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SCIENCE AND SURVIVAL SCOPE AND LIMITS OF THE SCIENTIFIC METHOD

By B. ABDY COLLINS, Author of *Death is NOT The End*
MR. G. N. TYRRELL suggested in *LIGHT* of July 27th, 1939, that the majority of people care very little for those things which do not lie in the material world. He supported this thesis partly by figures of church attendance and partly by the behaviour and general attitude even of the minority who do attend.

I think it is very true to say that the great majority of people are absorbed in the cares of every day life. It is difficult to see how it could be otherwise. The struggle for existence and material comforts is so keen that most of their energies must be taken up with it. But my own experience is that most people do care about a life after death. Certainly most people, except towards the end of their lives at any rate, seem very much afraid of death. Nowadays, when they commonly look on it as the end of all things, this is very understandable. If they appear to have lost interest in religion, it seems to be partly due to the assaults of the scientific world on its most cherished beliefs and partly to the loss of conviction or at any rate the lack of fire manifested by the clergy themselves. The result is an apparent apathy, but an apathy due rather to a feeling of hopelessness—an inability to penetrate the future and to understand the present.

If the mass of the people could be persuaded that survival is a proved fact, I feel certain that the keenest interest would be aroused, with an overwhelming effect on humanity at large. One result would be a return to religion of some kind; another a revolt from the selfish outlook on life that materialism tends to encourage. At present it is a common opinion among philosophers that we are living on the moral fat stored up by the religious outlook and training of our forefathers. As this becomes—as it is becoming—exhausted, public morality will begin to decay, unless renewed belief in another world arrives to save us. It is of the greatest importance, if possible, to extricate humanity from the Slough of Despond.

Mr. Tyrrell seems to think that we must wait until the scientific world is converted to a belief in survival, when this will gradually spread downwards into the less educated grades of society through the schools and

daily press. He deprecates "the popularisation of scientific inquiry," and so far as the mass of human-kind is concerned, seems to be content to wait indefinitely for this consummation, for which to do him justice he seems to wish as much as anyone. To this plan of life I am strongly opposed, partly because I feel doubtful whether science if left to itself will ever consider that the truth of survival is definitely established, partly because there is plenty of good evidence already available which ought to be brought to the notice of the man in the street, who is just as competent to judge its worth under proper guidance as the jury in a criminal trial.

SPIRITUALISM SPREADING RAPIDLY

Actually, the knowledge and practice of Spiritualism is spreading rapidly, through the publicity of the national and Spiritualist Press, through public demonstrations of clairvoyance and through the formation of private circles. Man is a gregarious animal and eagerly grasps at any opportunity to maintain contact with those torn away from him by death, as soon as he thinks there may really be something in it. It is useless to try to hold aloof, as if by looking the other way it were possible to stem the flowing tide of information. More and more people have personal and intimate experiences which carry conviction of their inmost hearts. The idea that the world will wait while a few and generally little known persons with scientific training play about, often in a dilettante manner, with various aspects of the whole case is futile. What is now wanted is leadership and guidance.

But, it is said, it is wrong to believe in survival until there is "scientific proof." What is scientific proof? I often see the term used in discussions of this kind, but I have never found any definition or explanation of it in any treatise or encyclopaedia. The fact is there is no such thing. The scientific *method* is to search for facts and to adopt the hypothesis which best explains them for the time being, or even at the outset to form no hypothesis at all.

In fact, science is a method rather than a form. It denotes exactness—meticulous care in both observation and experiment—and any particular science is characterised by a technique and body of laws which have been built up by such methods. From time to time new branches of study lay claim to the name of science and some eventually win their way to recognition as such. If they are to succeed in general estimation the knowledge must be worthwhile and the pursuit of it exact and serious.

Is there any chance that a new science choosing as its field the supernormal will win recognition? At present such phenomena as are suitable for scientific study fall within the scope of physics, psychology and physiology. My own view (which opposed as it is to that of others much more experienced than myself, I put forward with apologies for my presumption) is that the field is not sufficiently homogeneous to form

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the subject matter of a single science. One man will not have the special training to solve all the problems that present themselves.

Further, much of the evidence which seems to bear on the problem of survival is not suitable for investigation by the scientific method and requires the skill, the training and the common sense of the conjurer or lawyer to deal with it. The phenomena cover a wide field and that tendency towards specialisation which characterises the scientist makes him on the whole unfitted to investigate the whole of it. This is not an idea without any basis of fact. Anyone who thinks that all phenomena can easily be investigated by, say, a physicist or physiologist should read the pages devoted to the possibilities of mal-observation and the like, with especial reference to slate writing, in Volume vi., part x. of the *Proceedings* of the S.P.R. Here an amateur conjurer was able to deceive a number of experienced investigators. Not only are some phenomena better investigated by the detective and the conjurer, but the testing of, say, levitation is a very different matter from the observation of trance phenomena.

It seems to me, therefore, more likely that physics, psychology and physiology will rather each gradually extend its field to include the study of these apparently supernormal facts which fall within its special sphere and so slowly reduce to law and order those phenomena that appear to defy the hypotheses which now prevail. This tendency already manifests itself, as university professors throughout the world investigate telepathy under new and respectable names and invoke the aid of their assistants and students in their work. Hypnotism is now a recognised form of medical treatment, and the interest of the profession seems aroused by the treatment of cases of obsession on the spiritist hypothesis.

I shall return to this presently. Meanwhile, I would like by one example to emphasise the practical limitations of the scientific method. It is now about one hundred years since the discovery of electricity led to

its gradual use in the service of man. Electric light, the telegraph and the telephone—to name only a few inventions—were all developed to the great benefit of the human race long before the nature of electricity was understood. Suppose that we had been persuaded that it was unsafe to use it until we understood more clearly what it was. How slowly we should have progressed and what a number of material conveniences we should have missed. As it is, man learnt by experiment to control electricity to his great advantage long before he unravelled its mystery.

THE PRESENT POSITION

The present position in regard to psychic phenomena is really analogous to that of electricity during the last half of the nineteenth century. There is a mass of evidence of different kinds all pointing to the same conclusion—that man survives the grave and can communicate with those he has left behind. The attitude of official science towards these phenomena is partly a disinclination even to investigate them at all, and partly a sort of suspended judgment. It is considered legitimate to put forward every kind of hypothesis, however strained, to account for them on a naturalistic basis rather than to explain them by assuming a future existence. It is more or less admitted by those who have seriously studied the evidence that it is impossible to account for some of it at all satisfactorily on the latter basis. At the same time it is urged either that, if the phenomena are accepted as facts, they prove nothing, or else that other possible, though unlikely, hypotheses have not been sufficiently explored. Even where no other hypothesis can be put forward, it is said that evidence of this sort is insufficient.

In other words, because science ignores or is unable to explain these things to its satisfaction, we are asked as persons of caution and common sense not to arrange our lives on the basis of survival—the adoption of which as a certainty, with all the change in moral and philosophic outlook which it involves, would be of incalculable benefit to the human race. My own feeling is that if the scientific world had taken the matter seriously, had investigated fully these phenomena and had shown clearly with the authority of its greatest men either that the facts were uncertain or that the conclusions commonly drawn from them were unsound, there would be some reason for hesitation. But the position is quite otherwise.

Science is inclined to reject the evidence on *a priori* grounds, as it rejected the discoveries of Harvey and others in the past. Very few scientists of international reputation have investigated the matter at all fully. If one looks at the lists of former presidents and members of the S.P.R. and reads their contributions to the *Proceedings*, one is struck by the fact that very few of them answer to this description and fewer still have really studied the evidence. Such eminent men of science as have given serious study to the subject have avowed their belief in the reality of supernormal phenomena, and, except Prof. Charles Richet and possibly Prof. William McDougal, have been convinced of the truth of survival.

Prof. MacBride is an example of the danger of trusting too much to the opinions publicly expressed on this question by eminent scientists. A man of international reputation in his own subject, he gave a lecture at the British College of Psychical Research in 1934 entitled "Why I only half believe in Survival." At the end he good-humouredly submitted to some cross-examination by those present, and it speedily became evident that his acquaintance with psychic matters was limited. Other men of great reputation have revealed themselves in somewhat similar manner. Prof. McDougal's chapter on the "Results of Psychical Research" in *Body and Mind* does not show a great familiarity with the evidence, while the present Lord Rayleigh's address to the S.P.R. as President in 1937-38 can hardly be described as thorough. I feel, therefore, that it is unsafe to trust to great names, unless they give clear indication

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that they have really studied. I think it would be fair to say that he is the only scientist of whom it is shown that he has fully investigated the phenomena, borne very strong testimony of any man—as to the reality of the phenomena. Further, he admitted that he was the only one that would not satisfy himself, though he put forward any other conclusion. All this might seem somewhat of an overstatement, but my object in this investigation of the phenomena is rare, and will not carry weight—an opinion of himself a very well known Spiritualist.

IMPOSSIBLE

However, my argument is well as unnecessary for the scientists investigate the phenomena. As Sir Oliver Lodge said, there is no crucial experiment. It rests on a mass of evidence to the same conclusion. It is a reasonable common sense if it is put before him. It should suspend judgment until it has understood all the phenomena and mediumistic world had adopted this principle in all directions would have been. The pioneers of flying theory, while the scientific world regarded them as harmless lunatics. It was that flying was a practical matter became interested, and even

TELEPATHY AND

By AUBREY

THE late W. T. Stead once sat in his office in London in South Africa quite easily. Although it is true that at specially favourable conditions touch with absent friends, not to be able to put it to such practical use by the famous journalist.

Some years after Sir Oliver Lodge's theory of the etheric body, we possess this other body here and put the idea forward in the course of an address delivered he stated that telepathy became survival. In a correspondence with LIGHT for November 8th of that year, that as long as the two brains were nothing, and that it was only a carnate mind which could prove that it did not do so in itself, telepathy had not been proved.

I also suggested that we communicate at a distance by means of the manner as wireless waves travel, believe that the Mind can use to transmit or receive thought the finer instrument of the etheric.

Telepathy is a proved fact, abundant evidence as to its reality can be shown that the process is of the physical brain, it proves that which is not subject to material.

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that they have really studied the subject. On the whole I think it would be fair to say that Prof. Charles Richet is the only scientist of world wide reputation who has shown that he has fully investigated the matter and is not convinced of the truth of survival, and even he has borne very strong testimony—perhaps the strongest of any man—as to the reality of supernormal phenomena. Further, he admitted that the spiritist hypothesis was the only one that would explain certain facts at all satisfactorily, though he felt unable to adopt it or to put forward any other convincing to himself in its place.

All this might seem somewhat irrelevant to the purpose of this article, but my object has been to show that full investigation of the phenomena by men of outstanding reputation is rare, and without it their opinion should not carry weight—an opinion shared by Prof. Broad, himself a very well known man and not a convinced Spiritualist.

IMPOSSIBLE TO WAIT

However, my argument is that it is impossible as well as unnecessary for the world at large to wait until the scientists investigate the evidence fully, if they ever do. As Sir Oliver Lodge said in the nineteenth century, there is no crucial experiment which will prove survival. It rests on a mass of evidence of all kinds all pointing to the same conclusion. This evidence any man of reasonable common sense and intelligence can weigh, if it is put before him. It is absurd to argue that he should suspend judgment until science has investigated and understood all the processes involved in physical phenomena and mediumistic communications. If the world had adopted this principle in the past, progress in all directions would have been far slower than it has been. The pioneers of flying understood little of its theory, while the scientific world looked on them as harmless lunatics. It was only when they proved that flying was a practical proposition that science became interested, and eventually was able to explain

how it was they flew, and even to suggest how it might be done better. The same is true of the design of ships and yachts and many other things.

The truth of survival is really a matter of legal proof, the test of which is its "sufficiency to satisfy the mind and conscience of an ordinary man and so convince him that he would venture to act on that conviction in matters of important personal interest." The opinion of the man of science on that part of the case which falls within his special sphere is a matter of first-class importance, provided he has really studied the subject. He is an expert witness, but expert witnesses are commonly produced on both sides in legal proceedings and often look foolish under cross-examination by the opposing barrister. Many judicial trials have been held in the past, and substantial justice done before medical jurisprudence reached its present standard. As knowledge advances, so science becomes ever more helpful to those who have come to any decision in any sphere of life. But is the present generation and others to come to be debarred a belief in—nay, the certainty of—a life to come with all its ethical and intellectual advantages, because some men of science have not yet examined to their satisfaction every other conceivable hypothesis to explain this or that fact rather than the most obvious? To stigmatise those who follow the example of Sir Oliver Lodge, Alfred Russel Wallace and other eminent men as credulous is preposterous. There is ample evidence to justify their belief, and in my view it is a sacred duty to bring it to the notice of the multitudes who are ignorant of it.

What is wanted is more publicity, not less of it, and leaders with conviction, common sense, breadth of view and inspiration. So surely as more people are "converted" and the knowledge of the facts spreads more and more widely, will science modify its attitude, and I have no fear but that many of its leaders will confirm the opinions of the few outstanding men who have so far thoroughly investigated the evidence.

TELEPATHY AND SURVIVAL

By AUBREY TURLE

THE late W. T. Stead once assured me that he could sit in his office in London and converse with friends in South Africa quite easily by means of telepathy. Although it is true that at rare moments, or under specially favourable conditions, we do seem to get into touch with absent friends, not many of us would claim to be able to put it to such practical uses as those stated by the famous journalist.

Some years after Sir Oliver Lodge first propounded his theory of the etheric body, I suggested to him that we possess this other body here and now. He agreed, and put the idea forward in several later lectures. In the course of an address delivered at Bristol in 1930, he stated that telepathy between the living proved survival. In a correspondence which was published in *LIGHT* for November 8th of the same year, I submitted that as long as the two brains were in existence it proved nothing, and that it was only a message from a discarnate mind which could prove survival. He admitted that it did not do so in itself, but pointed out that telepathy had not been proved to be a physical process.

I also suggested that we communicated with each other at a distance by means of the etheric brain in the same manner as wireless waves travel on the air. I do not believe that the Mind can use the physical brain either to transmit or receive thought at a distance. It needs the finer instrument of the etheric brain for this purpose.

Telepathy is a proved fact. The S.P.R. possess abundant evidence as to its reality. If, therefore, it can be shown that the process is carried on independently of the physical brain, it proves that we possess something which is not subject to material laws.

We travel long distances during sleep. In what body are these journeys made? It cannot be the physical

body, which is lying motionless upon the bed. People have visited places in their dreams quite unknown to them, and witnessed scenes which have afterwards been verified. It therefore seems clear that we have another body which has the power during sleep of detaching itself and journeying with the mind in its mysterious wanderings.

If it can be further shown that this other body persists after the physical one has ceased to exist, the whole case for survival would appear to be proved. All that can be said when we "die" is that the physical body has died. There is nothing to show what has happened to the finer body or the Mind.

The physical brain is as much "matter" as any other part of the body and could not act apart from it. But it is animated by the Mind which is not matter, and is the Real Person. It dwells in the etheric brain, and even during life under certain conditions can leave the physical body and act independently of it.

The Mind can project its thought into space so as to influence that of another, but when it wishes to acquire knowledge in new surroundings, or to make itself apparent, it must be accompanied by the etheric body. It must have a body in which to function. As Professor Richet remarked: "I cannot conceive of a bodiless Mind."

The fact that we possess this other body during life and can function with it independently of the physical one, seems good evidence that it will persist after the grosser garment has been cast aside.

With regard to telepathy with those who have gone before, as we already possess the etheric body and brain, it should make communication no more difficult than it was upon earth. There are many however who would claim to be impressed by the thought of departed friends whose continued existence and loving companionship is a real and ever-present factor in their lives.

Light

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EDITOR - - GEORGE H. LETHEM

AS WE SEE IT

REV. PAT. McCORMICK'S FINAL MESSAGE

BY the transition of the Rev. Pat. McCormick, London has lost one of the few popular preachers who can "draw" audiences larger than their Churches can accommodate, and the listening public has lost a Voice which had become familiar and welcome and helpful to millions of people in Great Britain and Overseas. He was not only an attractive preacher; he was one of those Churchmen who have freed themselves to a considerable extent from the handicap of a literal acceptance of the words of the ancient Church creeds, and who have, consciously or unconsciously, accepted the teaching about Life and the Hereafter given to the world some fifty years ago by "Imperator" through the hand of the Rev. William Stainton Moses, M.A. (himself an Anglican clergyman), and later—after serial publication in *LIGHT*—embodied in the books known as *Spirit Teachings* and *More Spirit Teachings*.

It may be that Mr. McCormick never read these books, perhaps never heard of them; yet it remains true that, in his broadcast addresses, he followed the lines of Biblical interpretation laid down by "Imperator" regarding the nature and opportunities of the Life after Death and the importance of the present phase of life as a school for the development of character.

A POSTHUMOUS DECLARATION

That this is no over-statement is proved by an article on "The Future Life," by Mr. McCormick, published in the *Sunday Dispatch* after his death—that is, after the death of his physical body; for He, the Man, the Preacher, is not dead; like Sir Oliver Lodge, he has "gone upstairs" to a larger and better room in the Father's House and to much fuller opportunities of service.

In that article, he asked and answered various questions with which Spiritualists are familiar. He had nothing to say about the "resurrection of the body" at a far-off "last day." Like other Anglicans, he had of necessity recited the words of the Creed proclaiming that belief; but evidently he had not felt bound by them. Answering the quotation, "What shall we do in the future Life?" he wrote:

"I hope we have got over making material what has been given us in picture, symbol or poetry, such as playing on golden harps, or singing in the celestial choir, or sitting by streams in the Elysian fields for ever and ever; for these pictures are enough to make the future life appear a thoroughly boring existence. Here a parable may help us; our Lord certainly seems to suggest in the Talents that the reward for service here will be further service in the life beyond. Rest as portrayed in the future life, it seems to me, can only be taken in the sense of that line in one of our hymns, 'In perfect work shall be perfect rest.'"

LIFE IN THE BEYOND

Again, he ignored the ancient and still orthodox teaching that Death of the physical body would be followed by a fixed condition—Heaven for the "saved" and Hell for the "lost."

"There must," he wrote, "be growth in our characters in the life beyond. Although our aim here

is perfection, no one is perfect when death's call comes, and I cannot see that the process of death is going to make any difference to our personalities; we shall pass over just as we are. But as we are not perfect when we pass over, and perfection is God's purpose for us, it is clear that there must be growth; and as we are given a more perfect perception of what God's love and purpose is, we shall grow into the stature of the fulness of Christ."

As Spiritualists know, it was—and is—one of the fundamental points in "Imperator's" teaching that Life is continuous and that Death makes no immediate change in the personalities of those who pass from our phase of life to another. That teaching was accepted and proclaimed by the ex-Bishop of London in the memorable saying that "five minutes after death a man is the same as five minutes before death," save that he had left his physical body. That saying has been often quoted; and, although it has never been formally accepted by the Church Assembly or Convocation, it has been accepted by men like Mr. McCormick, as the above quotation proves.

THE SPIRITUAL BODY

Again, answering the question, "What shall we be like—shall we just be disembodied souls?" Mr. McCormick wrote:

"It seems to me the answer is given by St. Paul when he says, 'There is a natural body and there is a spiritual body.' The natural body we knew, the spiritual we cannot describe. After the Resurrection Our Lord Himself appeared with a spiritual body, which makes one believe the body has a form similar to our present body by which recognition is possible."

This is a somewhat halting declaration, but it is on the right lines. With fuller knowledge, Mr. McCormick might have proclaimed the fact that the "spiritual body" (or Soul-body) is the Real Person, here as well as in the realm Beyond death, thus providing not only for Survival of the personality, but for Continuity of Life and experience.

EFFECTIVENESS LESSENERED

That Mr. McCormick handicapped himself and lessened the effectiveness of his great and useful ministry by refusing to accept the help offered by Spiritualism is made obvious by the answer he gives to the most vital question of all: "What evidence have we for Survival?" To this, his answer, unfortunately, can only be described as evasive.

"The answer," he wrote, "surely is that if you believe in Christianity at all, you *must* believe in a future life."

That is, "you must believe without evidence," and that is what multitudes of people find themselves unable to do. How much more effective he would have been had he been able to say he knew that evidence of Survival existed, that he had studied it, and that he could assure his readers Sir Oliver Lodge did not exaggerate when he declared that the evidence for Survival "is conclusive."

"SOME PEOPLE"

If it be true, as the late Bishop Welldon wrote, that "all Christians are Spiritualists," it may be asserted that Pat. McCormick was a Spiritualist in a fuller sense than most of his fellow-Anglicans—even though (as in the article already quoted) he advised "ordinary folk" to leave Spiritualism alone and pointed to the fact—a regrettable fact as *LIGHT* has often admitted—that "some people who treat it (Spiritualism) as a religion definitely attack the great truths of Christianity itself."

But for this regrettable attitude on the part of "some people," there would be much more likelihood of men like Pat. McCormick being attracted to Spiritualism and so enabled to make their Christian message fuller and better.

GLEANINGS FROM SOURCES OLD AND NEW

CUMULATIVE EVIDENCE

It has often been pointed out that it is not so much the single piece of evidence by itself that brings proof, but the fact that from such widely different sources, times, people and places, one testimony corroborates another: it is the cumulative evidence that carries weight.

When going over old volumes of Psychic journals, one cannot help being struck by the close similarity of what was written, said on platforms, received through mediumship, in those early days with what we hear and receive to-day. The language may be that of the last century, the phraseology perhaps more stilted, but the actual truths expressed are the same.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Many examples may be found in old files of *Borderland*, edited by W. T. Stead. Such, for instance, are the answers given in automatic writing through the hand of Mrs. Underwood to questions put by her and her husband concerning life in the Beyond. They correspond with information given to-day. Here are a small selection:

Q.: In your sphere is there anything analogous to class distinction?

A.: Distinctions are made on this sphere as on yours, but on a different basis. Voice of the people does not count with us as with you; general qualities are more the standard than appearances.

Q.: Do all spirits progress on leaving this plane?

A.: There are some who may never reach a higher plane; who change and change for ages without real progress.

SURVIVAL AND IMMORTALITY

Q.: Are all born on earth sure of continued existence?

A.: Abortions are more unfrequent spiritually than physically. Such must die out—cease to exist. Punitive methods help to sift such abortions from reproduction. We do not quite understand, but we hope much.

Q.: Is not every spirit on your plane assured of continued existence?

A.: Continued existence does not necessarily mean immortality to all mankind. When the change you call death occurs there is but a step taken toward the change which annihilates as well as strengthens.

Q.: Why do the discarnate wish to communicate with this earth?

A.: The salvation of troubled souls gives us power to benefit and that is our wealth.

LANGUAGE AND CLOTHES

Q.: What language is spoken on the Other Side?

A.: Spirit Language means only *Thought*, a word coined by man to express something inexpressible to those in your static knowledge. All languages are but symbolic parts of spirit speech, and virtually we have but one language, which includes all which you have differentiated. Your languages are dialects only.

Q.: Have you any need of what we call clothes?

A.: Choose ye what apparel shall be yours. Thou shouldst understand that in the spirit-world clothing typifies the state of those who choose their raiment. Our friend who gave the world *Sartor Resartus* spoke better than he knew in saying clothes signify humanity.

PROPERTY AND RELATIONSHIP

Q.: What about personal Property?

A.: There is on soul planes no cognition of selfish ownership of anything spiritual. Spirits are of right owners of all Good; but temporal earthly goods are accounted buzzards' prey. Spiritual possessions are always marked by boundless desire to make those possessions the common property of all.

Q.: Do family names and affinities persist?

A.: Names with you are but the signs of tribal relationship. Here blood-relationship does not count: bonds of sympathetic being are stronger than relationship. Blood relations are often hurtful, but soul relations will ever assert themselves and give joy when recognised. Bonds of spirit are much stronger than man's paltry blood relationship.

SPIRITS AND WORLD-MISERIES

Q.: How can spirits be happy in view of the miseries of this world?

A.: There is a law of psychical essence which makes necessary these entanglements which to you seem so severe. Such hardships must be endured by questioning souls on the highway of progress. From our vantage-ground of larger knowledge we know we cannot remedy them, because humanity is but an embryo of true existence. When undeveloped souls pay the price of development, we stand aloof and let the play go on. Interference would do no good.

Q.: How can we best stimulate the higher life?

A.: Conquer selfishness; love all; outgrow envy; grow ashamed of the lower nature within you, and fight it day by day, so shall you assimilate more and more to spiritual life. Love is the root, power and substance of all things, spiritual, temporal and carnal.

When your knowledge has saved you from the love of hatred, then learn to love the least lovable. Hatred even of the detestable lowers the striving Divinity within man.

CONSCIOUS LIFE IN TWO WORLDS

Writing, many years ago, to the then Editor of the *Herald of the Star*, a Constant Reader vouched for the reliability of the writer of a document he enclosed, in which a friend of his gave a detailed account of her many years of clairaudient experience. She wrote as follows:

"In the year 1915 I first noticed during a severe illness sounds of music which I could not account for. I noticed that a relative who some-time previously had passed away came and talked to me. I came to the conclusion that I might be leaving this world myself, instead of which I recovered, being assisted by my spiritual friends in a remarkable way. After this others came. They are all very good and kind people, ever ready to help us, which has proved to me the existence of guardian angels. I had had no particular wish to recover, but they gave me fresh hope and encouragement to go on. This shows me that these spirit-people are about everybody, whether they know it or not.

"I have heard many hymns and sacred music; beautiful voices singing, sometimes a number of people, or a single voice. Then there are interesting conversations I can hear; the subjects may be religious or general information. I am conscious that I live two lives, one here and one among spiritual company. Music is continually with me, attracting my attention at any quiet time. It has been a most happy experience. I have made the acquaintance of people I never knew here. M.A.B.

NOVEMBER 11th, 1940

Because you died so long ago
On England's scars the poppies glow
To-day.

They bring a message once again
Inspiring hope in all our pain
To-day.

You taught us how to die . . . or live
Make sacrifices, suffer, give
To-day.

Because of you the poppies red
Bloom for the free—and honoured dead
To-day.

MARJORIE COLLINGDON.

IS THERE A DIVINE PLAN?

By W. H. EVANS

IN thinking of a plan, our attention is usually directed to our world, but we must have a wider outlook.

Belief in God carries with it definite implications. It means that Life is directive, that at its root is Mind. The fact that life manifests in form indicates that personality is a principle of Being. The union of energy and form is essential, each is dependent upon the other. Without form energy cannot express itself; without energy form is non-existent, it is a chaos.

These thoughts are basic. Herbert Spencer said something to the effect that it is as impossible for us to express infinite personality in human terms as it is to express human personality in terms of a plant's functions. Let us bear that in mind and be humble.

It is natural for man to strive for greater understanding. Our world is one of millions of others, some of which are so distant that the spaces between them can only be computed in millions of light years. Yet this vast infinitude of worlds is held by an all-embracing law. The universe is a unity, and is immortal. It is impossible to conceive of it as beginning or ending. As soon as we try to imagine either we find there is a gap, and the mind refuses to accept a vacuum. Being is immortality; it means an ever-expressive creation of form.

The quality of Being is "To Be." That may seem trite, but "To Be" is to Act; and, for Being to act is to create, and to create is for it to emerge from the no-thing to the some-thing. There is the eternal wedding of spirit and substance, or energy and form.

We can only know the nature of Being by its expression in the universe. The all-embracing law, gravitation, is a perpetual adjustment of forces seeking equilibrium. It holds all, and its higher expression in life is revealed in justice, which seeks the adjustment of moral forces to give balance and power in the moral and spiritual world.

WHAT A PLAN IMPLIES

The conception of a Plan implies One who plans, which in turn implies that at one time there was no plan. But that view is inadequate. Being can only act according to its nature. *Its action is its plan.* "God geometrises," said an astronomer. In this sense there never was a time when plan did not exist. We have to conceive of plan as the eternal outworking of the infinite possibilities of Being. In this sense there is no moving of pieces as on a chess board, or the allotting of parts as in a play, but an orderly expression of The Within. Hence whatever is, is the natural outworking of inherent forces. In such working, adjustments are sought that equilibriums (justice) may be achieved. This is fundamental, and its infringement in the realm of life brings pain and suffering.

When we turn from these apparent abstractions to our world, we are on more familiar ground, but find it just as difficult to understand. But what is true of the greater is also true of the lesser. And in the human realm we are aware of two opposing forces, the centripetal and the centrifugal, ever seeking balance. Outside of human consciousness there is no problem of evil. It is we who create the problem by our limited view of life. Men have postulated a God outside creation, who is all good, and who is opposed by a Devil. But Being comprises All, directs all, for we are in Being, and the action of Being as plan is as much a part of this world as of the rest of the universe.

Therefore our contrasts are human contrasts, the contrasting of one thing, element, or quality with other things, elements or qualities. Thus the good of to-day becomes in process of growth the lesser good of tomorrow.

Now, if infringement of the fundamental law brings pain, that implies that obedience to it will bring joy.

The ultimate of plan is the attainment of this joy, for this means fulness of life. St. Paul expresses it thus: "And to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God." *Eph., 3-19.*

If the ultimate of the plan means fulness of Being, of joy, peace, happiness, we must act according to it. The plan, or the movement of Being, has moral and spiritual foundations, and makes moral and spiritual demands upon us. We have to live in accordance with the principles expressed in the plan. Those principles are expressed in the Scriptures of the world, are indeed expressed in Nature.

THE PLAN AND ITS PRINCIPLES

As the plan and its principles are an expression of life, it and they apply to life. We have to discover them, and it is in this seeking that suffering and pain is experienced. For though the plan and its principles are inherent in us as part of Being, yet here we find that "corporeality dims spiritual vision." It is in the plan that we should love right by a consciousness of it, but that consciousness is won by struggle. The line of life ultimates in two modes of expression: instinct and intelligence and intuition. Instinct is limiting and binding; intelligence and intuition mean freedom.

The divine plan is a dynamic living out of the principles of Being. It is alive! It is not a marshalling of forces from without but the co-ordination of forces from within. Thus everything is used, and even our mistakes ultimately are corrected and made to minister to the well-being of the whole. If we have the vision to see this, life becomes what it should be: an adventure in living, a perpetual challenge to strive for the highest and best.

We thus see that the moral law, "Do unto others as ye would have others do to you," is the living principle of the plan. It is the gravitational co-ordination of life seeking that balance which is spiritual power. Whenever man acts from this principle he has fulness of life, and can co-operate with the formative forces of the universe. He then knows the meaning of St. Paul's words, "For in Him we live, move, and have our being." Knowing this means having a consciousness of God. It may not be very vivid, but a glimpse of it is enough to hearten us. For by striving we shall grow into the image of the plan, shall see that the Divine plan is in essence a divine humanity expressing in fulness the love and wisdom of God upon all planes.

Will that plan ever be complete? Can an eternal fountain ever cease to play? Can an eternal dynamic ever cease to act? Being must ever act and infinite plan ever express itself.

L.S.A. "AT HOMES"

Members and friends of the London Spiritualist Alliance, and all enquirers into Spiritualism, will be cordially welcomed at an "At Home" at 16 Queensberry Place every Wednesday, at 11.30 a.m.

This arrangement is the result of the experience of a few members who met casually in the Library one day quite recently and found how cheering it was to exchange greetings with one another, and to feel free to express their beliefs and thoughts on Spiritualism, which are not always acceptable in other circles.

The anxiety of the war and the divided family life which it often entails creates a special loneliness which we all should do our best to relieve, for our own sakes and that of others.

This "At Home" is one small opportunity and it is hoped that many may be able to come. Coffee will be served, and there will be music.

WHAT OUR READERS ARE SAYING

PSYCHIC "KNOCKS"

IN his article in *LIGHT* (September 12th) Major Howgrave-Graham refers to a type of "rap" or "knock" which sounded "very like" the snap of an electric light switch in an adjoining room. Commenting on this sound on the basis of similar personal experiences, in which my wife, our maid and small boy (all non-expectant and unimaginative persons) shared, the following remarks may be of interest to your readers.

I think in Major Howgrave-Graham's case the scientific sceptic would be justified in claiming a strong probability that the sound *was* merely that of his neighbour's light switch; and it seems to me that he is merely weakening his general case by quoting this extremely dubious piece of evidence—with all respect for his lady Medium, who in that instance may very well have been merely tapping memories and ideas in his own mind. On the other hand, the bare *possibility* that what he heard was a genuine "rap" is shown by the fact that I and the three other persons mentioned above all heard on several different occasions, sometimes individually and at others in unison, just the same sounds in our own house. Now the point here is that, at the time at which these "raps" were heard and unanimously agreed to sound *precisely* like a certain light switch (on wood panelling) on our staircase, our house was very definitely haunted;* but that since the other phenomena which paralleled these noises have ceased, so too have the electric-switch-like "raps." Yet nothing has been moved or altered in a constructional sense.

In our case, the sound was heard and carefully located many times by four independent people: it was, therefore, perfectly objective and seemingly quite normal. Yet there seemed to be no normal explanation, as we quite satisfied ourselves that the actual switch

(nor any others in the vicinity) mechanism had not moved on or off at the times of the sounds, nor else stuck in a half-way position and then snapped off later. Neither did the light go on or off at corresponding times. Yet one could not imagine a more perfect imitation of the sound of that particular switch. Nevertheless, unless it had also happened that at the same period the ghost likewise dropped the latch of a certain casement window and, by way of variation, violently kicked the kitchen coal-bucket on a tiled floor several times when there was no wind, no chance of either animals or humans having been implicated, but excellent conditions for checking up on abnormality existent: unless these and other far more convincing events had also happened at the same period, I would have been inclined to dismiss the switch incident alone as possibly having possessed a normal mechanical explanation, even though the latter was not evident.

The curious point in this instance is that, although the window latch was the same original latch that the ghost had operated while she was still in the flesh, and which was definitely associated with the drama which we found to have originated the primary haunting; yet the light switch and the coal bucket were novel importations of our own. So that, supposing we were not deceived in our supernatural interpretation of these incidents (as I hope to prove in a complete report of the case one day), there was something as seemingly objective and physical about the latter sounds as they were, likewise, completely unexpected.

J. CECIL MABY.

*This detailed and convincing case will shortly be written up and submitted to the English S.P.R., fully documented and witnessed.

A HUMAN CENTRE

Sir,—When I read Mrs. Stobart's fine article in the issue for October 10th, I was reminded of a statement by the late Mr. Mozoomdar in his book, *The Faith and Progress of the Brahma Somaj*. That eclectic community venerates the founders of great Religions—Buddha, Mahomet, and Christ.

In his record, Mr. Mozoomdar said that in his opinion the great advantage possessed by the Christian Religion consisted in the fact that it possesses, in the Person of Jesus, a great Human centre round which the influence emanating from the personal centre has been operative, in spite of the differences and divisions within the Christian community, and has acted as an integrating principle amid all variations. The Christian Religion differs from other great Religions because it is grounded on the Ideal manifested in a Person and on the Survival value of that Ideal of which He has given assurance to Mankind by His manifestations after death.

The binding influence of Jesus Christ cannot be ascribed only to the homage which a noble example evokes; it is not homage to a dead hero, but allegiance to a living Leader which has swayed the minds and wills of countless multitudes and inspired them to self-devoted sacrifice through torture and death.

H. A. DALLAS.

SPIRITUALISM AND RELIGION

Sir,—Mrs. St. Clair Stobart, in her illuminating article (October 10th) on the "Mysteries" as forerunners of the Christian religion, surely strikes the right note when she writes that, in these days, "Christianity, as distinct from Churchianity, could be a very present help in trouble." That is the difficulty! How can we, through the National Church, obtain the one without the other?

"Imperator," who said that he derived his mission from the Lord Jesus, spoke through Stainton Moses of Spiritualism as a "message in its essence religious in

its effects and all its bearings . . . This your world," he said, "in its social and religious aspects, has come to its last gasp and needs some new power to give it vitality. We regard what you call Spiritualism as the only possible antidote to this festering mass of corruption, the only means of purifying your world" (*More Spirit Teachings*, page 34).

Mrs. Stobart asks if that would be moving the clock of religious progress backward or forward. Let "Imperator" answer.

CORDELIA GRYLLS.

TO OUR READERS

In common with many other businesses and organisations we are now working under difficulties.

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