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A table of contents for *Journal of the Transactions of the Victoria Institute* can be found here:

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1913.

539TH ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING,

HELD IN THE ROOMS OF THE INSTITUTE ON

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 3RD, 1913, AT 4.30 P.M.

MR. DAVID HOWARD, V.P., TOOK THE CHAIR.

The Minutes of the preceding Meeting were read and signed.

The SECRETARY announced that Miss Cruddas had been elected a Member, and the Rev. W. Laporte Payne an Associate of the Institute.

The CHAIRMAN then called upon the Rev. Dr. Skrine to read his paper.

VISION, IN SACRED AND OTHER HISTORY.

By the Rev. JOHN HUNTLEY SKRINE, D.D.

MY title may suggest a scope too great to be modestly proposed for a brief paper, and I must begin by defining the limits of the inquiry. "Vision" is a name, in its higher use, for the contact through the senses of finite human nature with the infinite, and to ask what Vision is might be asking to "know what God and man is." To ask that question, however, is what man is for; and to gain some morsel of that truth shall be the purpose of this inquiry, which will place side by side two stories, recorded one in sacred, the other in secular literature, of visions of the supernatural world, and endeavour to extract from the comparison some element of fact as to the relations of divine and human.

The story I take from the Scriptures is the record either of an illusion or of the most cardinal event in man's history. It is the vision seen by Mary of Nazareth, when the angel Gabriel was sent from heaven to a virgin espoused to Joseph, a carpenter of Nazareth, and announced to her the birth from her womb of the Messiah.

Beside this story I will place the tale of another woman who, through the impulsion of a vision, having some features in common with that of Mary, entered on a fate which had issues incommensurate indeed with those which sprang from the

Syrian maiden's, yet within their range also great and wonderful. Joan of Domremy, in France, bears to the history of her own people a relation similar and proportionate to that which Mary of Nazareth, in Galilee, bears to the race of man. Each became mother of a deliverance. And if there seem no measure of their respective deeds, if Joan's battles and Mary's childbirth seem at first glance so disparate in character, and so incommensurable in scale, as to make their juxtaposition an irreverence, a closer look will disclose a spiritual affinity which makes the comparative study not only reverent but religiously fruitful.

It is only the French maiden's story which needs recalling, and that only in an outline in which we can trace the features of the Nazarene. A European nation lies in the extreme of political helplessness. The kingdom is occupied by invaders whom its cowed soldiery can no longer face in battle rank, the king bankrupt, at refuge in a corner of his dominions, and despairing of rescue from his abject plight. A peasant girl (she, too, presently to be known as "The Maid") has a vision of an archangel, who announces to her the destiny of redeeming the realm and setting the king on his throne. At first she cannot believe it. "How can this thing be, seeing I am only Jeanne, daughter of Jacques d'Arc, a yeoman of Domremy, and know nothing about soldiering, nor have even learned to ride a horse?" The Visitant assures her that the powers of heaven will have it so, and at last, after many reluctances, she is able to speak her "Be it unto me," sets forth on the enterprise, converts to her belief the king's broken spirit by a feat of thought-reading which that age thought a miraculous sign, leads her countrymen in battle, turns to flight the armies of the aliens, and redeems the nation's life as a nation. It has been unto her according to that angel's word.

There will arise at once the criticism that Joan's story, wonderful as in itself it is, throws no light on Mary's. So far as the French tale resembles the Syrian it is a mere consequence of it, an unconscious copy. Joan's age believed that the Holy Ones could present themselves in vision, and every peasant knew that an angel Gabriel had appeared to Mary. Accordingly, the French girl, on whose nature a patriotic and religious impulse had fallen, visualizes that impulse as another angel, Michael, more suggestible to her than Gabriel, because under the patronage of St. Michael French soldiers had of late successfully repulsed the English from the Mount he guarded. And then, after all, who is St. Michael or what, that he should

appear to any one? Or who and what, for that matter, is Gabriel? There is no authority for the existence of either except the Rabbinic angelology. The angel who visited the house in Nazareth may, indeed, be the reflection in human senses of some reality and even a personal reality, but all that we can verify is that reflection in the human senses of Mary. The angel who appeared at Domremy is something greatly less: he is but the reflection of a reflection, twice removed from reality.

I imagine that even convinced believers in the doctrine of the Incarnation find this consideration a difficulty for faith. The Lucan story of the Annunciation has round it airs of fancy and folklore which cause a modern Christian to turn faith's attention in other directions, and to rest it not on the scene in a chamber of Nazareth but on that in the Bethlehem stable. To do this is to turn away from the essential to the accidental, from ultimate fact to consequential, from the divine-human to the merely human. The true moment of the Incarnation in history is not the Nativity but the Annunciation. The mystery of God become Man will, indeed, never yield itself up to an intelligence limited by human conditions, but we shall approach it only so far as we grasp the significance of that event which is reported in the form of a parley between the Virgin and an Angel.

That significance, I have thought, can be brought out by an application of the comparative method which to all other subjects we have applied with most fruitful results. If I can see what the significance is of Joan's parleyings with her "Council," what the event was in her personal history and that of her people which had vital association with her visions, it is likely there will be suggested to me the bearing of Mary's vision on the fortune of her soul and of the human race.

This at once I feel sure of; it is vain to hope to discover the nature of Joan's visions and "voices" (for the communications through the ear alone were the more numerous, I believe) if we only study these phenomena in separation from the other facts of her career. Had nothing more happened than that the girl saw forms and faces in an empty space and heard words spoken in what to other ears was a silence, the phenomenon might remain inscrutable or might prove explicable by natural laws, but it would be without value spiritually. What actually happened was a train of vast and surprising consequence. A rustic girl, as a result of her visions, undertook an enterprise which in every judgment was impossible for any capacity whatever, but for the womanly capacity something more than

impossible. She achieved this task, and that not solely by a moral inspiration of the soldiery, who were the practical instruments of the achievement, but by actual guidance in strategic council and leadership in battle and an astonishing aptitude for details of the military science, in especial the management of artillery, to which emphatic testimony was given by high authorities on war. The whole fact which we have to contemplate and analyse is not an apparition of Michael and a summons to redeem France, but that vision in all its repetitions *and* this solid mass of practical consequence from which the vision cannot be dissevered.

Contemplating then as a whole this fact of Joan's deed, the visions and the activities together, I say that we can only judge the former to be either the cause of the latter or else a joint effect of something which was cause of both. The full truth, one does not doubt, is this last: vision and action are but the two sides of one fact, the inward and the outward, the subjective and the objective of that fact. Neither one nor other is intelligible until we discern the nature of the underlying fact. What then do we discern as the fact for which Joan the Maid has become the name? Unmistakably to my mind we are contemplating an act of faith; the most signal act of faith recorded in human history with one only exception, the act of Mary of Nazareth. By an act of faith I understand an act of concurrence between a human will and the divine. And this concurrence I would analyse more closely, and describe it by the figure of an interchange of the two selves, a mutual self giving between the divine and the human term in the relation of Creator and Creature.

Here, no doubt, I am taking the fact of the Frenchwoman's career out of the category of human history, as history is commonly understood, and am placing it in the category of spiritual history. In this I shall not be followed except by those who agree that the cause of sensible phenomena is to be found ultimately only in supra-sensible fact. But these will, I think, go on with me and seek for an interpretation of the vision in sacred story where they have found that of the vision in the secular record.

We have then interpreted Joan's vision of Michael and the Saints as a part of the whole occurrence of her career from her call to her death: it is the first moment in her act of faith, that sacrifice of herself to the Divine Will, which I have ventured to call by a more abstract terminology the Self-Interchange of divine and human. I make no attempt to

explain the phenomena of the vision and audition in terms of the sciences of things seen and heard ; and I do not myself imagine that anything was really present to eye or ear ; the sights and sounds I accept as creations of her mental consciousness, and so far "subjective." But there is no subject without an object, neither word has any meaning unless the other word is involved in it, just as neither thing has existence till both are there to create it. And the object to which the consciousness of Joan was subjective was no less than the Power by whom all things are made. Her soul was in communion with that Power by her self-sacrifice, and this was the mode in which it communicated itself and she received it, her human consciousness made its response to divine fact according to the laws of human consciousness, under which laws we men can only know things by seeing and hearing or by an activity of the mind which is a reflection upon the brain of such impressions as have fallen on the nerve of eye or ear. The mind of Joan communed with the mind of God by an activity of her brain which reflected impressions furnished to her senses by her experience, such as pictures or images of Michael, Margaret, and Catherine in a village church and the current news of France's need of deliverance. By what laws of man's body and spirit the impact on her soul of the touch of heaven was translated into a sight and a sound which yet were, in our understanding of them, no actual vibration of light or air upon the physical organs of eye and ear, is a question for the psychologists but not here for us. We are equipped with an instrument of our present research if we are satisfied that the vision of Joan was a communication, conveyed by whatever channel, from the Divine Reality to a human soul, and that this communication was made possible by an act of faith or a self-interchange between the soul of this woman and Him by whom all souls are made.

So I come to put the tale of Joan the Maid beside that of Mary the Virgin, and to ask if the act of that person who was the human instrument of the supreme fact for man, the Incarnation of Jesus Christ which began to be in the vision of an angel, Gabriel, is not more interpretable by the light of that other act, incomparably less but not unlike in kind, which was wrought by this other woman and began in a vision of an archangel, Michael.

I am led then to say that the cause of the Incarnation, meaning by "cause" the first antecedent in the train of human circumstance set in motion by that divine event, was the vision

of Mary known as the Annunciation. And I analyse that vision as the movement of her mental consciousness, which was an inseparable part of the movement of her soul or total consciousness, that which I have called her act of faith. Further, I define this act of faith as an Interchange of Self, or, in less abstract and more consecrated language, an entry by sacrifice into a divine communion. The self-sacrifice of Mary, taking form in the recorded parley with Gabriel, is the fact among things human by which the word was made flesh and dwelt among us in Jesus Christ, the Son of Mary.

[At this point the question will suggest itself of the relation of this theory to the doctrine of the Virgin Birth. If the theory is a sound speculation its bearing upon that doctrine should be momentous. In this paper the matter cannot be treated, but in leaving it thus aside I cannot refrain from recording my own experience of the result of inquiry: I have found in my own thinkings that to study the Incarnation fact in the light of the above speculation is to add to the scale of the traditional doctrine a great increment of conviction.]

To resume. What will now ask for proof is the position that the act of the Annunciation was an act of sacrifice. It has not been much regarded in that light. I should suppose that believers have let their minds dwell rather on the exaltation and glory, the incredibly high fortune of the actor in the scene; their appreciation of the event has been tuned to the pitch of the Magnificat. And if they are now asked to discern a self-sacrifice as the essential reality of the event, they will feel that it is not at once evident. What did it cost the Virgin to assent to Gabriel's message with her "Behold, the handmaid . . . be it unto me"? What suffering or risk of suffering was dared? How does this seemingly slight effort of soul bear the weight of that infinite event—the coming of the Word into the flesh? Nay, is there effort at all in this, that a Jewish maiden at the age of marriage should think she could be mother of Messiah (and no more than this could be before the mind of Mary at this time), seeing that when Messiah shall come He must needs be born of some woman, and therefore any wife in Israel might be that mother?

When one asks, "was Mary's act a sacrifice, if it was without suffering?" it is well to remind oneself that, though pain and loss are in our minds not separable from the idea of sacrifice, they are not the essence of sacrifice, as I am here employing that idea to express the mystery of life. The sacrifice which makes us to live is the giving of *self*, not

the giving of a toll of pain. In sacrifice, as we know it, there is indeed the moment, inseparable in human fact, of pain; but since pleasure and vitality are one, pain, which is the negation of both, cannot belong to the nature of sacrifice which makes life. Nor are we without human experiences—the soldier's or the lover's delight in danger for a passion's sake, the martyr's or even the fanatic's pang transmuted into something akin to rapture—which teach us that not pain but joy is the real substance of self-sacrifice. Above all, in the sacrifice which Mary offers, the "sorrow because her hour will come" is to be forgotten in the "joy because the Man shall be born into the world." And yet I seem to discern even in the tale itself some hint of actual pain confronting the handmaid of the Lord when she chooses the sacrifice. Does not the record of old Symeon's presage, "Yea, a sword shall pierce through thine own bosom also," suggest to us, familiar with telepathic fact, a consciousness in the Virgin herself of perils in her moral adventure and a reflection of this upon the mind of him who talked with her. It is Symeon who gives utterance to the thought, but I shall guess that Mary thought it first, that this was one of the things she pondered in her heart; that she had seen that sword before she said, "Be it unto me."

However this be, I am sure I must look elsewhere than toward the pains, whether physical or mental, involved in Mary's act of faith, if I am to understand its character. I shall resort again to our parable of Domremy. In the France of that day there were, I believe, among the people, anticipations of a deliverance, and they even took voice in whispers of a maid who should save the realm. Indeed we should, even in the absence of positive testimony to it, expect the rise of a genius to be not an isolated occurrence, but the culmination of a movement in the general mind, whatever the gap between the hero and the foremost of the multitude. It is to be thought that there were many girls in France in whom patriotic fervours woke, and dreams (though they died on air) of playing the inspired woman's part and saving France. But while these others said to their own heart, "Might it be I?" Joan said to hers, "It is I." So at Domremy the fire of heaven fell; the Lord answered the sacrifice of man.

Now in Israel the conditions of mind which we gather from the French story were more demonstrably present. A movement of faith in a section of the nation which has been called "the seed-plot of the Gospel," the class which held Zacharias, Elisabeth, Symeon, and Anna, and in the next generation, the

Joannas, Marthas, and Maries who "ministered to Jesus in His work," is made very visible in the records. To be "waiting for the consolation of Israel" was to be going on the path on which the Virgin went all the way. In the timid aspirations which stirred in these bosoms there was already sacrifice, for there was the rendering up of imaginations, affections, interest in life, to a purpose of Jehovah; there was a giving of self in this cherishing of the great hope, which "the things that are seen," the political facts of the time, so obstinately denied. The selfish, the worldly, did not "wait for the consolation"; either they bartered it for the practical politics of Herodianism or instead of "waiting" sought "to take it by force" of revolution with a Judas or a Theudas. It was a true unselfishness and spiritual affinity in these "humble and meek" folk "of low degree" that carried them thus far on the way of making ready for Messiah; and sacrifice it was, though the cost in pain or deprivation cannot in the nature of things be made very visible to us by the records. Here, then, was the seed-plot in which could be let fall from heaven the seed of the life of man. It must fall in that seed-plot upon some one point; the soil of some one woman's faith must be that point, that there may be a mother of the Christ. We deem that Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, because here was she whose faith was able to achieve a sacrifice which the rest could only begin. And I find my parable of a maiden in Domremy, whose name was Joan, helps me to understand the uniqueness of Mary of Nazareth. The world-width that lies between the wistful day-dreams of French girls, of whom no more was heard, and the waking vision of the girl who dreamed, and also did, aids my own mind, and may aid another, to measure the interval between the faith of many women in Israel who could have said, "The mother of Messiah, could it be I?" and this faith of the one who said, "The mother of Messiah—it is I." Theirs was sacrifice, if without pain, for they gave of self something; Mary gave self and gave it all. Their waiting and hope was a faith; Mary's faith was a victory that overcame. So of her could be born Messiah.

Yet I think one may look more narrowly into the sacrifice of the Annunciation hour and still get light from Domremy. An act of self-determination, such as was Joan's acceptance of her call, is always an act of self-surrender. For it is the abandonment of all the alternative courses and self-interests. But in that decision of the French girl there was also pain positive: there were the natural homely fears, "How

can I go who never rode a horse? How can I, a villager, face a king's court." Was there no deeper pain than these? I will dare to speculate that, as we credit an artist with all the riches of beauty and significance in a masterpiece, though they were not all present in the creative moment, so we ought to think that the unforeseen travail and agony of her martyrdom were *implicitly* accepted by the girl who chose to venture. And to speculate so of Joan is to ask whether Mary did not bow herself both, in a conscious acceptance, to the perils and pains which it behoved the Messiah, as every prophet affronting the world, to suffer in His own Person and to reflect from it upon her who bare Him, and also, in an unconscious acceptance, to her doom of an agony under the cross. In Symeon's prophecy, "A sword shall pierce through thy own bosom," I have ventured to see an act of thought in which he read the thought of the woman before him, her dumb presentiment waking in him prediction.

But I will try to get closer home to the more human of the two incidents which is my parable of the more mystic. Joan spoke with an archangel, Michael. A symbol only, one says. But a symbol of what fact? Of a contact through a visual and aural sensation with the spiritual reality. In her flesh this girl had communion with the ghostly world and was called to have her portion in that world of the ghostly. What fear and what pain lies in the self-surrender by which flesh consents to have to do with spirit! But that same fear and pain lay in Mary's parley with an angel, Gabriel sent from God.

Must one take on trust from the universal human tradition the terror of an intercourse with the Ghostly; or does one find in oneself an attesting echo of the pang there is when our warm humanity feels bending over it the shadow of that Presence?

I suppose that to believe, really to believe in the Incarnation, to accept with seeing eye and with willing will the fact that the word is made flesh in this mortal, in me, my very self, is to accept an intercourse with a world of things and persons spiritual and to have to do, flesh and blood as we are, with that Unseen Order, to know ourselves to be of that Order first and last and most. If our belief as Christian has not been to us such an experience, it will be because the force of the mystical experience has been only in proportion to the force of the belief. But in that measure in which we have submitted ourself to the presence and touch of the Eternal—has it been a sacrifice that cost us nothing, has it been a passion in which there was no pang?

But this is common to every soul alike which truly yields self to the Incarnate. There are experiences that come indeed

some time (who can know ?) to all, but to no one many times, which throw a penetrating beam of light upon the experience of her in whom that Incarnate first was born.

One speaks of these with the reserve which reverence and mere instinct dictate ; but has it not happened to us, upon some peril or stroke of bereavement or sight of death even in no kin of ours, that the unseen reality has laid a dread hand upon our mortal nature and our "immortality" has become "a presence that is not to be put by." There fell an hour—how name it else ?—of ghostliness. Suddenly the man was "in the spirit," but by no rapture, rather by a chilling seizure. The Hand plucked him from the kindly human brotherhood : he walked among the living crowd an alien and incommunicable, a ghost that cast no shadow, become to himself a shadow ; his conversation was now in the company of heaven : and flesh and blood shivered to enter this.

Let who ever has known such an experience take away from it all elements merely natural, as the terror or the desolation, and there will be left the sense that the Spiritual had touched him, the great hand of the Eternal had drawn him out of the temporal world to have his portion in that other. Remembering that summons to take up his lot in the Unseen, he may judge how it was with Mary at the same summoning. If he ever thought of the Virgin as heroine of a wonder-tale receiving a miraculous fortune, he will rethink that shallow fancy and know her now as one like himself, constrained as he was once to attempt an intercourse with the Eternal Order. "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee." If there were not for the Virgin the pain of desolation or fear of death, yet she was as that man was in the awareness of communion and fellowship with the Spiritual Ones.

She had to endure, as it were, a Passing, to make the shuddering venture across from world to world, to brook in her veins of mortal the ghostly fire, to bear on her shrinking flesh the burden of the Power of the Highest. Was not this Sacrifice ? This Passion, had it not the Pang ?

This then, as I try to understand, is what happened when the Maiden of Nazareth in Galilee saw a Vision of the angel Gabriel, sent from God, and, in seeing it, "by the operation of the Holy Ghost," began to be mother of the Christ.

It will be said that in this attempt to analyse the event of the Vision I am seeking to explain an historic incident by a cause which is wholly mystical. That is so. But no other manner of explanation can render the cause of this effect in history. Mystical and historic fact are not facts of two orders, any more

than soul and body are entities that can exist in separation, though for the ordinary and lower purposes of life we do make an abstraction, and isolate bodily facts for study and practice. It is soul that makes body and only where the spirit is there is the flesh. But here again our earthlier tale is a lucid parable of the heavenlier. The career of Joan, redeemer of France, which has been our similitude for the service which Mary rendered to the whole race, is a train of events in the physical order—counsellings, musterings, battles, victories, the crowning of a king; but these events are not explicable, as it has seemed to me, by causes belonging to the same order as their effects, and the attempts so to account for them do not persuade me that

“These are their reasons,—they are natural.”

The Maid's own account of it stands. “Joan,” said one of the examiners into her mission and its authority, “if God will save France, why do you want soldiers?” “The soldiers will fight,” she answered, “and God will give them the victory.” The mystical must be there: then it will take to itself a body of the historical.

And I would say that what Joan's battles were to the Vision of the warrior angel, that was Mary's travail and deliverance of her first-born to the Vision of Gabriel, whom she saw and spoke with under her roof in Nazareth. Joan's sacrifice “in the spirit” was the generator of the victory of French arms, and from the sacrifice of Mary came after the flesh the Christ.

It will be said to me, perhaps, that this imagining of the Virgin's act will not bear looking at under the light of common day. This Maiden of the mystic trance yet became happy mother of a goodly babe, proud mother of a son of genius; the sword that should pierce the bosom did not find her till after thirty years of blessing; and nowhere does she give on the page of history proof of a character or even an intelligence unique.

No, nor was there need that she should. Her task in the world-process was to have in her the faith through which Messiah might be conceived in her; to bear and rear and teach, and then leave her child, as mothers must, to “make his own soul.” In all this it behoved the Christ's mother to be full-human and like all mothers of a man. One of us who may have had the experience which I have named an “hour of ghostliness,” came back from it to be again the shadow-casting mortal, like the rest, in a full-human fellowship: yet that fellowship with the Divine Ones had verily been. If for a moment he hung “wandering between

two worlds," it was for the moment: and then the company of heaven did receive him not unto terror but unto love; the ghostly fire consumed not, it had become like the martyrs' furnace, "a soft whistling wind," the very breath of very life. And from it he came back to the kindly human brotherhood, a man as they and yet a man not as they, because now and henceforth his conversation is in heaven too. Why should it be otherwise even for Mary of Nazareth? She must henceforward do all a mother's offices, homely, industrious, glad, to a child who was Son of *Man*: yet that once she had been the mystic virgin, the intermediary of heaven, the handmaid of the Lord; it had been unto her according to His word, and the Christ was conceived in her by the Holy Ghost.

Shall we have the courage of our convictions and dare, as unnumbered pencils have dared, to paint *Madonna* according to our thought of her? For his own eyes at least any Christian lawfully may so picture her, indeed must picture so, if his belief of her is belief. Let us then, as others have ventured, look in through an open Syrian doorway, and see within—not the submissive girl-figure bowed before the lily-wanded angel, but a peasant maiden, young and fair, of simple grace, of purest health in limb and mind, new risen from her knees. We discern by the clasped, straining hands, wide eyes and parted lips that there has fallen on her in a rapture the hour for which God sent her among men. There is none other in that chamber to our sight; but One there surely is to hers. All is silent, yet a converse thrills the air; and from the rapt figure a virtue goes out to us, till we know that a nameless passion has risen and is working in the maiden's soul. And we make surmise that this passion is none other than the vast hope of Israel, that has been secret fire in the blood of her race a thousand years, and now in the veins of this one daughter of Israel breaks, at a spark that falls from heaven, into the flame of faith, that can do all things through love that has cast out the fear.

Ah! this is no portrayal of the mystic intermediary of Heaven. But then—is it perhaps a portrait not all unlike a Syrian woman in life's crowning moment, who by the operation of the Holy Ghost shall be made the mother of Jesus, a carpenter of Nazareth, whose brethren, our fellow men, we know, and His sisters are they not with us in our own?

DISCUSSION.

The CHAIRMAN said: We are all grateful to the lecturer for his interesting paper. The argument from analogy is often useful. Newton in his observation on the fall of the apple, and his thought about it, has enabled the paths of comets to be traced in the heavens; and who can describe the consequences arising from Watt's thoughts on the steam in a kettle raising its lid? The History of Joan should warn us that things really happen though we can't explain them, and we should be cautious in refusing belief in Scripture stories simply because they are inexplicable by natural laws. In considering her story we should remember that Francia was not modern France, nor the English king an Englishman, that it was the Burgundians, not the English, who condemned and burnt Joan, and as a layman I may say this was due to the clerics amongst them. Many don't believe the story at all, but at any rate it was a fact that at that time England was saved from a great national danger in being delivered from a disastrous union with a portion of France. Here was a girl who did a great work. Don't let us quarrel with the greater mystery involved in it. Can we afford to disbelieve the Spiritual? "Absolute certainties" have given way under our feet. Radium has upset the very foundations of many physical theories which used to be considered established. Personally my scepticism is of so-called science, and not of the spiritual element in history.

The idea of sacrifice here explained, that it does not necessarily involve pain, is fully confirmed in the Levitical sacrifices, in some of which there was death; but even in them in almost all cases the sacrifices ended in a feast, sorrow was turned into joy. Sacrifice involved the giving up of self to God, and the reception from Him of spiritual grace. We are naturally selfish, and giving up of ourselves to Him is a wrench. The popular idea of sacrifice that it is only giving up the wrong is inadequate, and based upon an untrue meaning of the word "self," which is only English; foreign renderings of the word would save us from the error. The good of our nature has to be surrendered to God, it must be the whole self, the consecration of the whole being to God. Evil must, of course, go, and be consumed by the fire on the altar.

The Rev. Dr. IRVING said he had perused Dr. Skrine's paper with much pleasure and mental refreshment, and the more so

on account of the very reverent spirit in which he had dealt with the central mystery of all revelation in approaching it on literary and ethical lines. He thought, however, that it was necessary to remind those present that there was another side of the subject, which Dr. Skrine's scholarly speculations failed to touch. The analogy between the recorded experiences of Jeanne d'Arc and Mary of Nazareth, so far as it was a sound analogy, was only partial and "incommensurate." It left out the most important factor of all those concerned in the conception of the GOD-MAN, namely, the physical effect of what we try to understand by the Church's phrase, "the operation of the Holy Ghost,"* the *Dominus et Vivificans* of the Nicene Creed. This belonged *in toto* to a different order of events from anything whatever contained in the experience of *La Pucelle*. It was the first term in a sequence of vital changes, which (under the special guidance of Creative and Directive Power) produced (in accordance with the normal course of things) the Holy Child, which was "born of a pure Virgin." Here was the *crux* of the mystery; but he thought we should do well to recollect that it was but the first element of that complex mystery which was contained in "the New Testament revelation of the Ineffable Personality of the GOD-MAN—incarnate, crucified, risen and glorified—as the outstanding miracle of the universe of Being." Recent advances in biological science "suggested ideas of far-reaching significance in their bearing upon great questions concerning the fundamental Christian verities." He felt sure that if light from science was to be thrown upon this central mystery of Faith, it was in the direction of "Creative Evolution" on the lines suggested by Professor Henslow's Paper last year to this Institute, and more fully expounded by Bergson.

In conclusion, he thought the value of the paper from the ethical and mystical point of view would have been enhanced if the learned author of it had taken some notice of the efforts of the greatest artists to reproduce for our visual contemplation the deep thoughts and feelings (beyond the expression of words), which moved in their

* See "proper preface" in the Communion Office for Christmas Day. The Latin is very explicit: *Qui, operante Spiritu Sancto, verus Homo factus est, ex substantia Virginis Mariæ, matris sue.* Cf. the words: ἐξ ἀπεστείλεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ, γενόμενον ἐκ γυναικός (Gal. iv, 4)—a definite *creative* act, as distinct from "procreation."

own souls in connection with that transcendent event, at a given point of time, in the home of Nazareth ; and he did not hesitate to quote his own experience of former years, as he had sat and gazed upon the "Sistine Madonna" of Raphael in the Dresden Gallery, until the holy figures seemed to grow into life upon the canvas, and those beautiful lips appeared to move spontaneously with the *Magnificat anima mea Dominum*, and "inspiration" seemed to be a very real thing.

Lieut.-Colonel M. A. ALVES said : I cannot agree with the reader of the paper in considering the vision of Joan of Arc as being parallel to that of the Virgin Mary ; nor, even from a Roman Catholic point of view, in the statement that the Rabbinic is the only authority for the existence of angels. Allusions to them are made in all of the three great divisions of the Old Testament, and also in the New.

Of angels, two are mentioned by name ; Gabriel was sent with personal messages to Daniel, Zacharias, and Mary. To each of these there was at least one objective vision.

Michael is called in Jude "the archangel" ; no other of that title is mentioned in Scripture. In the Old Testament he is called the "Prince" of Daniel's people.

That people at present is shelved ; and "The Church of God" has taken its place. A hint at this is given in 1 Thess. iv, 16, "the voice of the archangel."

But neither to Daniel, the man greatly beloved, does Michael come with messages, nor to the highly favoured Mary.

Seeing then that, both in England and in France, the holders of the pure faith had to hide their heads, it is pretty certain that Joan could not have had a visit from Gabriel, still less from Michael. Her vision, like those of Timour the Lame, must have been purely subjective ; and although I have no doubt that God's hand was in the matter to separate England from France, and to shame both countries by making a woman the deliverer of the latter, I cannot compare Joan with Mary.

What was Mary's sacrifice and the sword that should pierce her soul ? I do not think that it was either the pangs of childbirth or her Divine Son's sufferings on the Cross. We must put ourselves in her place, and, I may add, Joseph's also.

Mary's innocent and matter-of-fact question to the Angel shows that she had no idea of a heavenly visitant and miraculous

conception; and she probably voiced popular opinion. Moreover, motherhood is the general lot of womankind.

When, however, Gabriel explained the matter, Mary showed her faith, (1) in the miraculous conception, (2) that God would make it right for her with Joseph, and (3) that He would make them both strong to bear the incredulity, which must have been very hard to bear, on our Lord's part, as well as on that of Joseph and Mary.

Mr. ROUSE praised the tender eloquence with which the paper closed, and added: In making this comparison, the author has been able to show a sort of analogy between Joan of Arc, in delivering her countrymen (already distracted by civil broils) from the scourge of the English invasion, and the Virgin Mary, in becoming a willing instrument for bringing into the world the Great Deliverer of mankind; and he has shown in each a striking self-surrender for the purpose. But as regards the visions that Joan alleged herself to have had of Michael the Archangel, St. Margaret, and St. Catherine, she could at her trial say nothing as to their forms nor whether they wore crowns or jewels nor whether Michael had long or short hair. She knew him from them simply by their voices and because they told her. She could only say that she saw the glorious faces of all and that they were always the same, and that the voice that came from each was beautiful, gentle, and humble. We may well conclude, therefore, that what happened was that she, a God-fearing and pure maiden, deeply grieving over the distresses of her country, did actually hear a voice from time to time urging her to go to the deliverance of her country, and in her reveries associated this with the faces of the archangel and of the saints which she had seen portrayed in her village church.

Now we know that Christians have from time to time declared that, in a season of great perplexity, they have distinctly heard a voice of guidance, which they have followed to lasting profit. And why should not God, through one of His angels, thus speak to cheer and strengthen those whose hearts are perfect towards Him, however little or much they may know of Bible truth? But far oftener no voice is actually heard, yet a strong conviction springs up in the mind touching the right course to pursue, and is proved by its results to be God-given.

While Joan the Maid was delivering her country, France, from the English, the famous Ziska was rescuing his country, Bohemia,

from vaster hosts of relentless enemies, who were bent on slaying the Bohemians at large as "a sacrilegious and accursed nation." When those faithful servants of God, John Huss and Jerome of Prague, had been imprisoned by the Council of Constance, and, in spite of the German Emperor's promise of a safe return home, had been burnt alive for the truths that they taught, Ziska, who was then chamberlain to King Wenceslaus of Bohemia, was found by his master brooding over the cruelty done to these noble men and the affront to his nation, when the king said to him in jest, "If you are able to call the Emperor to account, you have my permission." In earnest, Ziska replied, "Give me, Sire, that permission in writing"; and it was done. Then within a few weeks came the news that the fresh Pope who had been elected by the Council, had proclaimed a crusade against the Bohemians in the terms above given; and Ziska, to the indignant citizens of Prague, produced the royal permission. On the Michaelmas following, from numbers of the towns and villages round about, many thousands gathered to a plain near Prague, and partook of the Lord's supper in both kinds, as a protest against the Papal withholding of the cup from the laity; and they agreed to reassemble on the Martinmas following. But on the way to the second meeting they heard that the Emperor's cavalry were lying in wait for them; so they sent back for soldiers to protect them: and a battle ensued in which the imperial troops were routed. Ziska then, signing himself "Ziska of the Chalice," issued a manifesto in which he urged his countrymen to oppose the Anti-Christ with arms, relying upon God, who had already encouraged them with a victory he drove from the walls of Prague an army of persecutors 100,000 strong, and in sixteen pitched battles against the imperial forces and crusaders won the victory every time. I believe that Ziska heard God's voice encouraging him to deliver his country, just as much as Joan of Arc did.

Mr. SIDNEY COLLETT said that the line of thought running through the whole paper, *viz.*: that in becoming the mother of our Lord, Mary was performing a great act of sacrifice, is both fanciful and highly imaginative, and is quite contrary to everything we read in the inspired account, and indeed is opposed to Mary's own expressed views on the subject as recorded in Luke i, 46 to 55, which shows that she regarded it, not in any sense as a sacrifice, but as the highest possible honour, bringing with it the greatest possible joy.

Indeed we know it was the coveted hope of practically every woman in Israel.

After referring to other points touched on by previous speakers, he continued :—

Then, on page 83, the Author tells us that “the Lucan story of the Annunciation has round it airs of fancy and folklore”! I should like to ask on what authority he makes such a statement ?

A hearty vote of thanks to the Lecturer for his paper was then put to the meeting and carried unanimously. Dr. SKRINE acknowledged the vote and replied to the discussion.

AUTHOR'S REPLY.

In his reply (as revised) Dr. SKRINE said he had no desire to leave the meeting under any misapprehension of the position he took as to the interpretation of Scripture. While unable to take his stand, as some of the speakers seemed to do, upon a theory of inspiration at one time generally accepted, he claimed to stand where the best authorities of the Church stood, as his own Archbishop and Bishop. He wished also to urge on some present, who seemed to him to express a somewhat external theory of what constitutes belief in the Creeds of the Church, that in a right view of the function, belief, the merely mental apprehension of a truth is one factor, but rather a minor factor, in the act of faith. The act of faith consists essentially in a movement of the total consciousness—mind, heart, and will together, a movement in which the man makes surrender of his whole self to the Divine will as expressed in the particular truth for which belief is asked—such was the nature of the act of faith in the Virgin Mary, and such was the faith of Joan the Maid.