subject only to the authority of God, and to those whom we recognise as speaking with His authority. Subject only to that, we judge for ourselves in all such matters. "Why yourselves judge ye not what is right?" Christ says: "Judge righteous judgment!" "Judge in yourselves." Says St. Paul: "Judge ye what I say"; "He that is spiritual judgeth all things"; "Let the prophets speak and let the others judge."

But, of course, in the exercise of this right of private judgment, the individual uses a respectful deference to the formulated judgment of the community as such, *i.e.*, to the Church of his allegiance and the realm of which he is providentially a citizen. In religious questions, our National Church has disclaimed all right to supersede what is plainly set forth in Scripture, and all infallibility in interpreting it.

Questions arising out of conflict between the convictions of individuals, the teaching of the church they belong to, and the law of their country, are questions of casuistry, and can only be solved as they arise. As a general principle, we can only insist on the authority of our individual judgment in serious questions of right and wrong, on which we are conscious of having taken all reasonable means of getting well informed.

I quite agree with the Dean in his light estimate of the current appeal made by some to "Catholicity" so called; but I cannot accept the disparaging generalisations as to Church history of Sir Robert Anderson or Dr. W. Woods Smyth.