

And all theology is built upon them. First, there is this fundamental fact of love. Love is the source of the Universe and its upholding, for God is love. Next, it is the love of persons. The Father loves the Son and the Son the Father. Yet these persons are one God—in perfect unity of will. 'I and the Father are one.' And then, finally, this home, which is a home of rest because of the love and the unity, is also a home of activity. God is love, not only that the Father may love the Son and the Son the Father, but also that God may create man and love him.

And when God creates man and loves him, He creates man free to choose, and loves Him in spite of the evil choice he makes. This is the occupation of Christ with the Father even before the creation of the world, to love man in his sin and by persistent love to win him to holiness. For it is no more unthinkable that God should love sinners before the creation than that Christ should love us who are alive to-day when He gave Himself for us on the Tree.

Its truth is vindicated by the response the sinner makes.

O eyes that strip the souls of men!  
There came to me the Magdalen.  
Her blue robe with a cord was bound,  
Her hair with Lenten lilies crowned.

'Arise,' she said, 'God calls for thee,  
Turned to new paths thy feet must be.  
Leave the fever and the feast,  
Leave the friend thou lovest best:  
For thou must walk in barefoot ways,  
To give my dear Lord Jesus praise.'

Then answered I—'Sweet Magdalen,  
God's servant, once beloved of men,  
Why didst thou change old ways for new,  
That trailing red for corded blue,  
Roses for lilies on thy brow,  
Rich splendour for a barren vow?'

Gentle of speech she answered me:—  
'Sir, I was sick with revelry.  
True, I have scarred the night with sin,  
A pale and tawdry heroine;  
But once I heard a voice that said,  
"Who lives in sin is surely dead,  
But whoso turns to follow me  
Hath joy and immortality."'

'O Mary, not for this,' I cried,  
'Didst thou renounce thy scented pride.  
Not for a taste of endless years  
Or barren joy apart from tears  
Didst thou desert the courts of men.  
Tell me thy truth, sweet Magdalen!'

She trembled, and her eyes grew dim:—  
'For love of Him, for love of Him.'

## Psychical Research and its Bearing on some Biblical Problems.

BY THE REV. C. W. EMMET, M.A., WEST HENDRED.

I BELIEVE that the Society of Psychical Research is still by some known as the 'Spook Society.' The nickname implies that its main business is the seeking out or even the brewing of 'ghost stories,' which, however indigestible they may be to the common sense, are eagerly swallowed by its members and form in fact their main mental and

spiritual nutriment. This view is somewhat inadequate; it mistakes both the purpose and the temper of the S.P.R. Its purpose is to investigate phenomena which do not fall within the purview of Science as ordinarily organized—'the unclassified residuum.' These phenomena include telepathy, clairvoyance, second sight, crystal gazing,

premonitions and dreams ; hypnotism, multiple personality, automatic speech and writing, trances and possession ; hallucinations, knockings, apparitions of dead or of living persons, as well as 'the physical phenomena of spiritualism' as produced in séances. We may add to this varied menu a few hors-d'œuvres such as water-finding and other unclassified marvels, e.g. the hailstones of Remiremont.

Now, under all these heads, we have facts to study. People do see things, have premonitions which turn out true, write and speak in trances ; extraordinary events do occur in the presence of certain mediums. Science ignores these things ; they do not fit in with its scheme of the world. Religion too ignores them, paradoxically enough, seeing that the records of every religious system (including Christianity) are from first to last full of them. The S.P.R. simply exists to study the facts and claim them for Science (organized knowledge) ; it is not in the least tied to any one explanation of them. They may be due to conscious or unconscious fraud, to hysteria, to coincidence, to unrecognized workings of the mind itself, to the impact of one mind on another, to outside agencies or spirits, and probably most of these explanations hold good in one case or another. The problem is to classify the phenomena, to sift and test the hypotheses, but we may be perfectly clear that the S.P.R. does not encourage credulity. It would be enough to give a list of Presidents including Henry Sidgwick, A. J. Balfour, William James, Crookes, Myers, Oliver Lodge, Mrs. Henry Sidgwick, Andrew Lang, and, for the current year, Bergson. It has, in fact, been instrumental in many exposures—the Mahatmas and Mme. Blavatsky, the slate writer Eglinton, and mediums by the score. One of its members has written a scathing exposure of the professional medium in *The Physical Phenomena of Spiritualism*. Its canons of evidence are so stringent that prominent supporters have severed their connexion with the Society on account of its hopeless scepticism. The C.O.S. is not a greater terror to the writer of begging letters than is the S.P.R. to the paid medium.

The organized scientific study of psychical phenomena is of course in its infancy : the S.P.R. was founded only thirty years ago, and no finality can yet be looked for, but it may be useful to sketch the present position. Hypnotism has, of

course, now been adopted by up-to-date medical science, though it is still full of lessons and suggestions for the psychical researcher. Automatic writing, whether by hand or planchette, trance utterances and kindred phenomena are recognized as genuine, i.e. they are not due to trickery, nor are they a phase of insanity. The messages given are sometimes on a high level, and are drawn from a region which the subject or medium cannot tap in his waking hours. Whether the explanation is to be found in the powers of the subconscious self alone, in its possession or invasion by another personality, or in telepathy, is still undecided. The last-named holds just now a prominent place. It has been rendered almost certain that one mind can, under rare and unknown conditions, influence another and convey ideas to it without the use of the recognized material means ; this phenomenon being regarded as a *vera causa* is being put forward as an explanation of the most varied abnormal occurrences (e.g. it is invoked to explain the famous cross-correspondences in the script of Mrs. Verrall and others). Whether it is not being stretched too far is another story. As has been pointed out in a recent presidential speech, the S.P.R. has itself convinced the world of telepathy, and is now accused of credulity or blindness if it does not use it as the all-sufficient explanation of every phenomenon. Again, it has been made very probable that visions seen in crystals are often strangely significant, that clairvoyants do at times discover weird secrets and that premonitions or intuitions (e.g. of danger) and warning voices sometimes speak the truth, that veridical apparitions occur and that phantasms show a strongly marked tendency to coincide with the death or critical position of the person seen, when that is quite unknown to the percipient. Nothing may yet have been proved under these heads, but there is clearly a case for further stringent inquiry. We can be satisfied with neither the shrug of Science, nor the easy-going rationalism of common sense, nor the pious horror of a certain type of religion.

'Spiritualism,' in the narrower sense, is rightly under a cloud : most of its phenomena have been proved to be due to fraud, so much so, in fact, that the presumption is that the rest are to be ascribed to the same source even where no trickery has so far been established. And yet the feeling remains strongest among many of those who have

come into closest touch with this branch of the subject that, in spite of the wretched contemptible story of imposture and credulity, there is in some cases an unexplained residuum, traces of mysterious forces at work unknown to and uncontrolled by the medium itself. Browning brings this out very significantly in 'Sludge the Medium.' In the midst of Sludge's abject confession of his cheating there is the undercurrent:

'I have told my lie,  
And seen truth follow, marvels none of mine;  
All was not cheating, sir, I'm positive!  
'This trade of mine—I don't know, can't be sure,  
But there was something in it, tricks and all.'

If we assume for the moment that the medium has certain abnormal powers, they are not understood by himself and he cannot control them at will. He is expected to produce results at a particular time, and the results refuse to come when he most wants them: the temptation to substitute fraudulent phenomena is obvious. Possibly this explanation applies to the contradictory accounts of the various phenomena claimed as taking place in the presence of Eusapia Paladino. It is at any rate clear that whilst the discovery of what trickery can do in skilful hands should make us cautious to a degree, it does not finally shut the door to the possibility of there *being something else*.

It must be admitted that very little success has so far been attained in the purpose of the first founders of the S.P.R.—the collection of definite evidence for a future life. The tests devised by Myers, Hodgson, and others have failed, and no very definite conclusions can be drawn from the cross-correspondences; yet if direct proofs have not been found, a piece of indirect evidence of considerable value has emerged from the investigations. They have emphasized the mystery of human personality, its complexity, its possession of powers hardly recognized. If telepathy be a fact, if soul can communicate directly with soul without material means, there is at least a probability that it will survive the dissolution of its material home. In the workings of genius, trance, and clairvoyance we get glimpses of larger powers which seem to be in immediate touch with the unseen world. These powers are apparently abnormal here and alien to our present existence, but they may well be normal and find their full development in another state. They are not faculties which can be explained as evolved by the

struggle for existence, if we confine existence to our earthly life, yet they are not by-products or freaks of Nature: they are sometimes higher and nobler than many of our mundane faculties. May they not be indications, rare, but valuable, that we are greater than we know? May they not be indications that even now we have that within us which will fit us for life in a larger state, in a more spiritual atmosphere?

To put the same thing in another form, psychical research brings out the emotional, mystic side of life as opposed to the narrow, hard, materialistic view. It provides the bridge by which the man of Science may, and often does, pass to religion: we need only quote Myers and Oliver Lodge. This brings us to one of the main objects of this paper, which is to suggest a few of the ways in which psychical research may affect our view of the Bible and its narratives.

Miracles:—has it made them more credible? It has at least created an atmosphere in which they can be approached fairly and without *a priori* prejudice. If similar miracles do in fact happen now and have happened in all ages, it is obviously easier to accept those of the Bible. In certain cases they receive a direct confirmation; cures of mental diseases, accounts of possession and divination, the various gifts of the Spirit of which St. Paul writes, are all closely parallel to modern phenomena. If premonitions occur sporadically in the present day we have less reason to stumble over the account of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch, or the supernatural guidance of St. Paul's life, or Ezekiel's telepathic knowledge of the fall of Jerusalem. In the same way, the 'demon' of Socrates, the stigmata of St. Francis, the voices of Joan of Arc and of the Mystics, have all been shown to be possible, for similar things happen now. 'The mental and physical are so interwoven; the possibilities of clairvoyance are so unexplored, that I do not feel constrained to abandon the traditional idea that the coming or going of a great personality may be heralded and accompanied by strange occurrences in the region of physical force.'<sup>1</sup>

But we are bound to add that there is another side. A cursory acquaintance with the S.P.R. reports brings out the extraordinary fallibility of human evidence. Even trained observers, gathered for the express purpose of noting and narrating

<sup>1</sup> Oliver Lodge, *Man and the Universe*, p. 289, with reference to gospel miracles.

what they see, can give the most diverse and incomplete, and therefore inaccurate, reports of the same events. Much more do we find that the ordinary story of the marvellous is reduced to very commonplace proportions under cross-examination and criticism. The student of the S.P.R. literature will underline the caution that the accounts in the Bible are not written as accurate scientific records and would receive a very different form to-day. From a purely documentary point of view they are insufficient as evidence, though there may be other grounds on which this conclusion should be modified. Again, we must cease, even more decidedly than we do, to regard the Bible miracles as miraculous in the popular sense. They are in many cases not unique, nor are they in themselves evidence of a direct Divine interposition, as opposed to that general Providence which we believe is always at work in the world. We begin to see dimly that they happen in obedience to laws, however imperfectly we may be able to understand or formulate them. Wonderful voices or healings can no longer be regarded as necessarily due to any immediate outpouring of a special Divine power, and, as the Bible itself insists, the miracle *per se* is no guarantee of truth or holiness. Because a man possesses to an unusual degree the power of controlling nature by mind and can produce abnormal phenomena, he is not necessarily a good man, nor is his message to be accepted as inspired. The miracle must be judged by its intrinsic character; the teaching supports the miracle, not the miracle the teaching. This is well-worn ground, but psychical research emphasizes the truth of the contention. Some mediums are morally good, and their communications are valuable: with others it is the reverse. The power of producing extraordinary psychical phenomena seems to have little connexion with character. Hence, while this line of inquiry vindicates in part the general accuracy of the Biblical narratives, it does nothing to restore miracles to their traditional position in Christian apologetics. The facts are in certain cases confirmed, but they cease to be miracles in the old sense.

A word with regard to the Resurrection:—‘The appearances during the forty days are mysterious, but they can be accepted very much as they stand; for they agree with our experience of genuine psychical phenomena the world over, and a farewell phantasmal appearance, described as an Ascen-

sion, is credible enough.’<sup>1</sup> What this means is that the appearances will no longer be ascribed to fraud or myth or the growth of legend. The gospel accounts are recognized as substantially accurate records of genuine psychical experiences on the part of the apostles. Whether they are subjective or objective those who approach the question from this point of view will hardly yet agree. We ourselves have other lines of proof and must protest against any idea that our belief in the present life of Christ is to depend in the least upon whether or not we can accept the narratives of present-day phantasms, nor can we entirely accept Myers’ oft-quoted dictum, ‘I predict that in consequence of the new evidence all reasonable men a century hence will believe the Resurrection of Christ, whereas in default of the new evidence no reasonable man a century hence would have believed it.’ But it is possible that further investigation into the conditions of such events may affect our interpretation of the mode of the manifestations of the Risen Christ. We may come to understand more of the spiritual body and of the psychical experiences through which the apostles passed; and we may remind ourselves that this line of proof, though perhaps superfluous to the instructed Christian, yet seems to offer just what the temper of the present age requires. If it helps men to Christ we should not lightly throw scorn upon it.<sup>2</sup>

We pass to the phenomena of trance, ecstasy, and prophecy, ‘the psychology of inspiration.’ This is a subject on which we may certainly expect fresh light in the future. We see clearly that the language about trances or messages from the unseen which we find in the Bible is not a mere literary convention, but at any rate represents real psychical experiences.<sup>3</sup> How are we to interpret them? The theory of the subliminal self may be of great value. It suggests that there is a part of our personality which is in close touch with the unseen world and which can, in the religious or artistic genius, utilize its subconscious experiences.

<sup>1</sup> Oliver Lodge, *op. cit.* p. 291.

<sup>2</sup> The subject is too large for adequate treatment within the limits of this paper; in order to avoid misapprehensions, I would venture to refer to a fuller discussion in my *Eschatological Question in the Gospels, and other Studies in New Testament Criticism*, pp. 128 ff. The view taken above underlies Mr. Streeter’s remarkable study of the Resurrection in *Foundations*, and it is sympathetically discussed by Dr. Robinson in his *Studies in the Resurrection of Christ*, chap. viii.

<sup>3</sup> Ezekiel is perhaps the best example of this.

in a form which can be understood by the normal mundane self. It draws upon a storehouse which the ordinary mind (perhaps the ordinary man) cannot tap; and when it can articulate its discoveries (the power of adequate expression is often wanting) we get works of genius, inspiration, or revelation. Modern examples are fully in line with the claim which is characteristic of the psychology of the prophet—that his message is not his own; that it comes from a source outside him, and that to some extent it passes his full understanding. Yet it comes through his brain and bears the stamp of his own individuality. But here again we need to be reminded that the ultimate criterion is the inherent truth of the message, not the fact that it claims to have come in trance or ecstasy, by dream or intuition, or through any other abnormal channel. The reader will remember that Dr. Sanday<sup>1</sup> has used the theory of the subliminal self to explain the deepest of all problems—the Personality of Christ—and in spite of the somewhat cold reception which this bold hypothesis has received, it is probable that we have by no means heard the last of it.

It remains to say something as to the legitimacy of this line of inquiry. It does at times rouse a certain repugnance which comes from various sources. Much of this antipathy is at bottom prejudice and should be treated as nothing more. It is very often as purely a physical and intuitive dislike of the uncanny as is the woman's objection to a mouse, and deserves no more respect. Nor are the intellectual objections very serious. A fact is a fact, be the explanation what it may. The facts of psychical research are at their lowest of enormous psychological interest and are unquestionably worth studying in a scientific temper. To do so no more implies superstition than the study of anthropology implies a leaning towards animism. More serious is the moral objection which dislikes the apparent violation of personality involved in many forms of psychical research. We resent the idea that our inmost thoughts should be known to others except in so far as we deliberately choose to communicate them, or that any one should probe our mind or use it for experimental purposes. It will be seen at once that this objection applies mainly to those branches into which hypnotism enters. The ethics of hypnotism open up a wide field. Here it must suffice to say that probably no

one can be hypnotized against his will, that he cannot be made to do under hypnotism things against which his moral sense would revolt, and that experience shows that hypnotism properly used, so far from weakening or breaking up the personality, may be a powerful factor in restoring its balance and sanity.

We come finally to the directly religious objections which base themselves on what seems to be the teaching of the Bible and on the strong antipathy natural to the serious mind to any dealing with what is called the occult; it seems *prima facie* to be a relapse to a lower religious standpoint. A tempting solution is to distinguish between a mere study of phenomena on the one hand, and the attempt to produce them by experiment on the other. A minute's reflexion will show us that the distinction cannot be maintained. If the psychical researcher is told of noises in a haunted house he will obviously wish to put himself in the way of hearing them for himself. If he is told of strange phenomena occurring in the presence of a medium he must witness them under test conditions. Research can do very little without experiment.

Let us then look more closely at the real mind of the Bible on this subject. We are all familiar with its condemnation of sorcery, witchcraft, necromancy, and so on; it is needless to quote texts. Yet we find much of the same nature which is recognized as perfectly legitimate. Pharaoh has his magicians, yet Moses and Aaron do the same things as they do: Daniel is head of the magicians of Babylon. Dependence on dreams is forbidden, yet Joseph, Daniel, and Joseph in the New Testament interpret them by the help of God. Divination in various forms is also forbidden, yet we find that Jahweh worship has its Urim and Thummim and its oracles connected with the Ark. A Gideon is guided by an omen or sign; a prophet is expected to disclose the whereabouts of lost asses for a fee; an apostle is chosen by lot. Side by side with the condemnation of heathen oracles, frenzy and possession, we have the trances and spiritual visions of the prophets or St. Paul, and the psychical phenomena connected with the gifts of the Spirit. On the side of phantasms of the dead we can quote the story of the Witch of Endor (the shade of Samuel brings a message from Jahweh), the appearances of Moses and Elijah at the Transfiguration, and of the many bodies of the Saints after the Resurrection. We

<sup>1</sup> *Christologies Ancient and Modern*, chaps. vi.—viii.

need not necessarily accept all these things as facts, and we must allow for the growth of revelation. Many of the examples belong to its primitive stages, but it remains true that what are called psychical phenomena are closely connected with, and used by, the true Religion. Certain modes may drop out, but in the gifts of the Spirit and the life of St. Paul we find others vouched for in the age which is recognized as the high-water mark of Christian experience. The warnings against sorcery and so on cannot then be interpreted as shutting the door against any interest in, or attempt to produce, abnormal phenomena. How are we to distinguish between the legitimate and the illegitimate? Looking at the phenomena from outside it would seem impossible to do so. What is the line between Urim and Thummim or the lot by which Matthias was chosen and heathen divination? Regarded purely as a psychical experience, how does St. Paul's trance differ from that of the god-possessed *μάντις*? It is obvious that the distinction is not to be sought in the things themselves, but in the point of view from which they are approached and the results to which they lead. The fact is that the forms of magic condemned in the Old Testament or by St. Paul are not forbidden as being mysterious and abnormal; but as immediately connected with heathenism. To have recourse to them implied a definite abandonment of Jahweh and the national worship in order to obtain the help of alien deities. Further, there was usually the element of secrecy; the attempt was made to gain the knowledge and control of hidden powers in order to injure others thereby. Hence, the criterion is the temper of mind in which such things are handled. The man who thinks he is going to discover occult powers which he may use to his own advantage, or a short cut to knowledge, or a new religion, had better have nothing to do with psychical research. On the other hand, there can be nothing wrong in studying the subject with the sincere desire to know, and the unbiassed love of truth—essentially a religious instinct. All that is must happen in obedience to God's laws, and if we can discover them we may be confident that we are meant to do so. To say, as some do, that these phenomena are facts but are the work of evil spirits or devils sent to delude us, is to reproduce precisely the argument of those who explained the geological relics on the tops of mountains or the cave traces

of prehistoric man, as tricks of Satan whereby he led to perdition the sceptics who disbelieved in the first chapters of Genesis.

A parallel with sexual powers is instructive. On account of their mystery and their ready liability to abuse, these have, as we know, been sometimes regarded as bad *per se*. The mediæval monk saw in them the direct temptation of evil spirits, but we recognize that this attitude is really treason to the Creator. Man has powers which may easily become the occasion of sin, but they cannot be in themselves 'common and unclean.' What can be known ought to be known, and if we have mysterious powers they can only come from God and we ought to develop and use them if possible. Of course they must be under control and used for proper ends, as must every gift of God; *abusus non tollit usum*. Hypnotism, trances, and thought-reading have their dangers as have chloroform or explosives, and they should, when necessary, be under medical control: mental vivisection must be regulated as much as animal vivisection, but it need not be prohibited,<sup>1</sup> and experience has amply proved that psychical research has no dangers for the well-balanced mind. It may sometimes upset one of a hysterical temperament precisely as violent exercise is bad for a weak heart, or night-nursing plays havoc with weak nerves. A thing which is not good for everybody is not therefore bad in itself.

The upshot of the matter is surely this. If there is room for abnormal phenomena in the laws of Nature (which are the laws of God) they must be accepted as making ultimately for the good of the race as much as any other event which may happen to be distasteful to us individually. A Christian may encourage psychical research, seriously conducted under proper safeguards, with a clear conscience and with no faithless forebodings of what it may reveal. If it ultimately explains its phenomena in accordance with the laws of Science as at present understood, we shall have gained some valuable insight into the psychology of hallucination, and Science can go about its work untroubled. If we do get glimpses of new laws and new faculties, to one who believes that nature and man are both alike of God's ordering, these laws can have no terrors and these faculties can only hold out the promise of a profounder knowledge of Him and of His truth.

<sup>1</sup> It will, of course, be remembered that no one should be the subject of experiment without his full consent.