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# LIGHT

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*CONTENTS*

| | | PAGE |
|---|---|---|
| Editorial | | 146 |
| Communication with the Transpersonal Mind | Kathleen Raine | 150 |
| Daniel Dunglas Home | Brian Inglis | 153 |
| Forward from 100 Years | Paul Beard | 157 |
| The Candle and the Sun | Mary Swainson (with thanks to Jessica) | 159 |
| Some Tributes to LIGHT on its Centenary from: Dr. Raynor C. Johnson, Dr. Robert Crookall, Dr. Arthur Guirdham, Geoffrey Watkins | | 166 |
| On Life after Death | Hugo Meynell | 169 |
| Robert Browning: New Light on his Life and Work | Rosamond Lehmann | 174 |
| The Alchemical Work | Anne Baring | 180 |
| Faith | Nemerah (through Elizabeth Farrell) | 183 |
| Book Review | Dr. Carmen Blacker | 189 |
| Moment of Truth | Beryl Handcock | 192 |

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*LIGHT exists for the reasoned and courteous examination of all aspects of spiritual and psychic exploration and experience. The College does not necessarily endorse any opinion on any subject appearing in LIGHT. Those expressed in signed articles are the authors' own.*

# Editorial

The first number of LIGHT, a weekly, appeared on Saturday, January 8, 1881, and cost 2d. This was increased eighteen months later to 3d. and subsequently, by modest increases, to its present price of 75 new pence for a 48-page quarterly, which still seems remarkable value. An early issue defined its aims: "LIGHT proclaims a belief in the existence and life of the spirit apart from, and independent of, the material organism, and in the reality and value of intelligent intercourse between spirits embodied and spirits discarnate. . . . Its columns are open to a full and free discussion—conducted in the spirit of honest, courteous and reverent enquiry."

This aim underlay the dedicated efforts and perseverance of all those who have brought it through its first one hundred years to what I see as a new starting point. In her review of Sir Alister Hardy's *The Spiritual Nature of Man* (and this work is surely a landmark in Western thinking) Dr. Carmen Blacker makes the point that modern man, having turned his back on religious and other symbols, has lost his way of relating to those flashes of awareness of transcendent reality which continue to visit him; not knowing how to relate to "these priceless gifts . . . the recipients failed to follow them up, so that only a memory remained." Or worse, they were left feeling isolated and bewildered. This pinpoints the need to spread understanding of that living truth which, in every age, has been mediated through the icons and symbols of the time. The founders and those associated with the early days of LIGHT—Edmund Dawson Rogers, Stainton Moses, J. S. Farmer and others—were men of vision who sought to explore the frontiers of human consciousness. The real tribute to their work is to build on it in ways appropriate to contemporary thinking. Our present outlook is in itself a tribute to the pioneers; and not only the pioneers of early days. One thinks of all those (one or two of whose names appear in this issue) who have done so much in the intervening years to make these ideas more widely understood. Were one to acknowledge all their contributions individually a separate volume would be required.

So in this celebratory Centenary Number, we recall the past with gratitude, but the emphasis is on taking forward the same work—that of expanding man's horizons and bridging gaps across levels of consciousness.

* * * *

The College is an open-ended organisation, propounding no

dogma nor particular set of teaching. Nevertheless it has its own standpoint. Broadly, it accepts that the non-material values lying at the heart of the world's great religions and found in the Ancient Wisdom tradition in all its streams, embody a greater reality than that of the material world alone; a process of becoming, in which the real work of the material world is transmutation of consciousness, whether in Christian terms or in those of other established religious traditions (the Kabbalah, the Tibetan Book of the Dead) or outside any orthodox framework. Students of Jung (one would suggest that his work has barely begun to be understood) may feel that he has given pointers which are specifically directed to the consciousness of contemporary Western man.

Stemming from this standpoint, the College attempts to bear witness to spiritual values and to help those individuals who wish to do so, to find these values for themselves in their own way.

The prospect then becomes one in which life continues, as a process of growth and expansion of consciousness, through the gates of physical death and on through other analagous transformations, reaching, in due course, to regions far beyond the bounds of our present understanding: perhaps those referred to as "eternal life" in the terminology of the Bible. Arising from this spectrum of continuing life is the possibility, given certain conditions, of communication between different levels of consciousness or forms of being. For us who are living a three-dimensional life in physical bodies, this in practice means communication with non-corporeal entities who are, by definition, not perceptible to our five physical senses; or at least, not to our physical senses alone. (There are cases which suggest that non-corporeal impressions can be *mediated* to register through physical sense organs.)

This extremely difficult and complex field of communication between different levels of consciousness is a vital part of the specialised work of the College, which seeks not so much to proclaim "proof" (which work is undertaken by other organisations) as to relay spiritual teaching or wisdom that may help people to live their present earth lives more effectively by developing an inner perspective or reference point. Whenever possible, it seeks to provide evidence, which it is for the individuals concerned to assess as convincing or otherwise, of the continuance of life after bodily death, and which often enables the bereaved to take up life again with a sense of meaning restored.

Now this is a difficult and some have said a dangerous area

of work. Certainly it is one in which a strong sense of personal responsibility and discipline, as well as sincere and appropriate motive, are essential safeguards. Certain specific streams of teaching, as well as certain individuals, have tabooed this area of attempted communication, or have said that any supposed results are illusion. Other teachings and equally authoritative individuals, including within the Christian church, take the opposite view and accept the value of properly motivated and conducted attempts at communcation. But I know from my work at the College that a very great deal of confusion and inhibiting doubt surrounds this subject in many people's minds. It is this that prompts me to offer some purely personal thoughts. I stress, this is a personal way, which I have found helpful, of looking at this difficult subject.

A recurring bogey is "the astral level". Any claimed communications are "only from the astral level". Now what does this really mean; what *is* the astral level? I am not here concerned with technicalities or its place in systems of man's subtle bodies, but only with how we can relate this idea to our own individual ideas and experience in a meaningful way—in other words, how do we turn this concept into a tool that we can *use*? We are often told to use discrimination, but not often told how to acquire it. How *can* we find our way about the astral world—or any other—unless we have some sort of compass that we understand? To me, the clue is the age-old Hermetic maxim: "As above, so below"; and a safe and practical course is to find one's way by correspondence: come back to base and start from where you are.

Where we all are is in a physical body—call it the instinctual level—with an emotional apparatus and a mental apparatus. In the perspective of continuing life, the mental world (in all spiritual traditions) extends "upwards" (or "inwards") from our lowest perceptions of it into rarefied regions beyond our ken. The astral world—which I am now going to call the emotional world (some traditions refer to it as the world of desire)—starts much lower down, below the solar plexus, if you like to think of it like that, where it overlaps with our instinctual nature; like the mental world, it extends "upwards" (or "inwards") to rarefied levels of purified emotion, but stopping short of the highest mental world. We thus have a picture of three kinds of life, three modes of perception from our point of view, overlapping but tending to separate out to a certain degree: our instinctual bodily awareness; part of this overlapping with our emotional nature giving rise, at the denser end, to bodily desires (*desires,* as distinct from uncontaminated instincts); the emotional nature operating pro-

perly through the heart centre to find outward expression in love; and our thinking faculty; the latter, when linked positively with emotional energy giving rise to creative expression. All this is the normal experience of three-dimensional living and we know very well how we can be uplifted or cast down, inspired or drained of our energy, even attacked or almost hypnotised by mass suggestion. Many people are beginning to realise that emotional pollution and mental pollution are as real as physical pollution.

With our inner faculties of perception we can reach "upwards" (or indeed "downwards") in the emotional and mental emotional fields as far as our ability permits. As in the physical world caution is needed. It is unwise to wander aimlessly and alone in regions of violent emotion and negative thought. As in this world, one does not make sorties into insalubrious places except for very good reason and with adequate protection. But—again as in the the physical world—there are areas of good intention where one may walk and explore purposefully, and perhaps learn something of value. What is our guide? As in physical life, it is motive. Sensation seeking and aimless exposure to negative energies are clearly dangerous, in physical or inner regions. The lower reaches of the astral world are a sea of elemental life (in theosophical terms) which it is our human task to make conscious. Our skin forms a physical boundary, and our emotional and mental bodies likewise have their boundaries, less defined and capable of expansion. Growth is by a sort of osmosis and proceeds by affinity: like attracts like, whether in an "upward" direction of finer vibrations, or "downwards" into denser vibrations. It is the *direction* which is our choice, placed as we are in three overlapping areas of elemental life. We can drift in the mindless level of mass emotion or mass opinion (as William Law put it, most men live "having the soul at the mercy of the outside world"); or we can start to become aware of ourselves as individual units of consciousness, responsible for our spiritual fate, and move intentionally in the direction we choose. This is the transmutation of consciousness. This conscious choice —essentially one of motive—is our guide and protection equally in the corporeal or the non-corporeal levels of the astral world. Life-enhancing, as well as negative and illusory states, are to be found in both.

B. M.

*Asked for ways in which we can learn and practise extension of consciousness, Gildas said:*

"As you observe in mentioning meaningful coincidences, this

is largely something which 'comes' through widening one's perceptions, and constantly making links and correspondences, thus cultivating in the first instance the sense that all happenings are co-existent and inter-related."

*Balance and Beyond, LIGHT, Autumn 1980.*

# Communication with the Transpersonal Mind

**KATHLEEN RAINE**

Since Yeats's *A Vision* books of "communications" have been published in ever-increasing numbers, and this output seems likely to continue as recognition of the trans-personal mind (under whatever name) as a reservoir of collective wisdom and the source of a certain kind of knowledge not available to the empirical ego becomes ever more widespread. A generation ago communications from supposedly discarnate spirits through mediums were the most common form of this kind of literature; readers either believed or denied that these accounts of the afterworld were authentic. Yet the subject is much more complex than to be met by a simple yes or no, and most communications are a mixture of many elements: from the unconscious mind of medium or sitter, symbolic elements and elements which genuinely are from spirits of the discarnate or of other levels, higher or lower than these. Swedenborg, and after him many serious students of these matters (including Yeats) have laid the foundation of a "doctrine of souls" which suggests that the discarnate construct the appearances of their surroundings from memories and imagination, these being flexible and changeable with their thoughts and corresponding to their states of being. No one has ever suggested that the spirits are infallible, being still human, nor do they claim omniscience.

Communications from "teachers" are of a rather different kind. "Gildas", "Chan", "Nemerah", and a host of others do not claim omniscience either, but do transmit teachings which seem to originate at a higher level. Who these teachers are, whether real human individuals who have formerly lived, or names for some channel, is doubtful, and the teachers themselves give ambiguous answers, suggesting that identity in their worlds is not so simple a matter as it seems in our own. Their names may be arbitrary, as "Flaxman" is the name of a telephone exchange and has nothing to do with the sculptor. "St. Anthony" who finds lost objects and "St. Christopher" may be of the same

order. It seems that there are many orders of being, group-souls and celestial hierarchies in the inner worlds. Many of the teachings transmitted are wise and valuable in their own right, and this after all is the only test.

The Church itself accepts as authentic visions even of the highest figures in its spiritual hierarchy. Appearances of the Blessed Virgin at Lourdes and elsewhere have been accepted as authentic; but only after it has been established that the teachings are consistent with Catholic doctrine. None knows better than the Church how many neurotc nuns, harmless crackpots and perfectly sincere people whose unconscious mind is more than usually accessible claim too much for their "visions". Professional psychologists could say the name.

We should be neither too credulous nor too incredulous. Perhaps no such symbolic insight is without value, at least to its recipient; but in these days when the transpersonal mind has become a field of serious study we have even less excuse for being naïve and taking as literal or as absolute truth anything and everything that originates there. Discrimination is all the more necessary for those who accept the general truth that there are higher (and lower) worlds invisible to us .

Another class of "communications" comprises claims to have known (or been) famous persons in "former lives". Leaving aside the countless inflated or symbolic self-identifications with some archetypal projection there remains the possibility that we do return to this earth and that memories of former lives do sometimes occur. There is a fairly large body of visionaries, including some revered Catholic mystics, who claim either to have seen in vision the events of the Nativity or of the Crucifixion or some other episode in the life of Jesus, or to have been a member of Jesus' circle. Again not all these are necessarily untrue, and presumably all have at least a symbolic value for the recipient of the "vision". Overwhelmed as those must be who experience such a vison we cannot criticise them for not being anxious to analyse such an experience. But that is no excuse for us to be equally literal in our understanding.

Thus Tudor Pole's *A Man Seen Afar* gives what purports to be a first-hand description of the Last Supper; Joan Grant has also given us some personal far memories of biblical events. Now Brian Cleeve* tells us that Jesus was "really" not at all like the impression on the Holy Shroud, but of insignificant appearance, with a crooked nose, sticking-out teeth and one shoulder hunched out of shape by over-work as a carpenter. In other words they can't all be true in a literal factual sense;

although each may represent some particular imaginative point of view or profound experience whose truth is of another kind.

Brian Cleeve, a Catholic born in Essex but now living in Ireland, seems to be a genuine but naïve recipient of communications of this kind. Whereas Yeats wisely speaks of his "instructors" (and has much to say on their inconsistencies) Brian Cleeve plunges right in and uncritically says that "God" speaks to him. But if we cannot accept his claims as uncritically as the author we should not therefore dismiss them, for they are a mixture not only of trivialities and nonsense (for example the questions and answers about flying saucers) but of beautiful and profound insights and very good sense. Nor need we doubt the value of his attentive attitude to the inner voice: his advice is "Ask, and listen" and "When you pray, listen". Certainly there are more people who pray than who stop to listen for the answer, especially if that answer is No. We should also listen to the collective wisdom of the Church: "In questioning authority you must listen to the answers. Modern man not only insists on asking the questions, he also insists on providing his own answers. And the Church has surrendered to this. I wish the Church and its people to return to a time when anyone might question but when he received the answer he accepted it. It is this refusal to accept the Church's answers in matters of essential doctrine that is destructive, not the length of a nun's skirts or the shape of a priest's collar. But these small relaxations of discipline began an avalanche that may carry away the entire building."

As a Catholic Mr. Cleeve asks searching questions about marriage and divorce, sex, hell, purgatory, the devil and so on; and in many cases his answers are very far from "permissive". They are counsels of perfection and often profound.

The author seems to have a very limited knowledge of the more serious works, either in psychical research or in depth psychology, on the inner worlds. Yet for all its naïvety his book contains much good sense, a luminous vision of the holy, a reverence for the mystery of God and an unfailing sense of the divine love and wisdom. It seems often as if the seriousness and depth of the question determines the seriousness or otherwise of the answer. The self-indulgences in idle curiosity produce silly replies; "God" no doubt finds his prophets very difficult to deal with. But read with discrimination this book offers many insights, many glimpses of wisdom. A psychologist of Jung's stature would have found in it a fascinating and rich document of unconscious contents.

* *The House on the Rock* Brian Cleeve. (Watkins, £2.70.)

# Daniel Dunglas Home

**BRIAN INGLIS**

I had little idea, when I began to take an interest in parapsychology, that any important evidence had been provided by Spiritualist mediums. Like many other people who find their way to the Society for Psychical Research through an interest in extra-sensory perception—telepathy and precognition, in particular—my "boggle threshold" (as Renée Haynes calls it) was low. I was prepared to accept that mind can communicate with mind, or discover what is taking place at a distance in space or in time. But this, I assumed, was very different from believing in such rubbish as that people can levitate, or be in two places at once, or become incombustible. These, surely, were achieved by fraud on the part of the performers, or gullibility on the part of those who believed in them.

Gradually, over the years, this scepticism was eroded. The evidence from poltergeist cases, in particular, was too consistent and too convincing in its details to be lightly dismissed. But the prejudice against the Spiritualist mediums of the last century persisted, until it was finally dissipated by a study of the career of Daniel Dunglas Home.

His autobiographies, and his second wife's biographies, are convincing enough on their own. Such works are not ordinarily to be relied upon, but these were packed with first-hand testimony. And what testimonials they contained! They were not from the ordinary run of seance-goers—their names, let alone their characters, long since forgotten. Many of them were, and are, famous. Royalty—the Tzar Alexander II, Napoleon III, Queen Sophie of the Netherlands and their courtiers. Literary luminaries—Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Robert Chambers, Lord Lytton, John Ruskin, Nassau Senior, William Makepeace Thackeray, Thomas Augustus Trollope. Still more remarkable, scientists—William Crookes, Francis Galton, William Huggins, the Master of Lindsay, and Alfred Russel Wallace, all Fellows of the Royal Society.

Knowing little about Home, I had assumed that like most other mediums his seances had been conducted in the dark. Not so: he preferred the twilight, in rooms with the curtains drawn back, and a fire blazing. Only for his levitations (and not for all of them) did he like darkness; and he was to express regret, at the end of his career, that he should have given way to this indulgence. By working in darkness mediums had only damaged

their cause, he feared, no matter how remarkable the manifestations.

Picture the scene: up to nine (he disliked a larger number) sitting round a dining room table, often of the heavy mahogany variety. The sequence varied, and often the manifestations; but the general pattern was the same, beginning with rappings on the table or the walls of the room. Then, the table would begin to vibrate; a leg would rear up; it would move along the floor; sometimes leave the floor altogether. Disembodied hands would appear; musical instruments would play (simple, but sweet, melodies, most listeners agreed). Sometimes Home himself rose into the air, and floated around. Sometimes he went to the fire, took out red-hot coals, and handed them to anybody who was prepared to take them; nobody sustained hurt who shared his confidence. Or he would stoop down and bathe his face in the flames.

All this in light good enough to see clearly what was happening. And Home held seances week after week, year after year. Thousands of people witnessed the phenomena; yet not once in his career, spanning a quarter of a century, was he ever accused of deception in the course of a sitting. A handful of disgruntled sceptics made retrospective guesses as to how they *might* have been cheated; but none even pretended to have caught him at it (Robert Browning's son claimed his father did; but Browning's letters at the time rebut this allegation).

Home used no cabinet, no curtains, no devices of any kind. He could enter the trance state anywhere: in a royal drawing room, or in the open air—even, on one occasion in Rome, in a police station. He had no assistants, unless his wives could be put in that category; and for much of his career he was in any case single. And there were no preparations. Attempts to account for what he did by conjuring tricks break down because they would have required apparatus of the kind he could not have concealed.

As an example of a typical series of "evenings with Mr. Home and the spirits" a pamphlet with that title, published in the 1850s, will serve. It was written by that remarkable character John James Garth Wilkinson, one of those men whose integrity appears always to impel them into swimming against fashion's currents, and taking up causes fated to be lost, but who nevertheless retain the respect even of their adversaries. As a young man, because he thought Blake's *Songs of Innocence* were unduly neglected, he had brought them out at his own expense. Although a qualified doctor, he campaigned on behalf of the despised homeopaths.

And he was an impassioned champion of Swedenborg, whose biography he wrote, and whose writings he translated. Although he was the close friend of Dickens, and greatly admired by Carlyle, his reputation was highest in the United States; it was odd, Emerson thought, that somebody of such "prodigious genius" should have so small a following in his own country.

Swedenborgians in New York gave Home an introduction to Wilkinson when he came back to Britain (he had been born in Scotland in 1833, but returned for health reasons in his early twenties). Home, Wilkinson found, was "a modest, intelligent youth of about twenty"; and after some conversation they settled down round a large table, their hands resting upon it.

*In a few minutes the table vibrated, or shuddered, as though actuated from within; it then became still, and instantly every one of us shook in his chair, not violently, but intimately, and like a jelly, so that objects "dothered" before us. This effect ceased; and now the heavy table, with all our hands upon it, raised itself high up on its side, and rocked up and down; the raising proceeding from all different quarters, Mr. Home and all the rest of us (exceptng our hands and arms, which were necessarily moved) sitting death-still. The lamp on the table seemed as if it must tumble off—but he assured us there was no danger of that—that it was held safely in its place.*

The fact that objects on a table remained on it while it went through its paces was to be a commonplace of Home's séances. So was the passing round of a hand-bell. Wilkinson could feel the fingers of the hand, up to the palm.

*It was a soft, warm, fleshy, substantial hand, such as I should be glad to feel at the extremity of my best friend. But I had no sooner grasped it momentarily, than it melted away, leaving my hand void, with the bell only in it.*

At a second séance, held in Wilkinson's own house so that he could be certain that Home had not rigged things up beforehand, the table did not just rear up and move around the room: it *suddenly rose from its place bodily some eight inches into the air, and floated waverng in the atmosphere, maintaining its position above the ground for half-a-minute, or while we slowly counted twenty-nine. Its oscillations during this time were very beautiful, reminding us all of a flat disc of deal on an agitated surface of water. It then descended as rapidly as it*

*rose, and so nicely was the descent managed, that it met the floor with no noise, and as though it would scarcely have broken an egg in its contact.*

It required two strong men, Wilkinson knew, to lift that table. The suggestion, put about by sceptics, that Home lifted the table with a foot was not merely absurd, he pointed out, but impossible, because while the table was floating, Home was walking about, both his feet on the ground.

The experiments which Crookes, Huggins, Wallace and Serjeant Cox carried out with Home are familiar to students of the psychical phenomena of the period; but some of the tests he did in other countries are less familiar. Reports of them have been collected from a variety of sources by George Zorab. They include one from Dr. Karopovitch of the University of St. Petersburg, describing one of the few occasions when Home levitated in full light.

*He took, as he was lifted, a horizontal position, with his arms crossed on his breast; and in this reclining attitude was transported by invisible means into the middle of the apartment. After four or five minutes, he was carried back in the same fashion to his old place at the table.*

My personal interest being in the paranormal phenomena, and in establishing their reality, I have to admit that I have not devoted much time to a study of Home's teachings. That he saw himself *as* a teacher is clear; and from most accounts of those who heard his sermons while he was entranced, they were good. Elizabeth Barrett-Browning disagreed; but she was in a minority. The change that came over Home when in a trance, Lord Dunraven noted, was very striking.

*He becomes, as it were, a being of a higher type. There is a union of sweetness, tenderness and earnestness in his voice and manner whch is very attractive. At first sight much might appear to be skiful acting; but after having so frequently witnessed these trance states I am convinced of their truthfulness. Sometimes his utterances are most impressive; the language beautiful, conveying his thoughts in the most appropriate words.*

As far as it is possible to judge, too, Home lived up to the standards he preached. Of those who knew him well, only Thomas

Trollope mistrusted him; and they only knew each other at a difficult period in Home's life. Dunraven's son Lord Adare, whose record of Home séances is one of the most impressive of all such accounts, agreed that he could be difficult; he was vain, and subject to fits of depression, "but he was withal of a simple, kindly, humorous, lovable disposition". His domestic life appears to have been impeccable and loving, with both his wives; later insinuations about his morality can be dismissed because nobody as celebrated as he was—and it has to be remembered that he was internationally one of the most celebrated figures of his time —could have got away with a double life for long.

Significantly the sceptics, grubbing around for evidence to convict Home, have been unable to produce anything better than second-hand allegations and smears. Podmore was reduced to suggesting that tables were lifted "by means of fine hairs or fine threads attached to Home's dress"—the measure of his desperation. In *Mr. Sludge the Medium* Horace Wyndham could do no better. In his recent revised version of ESP, Professor Hansel had the opportunty to make amends for the omission of any reference to Home in the earlier book; he has not done so, doubtless because Home's career offers so little scope for damaging criticism.

Looked at from a historian's viewpoint, Home's career is in fact the most valuable evidence we have for the reality of the phenomena associated with Spiritualism. Scientists are more likely to be impressed with the career of Eusapia Palladino; she underwent more carefully controlled tests, by even more distinguished scientists. But nobody else but Home can muster so impressive an array of distinguished, sensible, and often sceptical witnesses, describing what they have seen within hours of witnessing the manifestations. His life and work deserve to be better known.

# Foreward from 100 Years

**PAUL BEARD**

To look through the many volumes of LIGHT produced over the last one hundred years prompts two thoughts in especial. The first is an appreciation of how much effort so many minds have contributed to the gradual elucidation of the complex subject which is LIGHT'S main concern, and secondly how lively and fresh are some of the experiences recorded in recent numbers.

But have we yet reached anywhere near to the core of the subject? It would be a rash man or woman who believes so. It is highly important to recognise that something much more is involved than the examining, distinguishing, and then re-examining of the same kinds of material; more than a matter of one scientific technique being added to another and to the applying of new tools of measurement, valuable though these can be. What is necessary is the addition of modes of perception other than those which the researcher is called upon to bring.

To gain reality the subject has to be *experienced* as well as analysed. It must be looked at from the inside, as well as from the outside. In the last resort, the important question has to be faced: are some of the teachings wiser than the sensitives can produce from their own resources, and indeed wiser than I, the recipient? Are they sufficiently wise for me to wish to act out in my daily life the philosophy and ethic claimed to have been reached as a result of experience beyond the now thin veil; shall I thus test them in the most decisive way? Whether new or old, is the material helpful to us on earth; does it work?

Then, and only then, an essential thread in all the best of the material becomes clear. These communicators (if we choose to regard them so) are concerned in a long term plan to enlarge the consciousness of their listeners, to help them become more worth-while as human beings, more valuable both to others and to themselves. This involves the concept that we humans have much more residing in us than we have so far succeeded in unlocking for use on earth. Religious teachers have always said this; but so do sellers of modern nostrums. How distinguish between the two? Nostrums, whatever the language clothing them, invite to what always turns out to be an ego-trip. What is offered is implied to be obtainable and added to oneself at small cost (except perhaps for the money demanded by the nostrum producer). Discarnate teachers say just the opposite: that what is worth while has to be paid for in terms of all the qualities in ourselves we least wish to shed. An ego-trip always sounds so much more desirable than this. The discarnate teacher says we must shed, not in order to gain, but to *be;* to be more than we have hitherto found access to in ourselves.

An important corollary follows. What any person can learn or perceive, whether on earth or elsewhere, is of course necessarily limited by his or her present range of consciousness. One cannot see further than the eyes of mind and heart can reach. These teachers say they have so much more they are longing to teach us, but that it is impossible to give more than we can absorb;

both they and we are limited by our own slowness in spiritual growth. Therefore the future now awaiting us as expressed in terms of the Ageless Wisdom—for this is what they are concerned with—depends upon how good and faithful pupils we make of ourselves through our own spiritual growth. Far from their teaching being platitudinous or trivial or everywhere familiar, it is not yet familiar enough in the one place which really matters —in the seat of action in ourselves. They are calling to us to be their allies, to bring forward with them the next steps of consciousness in the changes waiting in the years ahead. This is their challenge to us at this moment.

# The Candle and the Sun

**MARY SWAINSON (with thanks to Jessica)**

*"The times are fast approaching when we cannot allow any time to be wasted. Each event brings you closer to your fulfilment which we shall all share, for it will mark the beginning of your great work for the whole. You will no longer feel life to drag, for the days will not be long enough, and you shall no longer care about the burden of physical life for you shall not be of the earth but truly of the spirit."*

*Nabraham.*

At this Centenary landmark, as well as harvesting the riches of the past, it is vital to look forward to immediate and future needs. As a psychotherapist researching into further dimensions of awareness, I am particularly concerned with the relationship between ego and greater Self—the candle and the sun. By the ego I understand the little "I" consciousness, the personality of the present incarnation. The greater being of which the 'I' is but a partial reflection is known in different idioms as "the deep centre", "the I AM", "that of God within us"; but for a group of Jungian psychologists I defined it in this way:

"The Self, which exists beyond time and space as we know them, includes the distilled essence of many personality aspects of myself and of others, gathered from lives lived in three-dimensional space/time. The limited here-and-now "I" lives *in reference to this Self,* and the more I can listen to it and integrate with it, using its stored wisdom, the more fully can I function in this world."

**Education for relationship between ego and Self**

In view of the approaching changes, the mushrooming of groups and schools teaching consciousness expansion is welcome; but, as ever, discrimination is advisable to assess which are sincere and well-founded, which inadequately grounded or even exploiting a need. The "ego-trip"—or "ego-trap"—creeps in in subtle ways, until, like watching Aesop's frog, one sometimes wonders *what* is expanding, perhaps by too rapid a forcing which the psyche is as yet not sufficiently balanced to sustain. In my experience, the process of individuation—of becoming a whole person—although certainly it can be aided, takes time if it is to be sound and healthy. Some newcomers expect to be "changed" in a few months, but this great work takes many years, indeed often a lifetime, which itself may be the final harvesting of the experience of many lives.

It may help to look at a few criteria of assessment in examining the expansion process. These are seen as the ability to resolve pairs of opposites, one pole usually manifesting consciously while the other may well be unconscious and hence more dangerous. Each must find his own unique "middle way", and often the truth of wholeness is an apparent paradox which alone can synthesise these opposites on a higher level of awareness.

(1) **Ego inflation/deflation.** In inflation, the greater is swallowed by the less so as to provide the (usually inadequate) "I" with a false sense of significance, even of glamour. The compensatory extreme of deflation, falsely imitating humility, can be opting out from being a responsible ego at all—a refusal to commit oneself to the limitations of work within the restriction of one's personality. But a mature and strong ego can accept his specific earthly service, knowing that he is not alone, not alien, but is lived by a supra-personal being who is one with all things.

(2) **Anxiety/complacency.** In our Western culture the ego has taken on far too great a burden which should be borne by the wiser Self. As we grow and practise contact, we find, through increasingly meaningful "coincidences" and otherwise inexplicable happenings, that we are contained in a pattern—a supportive matrix—in which we can relax and hand over, thus reducing strain. The danger is that we may abrogate effort altogether, but such a swing is usually redressed when the flow of the pattern brings us to an area

where the ego is challenged to show courage, initiative, even sacrifice.

(3) **Dependence/independence.** These should not normally be compulsive extremes but rather should blend in a growth process. When we are young in spiritual experience a formal school training can be helpful; as we develop we find our own inner directive. The best guru or counsellor cannot know, as can the inner guide, what is the specific path and timing suitable for each individual student, and reputable schools will help the student to make critical but increasingly reliable contact with his own source. But there is a seductive inertia which leads some of us to avoid the individual way and to remain a dependent child; if an irresponsible guru "cashes in" on this weakness—beware!

(4) **The financial issue.** Here again there can be extremes. Teachers must live, and the law of taking and giving suggests that the student benefits by making at least a donation. But if charges are excessive—again, beware!

Other criteria will spring to mind. It may also help if the seeker asks himself the simple question: "What am I doing this *for*? This power, knowledge, insight, that I am developing, how shall I use it?" If to serve God and humanity, then all is well, but it can be employed on the left hand path (which may even masquerade as service to God and humanity. I have found myself that too much "do-goodery" for the wrong reasons may be worse than open "do badery"!).

Another useful question is: "What difficulties am I experiencing in surrender? Why cannot I trust life—trust the pattern—and let go?" Psychological help may be needed here, for the weak or unformed ego, still vulnerable, may defend himself by moat and drawbridge, or even by anticipatory attack. The underlying fear is usually that he will be shamed or rejected, invaded or possessed. Or do we perhaps, like Tinker Bell, feel that we exist only in the opinions, values and beliefs of other people? And that if we hand over to the Self we may cease to be there at all? Like the revolving, differently-coloured glass of a lighthouse, some feel that ships (people) recognise them only by the correct colours they show, forgetting the stability of the central white light within. But this again is a matter of growth—of progressive detachment from the many-coloured personality as we learn to love and value ourselves to the degree that we love and value others—no more and no less. How do we see our own ego in the total picture?

**Attitudes to the ego**

Readers of Gildas's teachings, striving to live more and more from the inexhaustible resources of health and energy of the deep centre, once asked him about the place of the ego in the New Age. Should the ego be encouraged to develop, especially in youth when degree of ego strength is held to be one of the main criteria of mental health? Or can one, in the New Age, function without it, living entirely from the "Monad" as one reader suggested, by-passing the separate ego altogether? Should the ego be seen as "the enemy" to be fought and crushed throughout life, as another reader believed? Or should it be developed and then formed into a strong but flexible channel for the higher Self to use—working together in harmony? Gildas gave his point of view:

"The ego will continue to be necessary as long as the karmic law is in operation, and the New Age—which we presently expect—does not bring the ending of karma. It brings a new understanding, the entrance into a new breadth of vision, the acceptance of different values, a shift of consciousness, and a new ease of communication. The need to incarnate on to the physical plane, however, will continue ,and the karmic law will continue. The ego—the personality—is the vehicle through which the karmic law operates; without this the lessons of life and experience would not be learned.

"As experience and learning grow, so the ego loses its importance to the individual and he passes into a new region of consciousness—a new phase of incarnation; but the ego is a very important part of the totality and should not be despised for its limitations, but rather wondered at for that which in its fullest strength it can accomplish.

"The ideal and most comfortable situation whilst experiencing earth incarnation is for the individual to reach that stage where the ego, strongly rooted in the light, can open up sufficiently to let through frequent glimpses of and contact with the greater, higher Self. Complete loss or superseding of the ego comes to few, and it is not altogether a comfortable achievement whilst still on earth. The New Age to come will bring about a new ease of achieving the ideal relationship between the ego and the infinite, but the ego will continue to be very necessary to the complete, integrated, earth-incarnate individual."*

**The process of transcendence**

Most readers of LIGHT will have had their own experiences

* Ruth White and Mary Swainson: *The Healing Spectrum*, Spearman, 1979, pp. 183-4.

of "frequent glimpses and contacts"; most will have read the mystics, recognising the two "dark nights"—of the senses and of the soul. But here, to illustrate the *feeling* of a process which is happening to so many at present, is the simple story of Jessica, a woman in her late thirties: it is sketched only too briefly, but will appear in greater detail in our next book on the redemptive therapy of far memory.

Jessica's course of psychotherapy took nearly four years. In the later stages it was supplemented by a spontaneous "inner journey" on a higher level of conciousness. Her naturally strong and resilient ego (even compulsively independent at times) became more relaxed and confident as it grew more deeply rooted in transpersonal dimensions of her psyche; this transition, however, was the culmination of the work of many lives of learning and suffering, six of which were re-lived during the period. Further, the work could not have been done without the close co-operation throughout, first of Ruth and Gildas, later of her own inner teacher and guide Nabraham, aided on rare but crucial occasions by her "Great Teacher".

Although usually considerable preliminary work must be done on "the shadow", in Jessica's case her inner sources did not advise it. "Look no more," said Nabraham, "it is as the flickering of a candle, so entirely minute it reflects nothing. Let the light shine through you. If you constantly inspect and dissect that which is not of the light, it will become more difficult to let the light come forth. This does not mean that when you recognise you are using a negative emotion you should not try to transmute it. What it means is, as the flickering of the candle can be seen in the dark, then your darkness is more evident. If the candle burns in consciousness of the light, then the flickering is immediately negated."

Soon after this message, Jessica had a frightening inner experience of herself, as a candle, burning right down and guttering out. Her teacher told her that this was "the final submersion". At the same time, on her inner journey, she saw him standing, illumined by the sun shining through him from behind, pointing the way ahead.

For nearly two years after this, the work followed "the way of the snake", swinging between a sense of being lost with no purpose in living on the one hand, and a few peak experiences on the other, yet periods of calm centredness occurred with increasing frequency. Thus, after great sorrow and renunciation, she said, "I began to realise that none of it mattered at all. It was a strange feeling; it dawned on me gradually that there was

absolutely nothing I wanted any more from the world. I felt free of it all, a sort of floating. . . ." This was largely the result of a "push" from the pain of outer life, but there followed the "pull" of a profound fulfilment in the higher world, after which she wrote, "It has left me with such a feeling of peace and satisfaction. I still don't understand what it is all about, yet somewhere inside me I *do* know. The unearthly quiet in and around me is new, yet I recognise it as being only forgotten."

A few months later she was alarmed that all ego-drive appeared to have left her; if it were not for her children's needs, outer life seemed just a nothingness. At this point her Great Teacher came in: "This training is very important; the future work relies on bringing inner life and outer experience together, for this subtle relationship is the way of learning the great laws and for knowing God's will. More and more people are becoming aware of their inner life but do not realise that it is part of the outer. You by your work will be able to assist them in balancing and recognising that the two are integral parts of the whole of life."

And then Nabraham: "You are learning to live from your source. Do not be concerned about this feeling of why you are here, for now you belong to the world."

This was a turning point. Jessica said, "I still feel very insignificant but I don't feel alien any more. I feel I belong, as though my feet are on the ground."

Tests now came thick and fast on every level. Those on the physical and material side were frequent and sometimes desperate, although most of the bodily tensions had been resolved in re-living a far memory of torture in which Jessica had learned to function out of the body at will. Now came tests of emotional stability. There was a phase of glorious non-attachment when she "went through the motions" of her work, observing the behaviour of others with curiosity and amusement, whereas not long before she would have been "torn to shreds". At this point she admitted the danger of becoming complacent. Later she was to feel the sufferings of others still deeply but with more objective compassion and acceptance than so much compulsive identification. This razor's edge of detachment/involvement is a difficult one to negotiate.

There were tests, too, on the mental level. Intellectually alert, with a passionate desire for truth, Jessica was always questioning her teacher and myself, especially concerning God's will, human will, and freedom of choice—wanting exact answers which obviously could not be given. For if we try to concep-

tualise before the relevant experience, we may diminish our grasp of reality by too limited formulations. Nabraham had told her that she would be more fully aware of truth "when you get beyond the questioning mind". Eventually there came a time when she found, to her surprise, that she had nothing to ask him. "He just stood grinning at me. He was impressing on me that *this* is what he meant by 'when the soul becomes free'. The difference is that when you are free you can choose, but when you are not free you are compelled. With the freedom, because there is no compelling force, you will choose because it is the will of God, for you now truly understand that you cannot live for yourself. What is done for yourself is done for the world." She saw that "the ego *belongs* to the world, so you can only receive to the degree that you give out. The taking and giving have got to be balanced."

Towards the end came a test on the soul level, resembling the agony of a crucifixion. Jessica experienced profound grief and fear for no apparent reason. Nabraham explained: "The loneliness of your soul is the hardest thing to accept, for each in our time has to face the moment when he is dreadfully alone and there is no comfort to be found. It is a passing moment, and although it is hard—the deepest and most painful of them all—it will proceed above into a new, joyful world where pain no longer clutches at your heart."

A cause of sadness at this time was the transitory nature of incarnate life. "Even happiness does not last," Jessica observed, "there is nothing permanent to hold on to." She still had to learn, in reference to that deep source of permanent love which she knew in the higher worlds, to swing with the rhythms of passing-time, sharing in what each joy and sorrow had to offer. Again, her guide gave the underlying explanation: "As you feel that life no longer holds any purpose for you, your fear grows less. If you could see as we see, you would know that as the outer will—the personality will—grows dimmer, so the spiritual will grows greater in power and glory. This is the light which we see, the flame which we tend. Truly we say to you (for we have passed through it ourselves) it *is* a dying, and what you are going through at this time is the outer manifestation of your inner candle experience. It is painful, it appears never-ending, and life seems to hang by a thread. My child, the time will soon be when the spiritual will shall shine forth in all its power on the physical plane, and you shall know the purpose and the plan."

Now she still had to deal with the opposites of taking too much ego-responsibility for the spiritual work on the one hand,

or escaping from it on the other. She had such a dread of inflation that she tended to overdo the compensatory deflation, pushing herself down. Finally this tangle was resolved through service in anonymity. She then said, "I feel a great freedom from ego-responsibility, yet at the same time I have never felt more responsible, more dedicated. I feel a wonderful sense of direction and of knowing where I am going, and why. It's a strange feeling. That's all you do, really; you clear everything out that is personal in order that the great universal thing can be. I see inwardly a great door that has just opened wide, and a soundless voice is calling 'Enter'. How I wish I could maintain this glow, this awareness of all the invisible help, love and protection. I feel so humbled about my petty resentments and anxieties of the last years, when all the time 'they' were with me, just waiting for me to hand over so that they could open the great door."

There was yet one more step—beyond the images.

"This place I have not been to before. I can't describe it as I have done with the far memories and the inner journey. There are no pictures, no symbols. It is simply a clearing. I'm waiting for images to form. They don't. Yet in this spot I am able to be clear and empty." From this time on, knowing deeply that all was well, she began to experience inner training for the work to be done through her.

# Some Tributes to Light on its Centenary

## From: Dr. Raynor C. Johnson, Dr. Robert Crookall, Dr. Arthur Guirdham, Geoffrey Watkins

On the occasion of the completion of one hundred years of publication, tributes have been received of which we publish the following.

**From DR. RAYNOR C. JOHNSON:**

On this—the celebration of the centenary of LIGHT—all its readers and friends will wish to send you warm congratulations. In particular, I should like to tender you my most sincere appreciation for the quality and excellent standard which you

have presented quarterly for our guidance, enjoyment and inspiration. May you live long to continue this splendid work—for which I thank you.

I have been reflecting upon the changing outlook on matters psychical and spiritual which this century has brought us. Frederick W. H. Myers died in 1900. My own present life began in 1901. In the recent Summer number of LIGHT we have again been reminded of the work to which Myers devoted so much time by clarifying and analysing with his clear mind. Yet it is of his poetry I think more often, expressing as it does so constantly, the deep yearning of a soul to be sure in this life of survival and to know that Eternal Love underlies *all* existence. Mind and heart have to converge when we approach truth.

In the Summer number of LIGHT which is before me as I write, there is an article "A View from Here" (by C. D'A.). Here is a view of truth as the open *heart* perceives it. Let us give thanks that in our day truth is shining so clearly. If some who have read "A View from Here" remind me that the author's friend was not open to receive this truth, may I quote to them the words of Pascal: "Human things have to be known to be loved; Divine things have to be loved to be known".

**From DR. ROBERT CROOKALL:**

I have pleasure in joining all who are interested in psychic matters in congratulating you, and indeed all who have been and are currently concerned in *LIGHT'S* phenomenal record. The subject is now accepted by all who are competent to judge—that is the essential record, one that can never be reversed, so skilfully has the work been done over the years. I am proud to be associated with Paul Beard, Rosamond Lehmann, and of course those whom they have led.

**From DR. ARTHUR GUIRDHAM:**

When Brenda Marshall wrote to me to say that *LIGHT* had completed a century of uninterrupted publication you could have knocked me down with a feather. She went on to say that this was no mean record. I think this is an excessively modest description. To me it is astonishing and exhilarating that a magazine dedicated to the revelation of the bare bones of truth should have kept afloat during a century of steadily increasing materialism. One is aware of the fact that there was a limited but distinguished nucleus of people who, in the middle and late Victorian era, were aware of the existence of higher levels of

consciousness, but for a journal devoted to such subjects to have been published continuously from January 1881 onwards is something I would have considered impossible had my attention not been drawn to it. I wonder how many journals in the world of a like nature have such a record.

Growing from such long established roots it is all the more important that the tree receives sustenance to carry it over at least another century. It is a great blessing that the magazine's devoted and highly competent editor can call on so many cultured, well qualified, and distinguished contributors. The atmosphere of the times is more open than in 1881 to what *LIGHT* has to say. Certainly materailism has reached a peak but the number of those in revolt against it has also increased and *LIGHT*, addressing itself to those who want bread and not a stone, must set off resolutely for its double century.

**From GEOFFREY WATKINS:**

I am grateful for the opportunity to write a few words of congratulation for a periodical which has completed one hundred years of publication. To do this I feel that I should be able to sign myself "Regular Reader", but I cannot, I have been only an occasional reader. Nevertheless my association with LIGHT goes back a good many years to about the year 1905 when, as a child, I was brought from time to time to visit my father's bookshop in Cecil Court. This was but a few minutes away from the office of the London Spiritualist Alliance at 110, St. Martin's Lane where LIGHT was published. My father would take me to lunch on these occasions at the St. George's Restaurant next door to the Coliseum. It was there that the Editor of LIGHT had a table reserved each day, a table for four. The Editor, Mr. Withall, a generous supporter of L.S.A., and my father would meet on Mondays; a fourth place was kept for a guest. I was too young to take any notice of conversation but I was too excited to worry about such a minor detail. I can just recall two people who later on I learned were mediums: Percy Street from Reading and A. Vout Peters.

There followed several years when my school and the first World War claimed all my attention until the end of 1919 when I joined the staff at the bookshop. It was then that I found what a close and friendly relationship had grown up with the office of LIGHT. Each week the bookshop gave space for the sales of the periodical and that was when I really grew to know the "regular readers". They formed a quite distinct section of our

customers. They were very much in earnest about their study of Spiritualism and its phenomena; they were very friendly and were always ready to share their experiences. At some time after the war, David Gow became the editor of LIGHT. He was a very remarkable man with a wide experience of Fleet Street, amusing, kindly, a friend of a number of well-known people in the esoteric field such as A. E. Waite. My father who published a number of books on psychical research published also a small book by David called *Spiritualism, Its Aims and Ideals*, now out of print for many years.

Some time after the war Miss Mercy Phillimore joined the staff of the L.S.A. She was just the sort of person needed at that time and she worked wonders. Among other things she organised the move from the modest offices in St. Martin's Lane to the house in Queensberry Place, which was carried out as smoothly as could be. While perhaps the very close relationship between Watkins bookshops and the L.S.A. no longer existed, we did remain closely in touch, each serving the other in some manner. What a warm relationship! Miss Phillimore and my mother became and remained close friends. I maintained my relationship until after Miss Phillimore retired, in fact I went to visit her with my wife a few weeks before her death. I imagine that that really concluded a warm and happy relationship which had lasted for almost seventy years.

The College of Psychic Studies did me the honour of inviting me to give a lecture shortly before my retirement, an occasion which I enjoyed. Normally I dislike lecturing, but the warmth and friendliness of the audience gave me tremendous pleasure.

And there is my account, not perhaps of a "regular reader" but as a friend and well-wisher of LIGHT. Times change and one must be prepared to accept change. I am sure LIGHT will do so. May I ask that my good wishes be accepted. *Fiat Lux!*

# On Life after Death

**HUGO MEYNELL**

*Hugo Meynell is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Philosophy and Theology in the University of Leeds.*

"Nothing really matters except the answer to the burning question, 'Am I going to live, or shall I vanish like a bubble?" What is the aim and issue of all this strife and suffering?"(1)

Malinowski's attitude on this matter does not seem to be shared by many professional theologians nowadays; though the reasons for this do not seem obvious. Is it because they regard the matter as one of indifference? Or do they feel that if one is a believer, one will assume the expectation of some kind of post-mortem existence as part of the package deal? Or has this component of traditional belief been unobtrusively dropped? While the matter is hardly of as much concern to the average believer as the South Galatian theory, it does seem worth trying to get a clear mind about it[2].

Of course investigation of this matter, more than almost any other area of human inquiry, is vitiated by credulousness on the one side, and what one might call sceptical dogmatism on the other; and each is equally removed from a genuinely critical spirit. As Aristotle remarked, a virtue is characteristically a mean between two opposed vices; and the virtuous man is liable to be accused by those guilty of each vice of being guilty of the opposite one[3]. Perhaps if anyone finds himself equally embattled with both groups of extremists, he may properly hope that he has hit on a method of approaching somewhere near the truth on these matters.

The work of Elizabeth Kübler Ross and Ralph Moody in the United States, and of J. C. Hampe in Germany, has stimulated a certain amount of public curiosity about these matters[4]. What seems needed now is a systematic survey of and commentary upon the kind of evidence that has been collected by such writers. In fact, such a work has been available for nearly two decades now, in Dr. Robert Crookall's book *The Supreme Adventure*[5]. This book is not at all well known; but it seems to me of an importance quite out of proportion to its present reputation. I would like in what follows to try to show why, and in general to direct attention to Dr. Crookall's work.

A huge range of evidence may plausibly be held to be stacked against the possibility of life after death; on the other hand, there is a certain amount of evidence at least which appears to tell rather strongly for it. As Professor C. D. Broad wrote: "Most people manage to turn a blind eye to one or other of the two relevant sets of data, but it is part of the business of a professional philosopher to try to envisage steadily both of them together. The result is naturally a state of hesitation and scepticism (in the correct, as opposed to the popular sense of that word). . . ."[6] The scientific attitude properly so called, in my view, is that which takes into account all the evidence available on any topic; which considers as many ways as possible in which that evidence

might be explained; and which prefers provisionally among these what is most in conformity with the evidence, and least in conflict with it. The sciences of physics, chemistry and biology, as we have them now, are as they are because the scientific attitude in this sense has been applied to investigation of the relevant phenomena by generations of specialists. Laymen respect these sciences because they represent the fruits up to now of such comprehensively critical investigation. In clear contrast to this is the attitude taken up by many people, in the name of scientific reasonableness, to paranormal phenomena such as those which have a bearing on the question of life after death. This consists, roughly, of generalising to the whole of reality the view of things, as consisting of "matter in motion" and nothing else, which proved effective in mechanics from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century; and of either refusing out of hand to investigate any phenomenon which seems at all incompatible with this view; or of demanding criteria of verification so stringent that they could hardly conceivably be met.

It must be acknowledged, of course, that it is not only natural, but thoroughly rational as well, to demand particularly careful checking when phenomena are alleged to occur or to have occurred which tell against firmly established views. Such views would not, after all, have become firmly established if they had not, at least at first sight, the support of a rather wide range of experience. But in the matters under discussion, the demand for confirmation often reaches an impossible degree of stringency. One cannot, in the nature of the case, confirm any claim about a matter of empirical fact with *absolute* certainty; a high degree of probability is all that can reasonably be demanded. And in fact, the conflict of well-attested paranormal phenomena with the laws affirmed by modern physicists and chemists is something more often assumed than argued for.

The demand for empirical verification is certainly a hallmark of scientific method. But this constitutes a pitfall for the unwary. The demand may easily be misunderstood as meaning that no type of thing should be claimed to exist, or type of event to occur, which is not capable in principle at least of being an object of experience. This would presumably rule out evidence for the existence of disembodied persons or discarnate spirits; but it would also rule out knowledge of the past, of other minds, and indeed of the subatomic particles studied by contemporary physicists. For neither the things and events of the past, nor the thoughts and feelings of other persons, nor electrons and neutrons are potential objects of perception. To be widened so

as to allow for these paradigm cases of knowledge, the principle will have to state merely that *evidence for the existence or occurrence of* the things and events in question will have to be available to experience, for discourse about them to count as scientific. But at this rate, it is by no means obvious that discourse about discarnate spirits cannot be scientific; might it not conceivably turn out to be the case that the presence and activity of such spirits is the most satisfactory way of accounting for certain data? One kind of verification principle rules out any knowledge by us of persons who have survived death, but also, when it is applied consistently, rules out modern physics, history, and knowledge of the thoughts and feelings of other people. Another kind accommodates these, but it is by no means obvious that it rules out knowledge of discarnate spirits.

In what I have to say about *The Supreme Adventure,* I do not wish to attend to the *conclusions* to which the book comes, for which the reader may consult it at first hand, but the *method* by which they are obtained. As with many important discoveries, it seems so obvious once it is pointed out, that one feels surprise that no one hit on it before. (As a matter of fact, as we shall see, the method had been suggested before; Dr. Crookall is the first, as far as I know, to apply it with any thoroughness.)

## II

As Dr. Crookall says, the case for survival of bodily death is often conceded by psychical researchers to have a good deal of weight, but to fall short of certainty. A number of authors have commented that the subject has reached an impasse on the matter. Why is this? Information allegedly given by discarnate communicators, for example through mediums, is often very impressive. For example, still-living friends will be reminded of occasions when only they and the alleged communicators were present, and of which no one else could have known; or an object will be mentioned which was concealed by the alleged communicator while still living, and which turns out to be where he claimed it to be on subsquent investigation. The trouble is that there are always alternative explanations available, and it seems these can never in principle be excluded. Thus, in the first kind of example, mediums in trance might be claimed to have extraordinary telepathic powers, which enable them to gain their information from the minds of their sitters; and in the second case, some other kind of paranormal knowledge can be attributed to the medium, which will render superfluous the hypothesis that the dead person concerned is communicating through her. (I understand that the majority of mediums are women.)

Admittedly, each of these alternative forms of explanation is somewhat extravagant and far-fetched; but it may well be questioned whether they are more so than the hypothesis, to which scientists and philosophers have raised so many objections, that human persons may survive the death of their bodies and communicate with those who are still living. Some psychical researchers have concluded that the question must simply be shelved until more information has been amassed about the paranormal cognitive powers of mediums[7].

However, there is at least one other avenue of approach to the solution of this question, which for some reason has been largely overlooked by psychical researchers. Sir Oliver Lodge cited the philosopher Bergson's opinion that "statements about life on the other side, properly studied, like traveller's tales, might ultimately furnish proof more logically cogent than was possible from mere access to earth-memories'. The material, according to Lodge, should be 'scrutinised and tested by internal consistency and inherent probability'[8]. If remarkable similarities and correspondences appeared over a sufficiently wide range of material of this kind, and collusion could be ruled out with virtual certainty, this would surely constitute strong confirmation of what was claimed, albeit of a different, and in a sense less direct kind, from that provided by alleged memories of embodied life. Dr. Crookall cites Archbishop Whateley to this effect: "When many coincide in their testimony (where no previous concert can have taken place), the probability resulting from this concurrence does not rest upon the supposed veracity of each considered separately, but on the improbability of such an agreement taking place by chance. For . . . the chances would be infinite against their all agreeing in the same falsehood'[9].

The intellectual content of alleged communications from the dead, as has frequently been remarked, is often of poor quality—though it must be insisted that this is not always so. It is complained that communicators seem never, or hardly ever, to have useful things to say about science, or God, or anything else of importance. Indeed it is striking that the *opinions* expressed by alleged communicators seem as varied as those of living people, and perhaps on average rather sillier. However, "if we make an unbiassed study of what they . . . say that they *experienced*" at, and soon after, death, "their narratives are seen to be highly significant since they exhibit internal consistency to a quite remarkable degree"[10]. "The concordances that occur in numerous independent accounts seem explicable only if these accounts did, in fact, emanate from the 'dead' and if they do

bear a close relationship to the truth"[11].

The evidence which he has accumulated, all of which is meticulously supported with references, has convinced Dr. Crookall himself "that the survival of bodily death . . . is as well established as the theory of evolution"[12]. Being a distinguished geologist (he took up the study of paranormal phenomena on retirement), he is in a position to make the comparison. But this is by no means the only conclusion of interest which is to be found in this book. It seems that the immediate *post mortem* experiences of those who die naturally are systematically different from those of people who die by violence, while those who die as a result of explosion form yet a third category. Light is thrown on such matters as the advisability of cremation, the desirability of prayers for the dead, and the interpretation of some very obscure New Testament texts.

Given both the intrinsic importance of Dr. Crookall's work, and its relevance to matters of concern to Christians, I find it astonishing that professional theologians have not paid more attention to it. If there is some good reason for this, I should be glad to know of it.

*NOTES*

(1) B. Malinowski, quoted R. Crookall, *The Supreme Adventure* (James Clarke, 1961), 51.

(2) John Hick's *Death and Eternal Life* (Macmillans, 1977), and H. D. Lewis's *The Self and Immortality* (Macmillans, 1973), are fine recent discussions of the matter from a general philosophical and theological angle; but do not deal with the relevant empirical material.

(3) Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*.

(4) Cf. E. KüblerRoss, *On Death and Dying* (Macmillan, New York, 1969); and the article on her work in the *Obsrver*, 15.4.79. Also Raymond Moody, *Reflections on "Life After Life"* (Bantam Books, New York, 1977); and J. C. Hampe, *To Die Is Gain* (Darton, Longman and Todd, 1979).

(5) The same author's *What Happens When You Die* (Colin Smythe, Gerrards Cross, 1978) assembles a rather different kind of material, to very similar effect.

(6) C. D. Broad.

(7) *The Supreme Adventure*, 4.

(8) 4, 75.

(9) 75.

(10) 8.

(11) xxv.

(12) xxvi.

# Robert Browning: New Light on his Life and Work

**ROSAMOND LEHMANN**

By one of those fortunate coincidences that seem "meant", Vivienne Browning and I found ourselves suddenly face to face

at a recent crowded literary gathering. Under her arm she was carrying a book with a richly coloured wrapper depicting a number of Rosicrucian symbols together with photographs of Robert Browning—the poet most familiar to me, deeply loved and studied since my childhood. Our encounter seemed to us both more like a mutual recognition than a first meeting; and in no time we were discussing the Browning Society (of which she is now President), the Armstrong Browning Library in Baylor University, Texas, the biographies of Maisie Ward and Betty Miller; also the poet's ties of intimate friendship with my grandparents. Before we separated she thrust into my hands the volume she was carrying; a generous gift, containing hitherto unknown information of immense importance to a true understanding of Robert Browning's life and work.

Vivienne Browning's grandmother was a first cousin of the poet, linked with him personally and affectionately for nearly thirty years. Later she went to live in Australia where she died, and where her grandaughter was born. Tragically, many family papers and photographs were destroyed by fire or owing to enemy action in World War II; but Vivienne Browning's exhaustive and dedicated research has brought together a mass of unpublished material, as well as of fascinating family lore; also a collection of Victorian family photographs—not only of Robert's son Pen, and of his American wife Fanny, but of many a bearded and bewhiskered male, or tightly upholstered, crinolined and bustled female cousin—altogether a vigorous, prosperous-looking brood—bizarre figures, so near to us in time yet so remote that they seem almost to be images reflected from an antique world. To quote her: "My father Vyvyan Deacon, a practising medium and lecturer on the occult and Theosophy (incidentally a friend of W. B. Yeats and of A.E.) was sole custodian of the Rosy Cross in Australasia in the 1920s. He gave me religious training from my birth until his death aged forty-two in 1938. He told me that he was carrying on the tradition of his grandfather Reuben Browning who was a Rosicrucian, a Christian in the Hermetic tradition, who shared his secret knowledge with his nephew Robert, the poet."

To prove her claim to authenticity, Vivienne Browning* has assembled more first hand evidence than this article has room to quote from; and this in spite of the fact that Robert appears

* *My Browning Family Album, Vivienne Browning (Springwood Books, £5.95).*

to have destroyed everything, before his death, which might have led people to suspect that he had long been an actual Rosicrucian initiate. It seems clear that at least one Browning ancestor in every generation, centuries before his birth, held a secret, an inherited esoteric knowledge of the early Christian Mysteries. "Their studies would have included what was later known as the Kabbala, hypnotism, healing, alchemy, astral travel and the Inner Mysteries of the Holy Sacrament." It appears more than possible that the Brownings were personally linked with the twelfth century Knights Templar, who concentrated on healing. Might this have been, partly at least, the driving force behind the dramatic Browning love story, in which there is surely an element pointing to an irresistble precognitive affinity; and, in Robert's case, to a particular healing energy powerful enough to rescue and raise to life a woman long immured in a kind of living death?

"The Hermetic Tradition", says the author, "can be understood only by those who recognise it instinctively". I have been taught, and am convinced, that this is true of all knowledge, in the sense that we learn (or re-learn) only what we already know; so possibly it was something "more deeply interfused" than the cherished Browning portraits, letters and other family relics in my father's library which enabled me to absorb this poetry and love it from my earliest teens onward. However, my understanding of its intellectual and spiritual essences was elementary; and the biographies I read much later, though in many respects excellent, did little to illuminate what I sensed of the buried meanings. Vivienne Browning's disclosures have helped me at last to penetrate more deeply into such poems as *Paracelsus, Childe Roland, A Death in the Desert, Karshish, Cleon,* as well as other more cryptic and profounder works, such as *A Heretic's Tragedy.* Again, this Album provides the key to an equally fascinating and hitherto mystifying area in Browning's private life. As a young man he was exceptionally handsome, virile and attractive, yet his emotional life, until the *coup de foudre* of Elizabeth, would appear to have been null and void. (So far as I remember, one biographer, Betty Miller, ascribes this to arrested development due to the Oedipus complex which her Freudian lens detected in him.) But it now appears that the poet had a beautiful aunt, Jemima by name, daughter of grandfather Robert's second marriage and only a year older than himself. According to strong but closely guarded family tradition, Jemima was his first love. As children they were neighbours as well as playmates; but later his affection for his

bright-haired companion turned to passionate and of course hopeless love. Whether or not his passion was returned is not revealed. Robert Browning always referred to her in guarded terms (once, in a letter, as "the most beautiful woman I ever knew") and it seems very possible that she was the original of his first poem *Pauline,* and helped to edit it. Mutual or not, this passion had to be strangled (remember *Porphyria's Lover*!) or otherwise repressed with mingled anguish and resignation, together with hints of idealised, other-worldly reconciliation and reunion; as for instance in *Evelyn Hope* and in *The Last Ride Together.* It is noteworthy, too, how the image of golden hair "runs through yes through" the poetry, always in the context of loss or death. Had there really been a last ride together for the young Robert and the girl he loved? Yes, according to Vivienne Browning's father.

When Jemima eventually married, Robert attended the ceremony and "kissed the chancel steps where she had been standing". He destroyed all material evidence of their association before his death; but Vivienne Browning feels that his heroic coping with a once agonising siuation "stretched his capacity for loving", so that later he was able to give Eizabeth the total human love which fulfilled them both.

So far I have looked in vain for notices of this Album in the more orthodox literary periodicals. It is to be hoped that it will not be overlooked or dismissed as an odd, unscholarly collection of family anecdotes. . It is much more than that; and makes not only delightfully entertaining but also serious reading; for instance the matter of disagreement over Elizabeth's active interest in contemporary spiritualism seems now explicable. "Rosicrucian Robert was no disbeliever in life after death, or even the abiltiy to communicate with the soul of a loved one. He was merely alarmed that . . . she was taking a morbid interest in the type of séances popular in her day with the accompaniment of table-lifting, etc., occasionally proven to be trickery. Even if they were genuine they were beneath consideration for the growth of the Divine Spirit within, which Robert privately sought."

With this summing-up in mind it is easier to understand what complex emotions prompted that savage and unbeautiful monologue *Mr. Sludge the Medium.* Browning would have been alarmed, distressed, perhaps disgusted by his intellectually distinguished wife's growing obsession with rappings, table-turnings, physical phenomena such as apports, "spirit hands" and materialisations generally. His genial, sanguine, generous outward

self concealed another, a daemonic self which—as we know from other contexts—could now and then erupt with volcanic violence. No one has better described this element in his nature than Elizabeth herself, writing (to Miss Mitford) of "the concentrated passion burning through the metallic fissures of language". ("Metallic"—what a curious adjective!—but apt.)

That phenomenally gifted Victorian psychic D. D. Home is presumed to be the origin of Mr. Sludge: if so, the portrait could be said to be monstrously unfair. Until his definitive biography appears, he is bound to remain a controversial figure. But, despite Browning's later assertions to his son Pen, he was never, I believe, detected in fraud. On the other hand some contemporaries appear to have thought him an unattractive character; and Browning clearly loathed him as a person and considered his adored Elizabeth contaminated by his practices and influence. The occult knowledge he himself had inherited, the quality of the experiences he strove for, were of a different, an altogether higher order. The trivialities of certain physical phenomena were repellent to his inner, spiritual beng.

"My father", says Vivienne Browning, "kept a magical compendium of significant Rosicrucian symbols, and was sure that the poet must have done the same. My grandmother said that he frequently referred to these in communicating with Reuben." Furthermore, although he destroyed before his death every clue to his Initiation, Vivienne Browning has unearthed (in America) and her Album reproduces, a small, somewhat bizarre sketch depicting a secret Rosicrucian symbol; and—most interesting of all— the following hitherto unpublished poem in his own handwriting.

*She shall speak to me in places lone*
*With a low and holy tone;*
*And when I have lit my lamp at night*
*She shall be present with my sprite.*
*And I will say, what'ere it be,*
*Every word she telleth me.*

On the opposite page of the portfolio is placed a copy of E.B.B.'s poem beginning *How do I love thee. . . .*

Surely these lines point to direct spiritual communion with his "lyric Love"? In my ear they sound as it were like a mystical echo of certain other lines which I discovered only recently while wrestling with that formidably discouraging work *Fifine at the*

*Fair.* The title is *The Householder. An Epilogue*: and here is the opening stanza:

> *Savage I was sitting in my house, late, lone;*
> *Dreary, weary with the long day's work;*
> *Head of me, heart of me, stupid as a stone;*
> *Tongue-tied now, now blaspheming like a Turk:*
> *When, in a moment, just a knock, call, cry,*
> *Half a pang and all a rapture, there again were we!*
> *What, and is it really you again? quoth I;*
> *I again, what else did you expect? quoth she.*

In the succeeding stanzas he grumbles and complains; she comforts him with a distinct touch of astringency. The whole tone is direct, lucid—almost a matter-of-fact discussion between two companions of a life-time; but the last line runs: *Love is all and Death is naught,* quoth she.

When I read it—and surely it is the record of an actual paranormal experience?—I was sharply reminded of an account once given me by a much-loved "daily" who used to work for me. The language is even more colloquial, but the convincing note of poignant intimacy is similar. She was talking about her husband, accidentally shot by his friend during a poaching expedition a few years previously.

"I used to go and sit on his grave—that's how morbid I was. But I never seen him there. No, it was one afternoon, in the kitchen; I was boiling the kettle for a cup of tea, and there he was!—solid as you or me, dressed like he used to be, his bag—you know—slung across his shoulder. *'Oh, it's you!'* I said. 'Yes', he said, 'it's me. I been through fire', he said. 'You would,' I said —because he was—you know—he done one or two things . . . though he was a lovely chap, everybody's favourite. Then he seemed like as if he was beginning to go. 'Ain't you going to stay?' I said. 'Not now', he said, 'I got to go down to Plumley's' —that was where his friend worked, you know the one. . . . 'But you'll come back?' I said. But he was gone. He never did come back again. Still, after that I stopped fretting. . . . Well, I could go on, anyway."

I venture to quote this unembroidered recital (which I recorded at the time) partly because of its intrinsic interest, partly because it would, I think, have appealed to the great poet who (in Carlyle's words) spoke with the most authentic of *human* voices.

# The Alchemical Work

ANNE BARING

Theology, philosophy, science and psychology converge at the point where each seeks to answer the central question of our existence—what is the nature and purpose of consciousness? It is this question that is increasingly dominating the researches of the last quarter of the century.

In his recent book, *Dynamics of the Self,** Dr. Gerhard Adler explores the huge territory that has been opened up by Jung's discoveries about the nature of consciousness. In a series of fascinating chapters, each with excellent reference notes, he offers us the distillation of a lifetime of contemplation and experience as a "healer of souls". He makes it clear that consciousness undeveloped and untransformed constitutes the psychic illness that is the root cause of the suffering and interminable problems that afflict humanity. "Dynamics of the Self" is an outstanding guide to Jung's most important and seminal ideas. It is apparent that Jung was not only a visionary and healer in the great tradition of those seeking to alleviate the suffering of humanity but also one of the most advanced of scientists, of a kind we now desperately need to guide us through this crucial transitional passage between one level of consciousness and another. Jung believed that the scientific study of the psyche would become the science of the future. We can already see how many people have become attracted to this study only a few decades after he despairingly wrote: 'I have failed in my foremost task: to open people's eyes to the fact that man has a soul and that there is a buried treasure in the field, and that our religion and philosophy are in a lamentable state."

Jung was essentially a "homo religiosus", concerned above all with the meaning of life which he believed to be contained in the mystery of consciousness itself and the possibility of its transformation. Observing from his work with patients that the psyche has an inherent capacity to transform itself, he realised that religious and mythological symbols were a vital key in deciphering the pattern of psychic transformation and an essential part of the language of the soul. It is difficult for someone reading Jung's work who has not undergone analysis, to grasp the concept of the duality of consciousness: the fact that the psyche is divided into two parts; conscious ego and unconscious; hence the many misinterpretations that have arisen

including the idea that the unconscious is inferior to the conscious ego or that the unconscious can be manipulated or controlled to serve conscious goals.

Dr. Adler helps us to understand the nature of the relationship between these two aspects of ourselves. He re-defines the unconscious as the greater consciousness or super-conscious—a re-definition that is long overdue. He shows how this greater consciousness functions as an autonomous intelligence within the psyche with a central directing principle that Jung called the self. He makes it clear how this directing principle initiates and oversees the whole alchemical process of the transformation of consciousness—which Jung called the individuation process—whereby the centre of gravity within the psyche gradually shifts from the ego to the self. He clarifies the nature of the changing relationship between these two aspects of the psyche, showing how the self is independent of the ego, yet needs it for the realisation of its purpose. If its intention is for some reason blocked, either because of childhood trauma or the attempts of the individual to adapt to the deficient collective values of society, the result is neurosis, depression, illness or acute suffering of one kind or another.

In the vast majority of people, the psyche is divided against itself, with the conscious ego unaware of and unrelated to the transpersonal self. It is in what Dr. Adler calls a pre-conscious state, characterised by identifications and projections of every kind. This is the "state of nature" to which we are bound by the unconsciousness of the instinct; where the philosopher's stone of the transformed consciousness is hidden in the base matter of the ego-dominated personality. The world is still governed by the values and behaviour which reflect this inferior state of consciousness. Yet we can detect a shift of emphasis in values in the current search for meaning and a deeper relationship with life and each other. The narrowness of the political, scientific or religious viewpoint characterised by prejudices and projections of every kind is beginning to give way to a different outlook which seeks to understand a mystery now openly acknowledged to exist.

The question of meaning, Dr. Adler says, only arises after we have been expelled from the paradise of instinctive, pre-conscious, immediate certainties, where meaning has not yet begun to be questioned. "The question of meaning presupposes the loss of meaning, the experience of meaningless, of chaos." The chaos of our times can be seen as an advance over the dogmatism of impregnable religious or scientific or political

attitudes, to "truth" as it has been defined and defended by the pre-conscious psyche.

It is just at this point that depth analysis has a place and an important function. "The experience of the relationship of the personal ego to the transpersonal self can give meaning, direction and substance to our lives. It can bring us into gradual union with the 'unus mundus' or totality of being and can heal the split between subject and object, ourselves and everything we seek to know and understand."

All Jung's researches lead back to the vital role the individual has to play in the transformation of consciousness. It is only the individual who can undertake the supremely difficult work of the withdrawal of projections and the integration of the divided psyche, which brings the ultimate reward of the incarnation of the transpersonal self within the personality. To heal the divided psyche is to help to heal the split in the world which divides each of us from the other and which also separates this dimension from that unknown dimension of consciousness which exists on the other side of death. It is possible, Dr. Adler suggests, that we "simultaneously exist in both worlds". One day, we may know this as a conscious experience and will be able to live in both dimensions at once. "To what new insights may we yet attain once we have learned to understand a little better the deepest layers of the psyche?"

What can awaken us from the pre-conscious state of division and projection to begin the alchemical work of transformation—the "opus contra naturam"? Two things are essential: remembering and forgetting. "Consciousness is memory and memory consciousness." Without the act of remembering the existence of another dimension with which we are trying to enter into relationship, there can be no transformation. It is the unremitting cultivation of the capacity to remember or make conscious the archetypal world within us that gradually transforms our understanding.

Simultaneously with the effort to remember, we have to make the effort to forget or to relinquish attachment to the "things of this world" that seem to be of such overriding importance; to the incomplete or deficient values that rule our actions. Forgetfulness or the science of non-attachment is the pre-requisite of union with the transcendental dimension within the psyche. Only by dying to the conscious ego can the self, the spirit, be acknowledged, valued and incarnated within one.

Because we are so governed by the pre-conscious ego and its values which lead us to identify with every kind of projection,

the impulse to turn around and face the inner world has often to be initiated by the experience of acute suffering. Collectively, we have experienced many kinds of suffering in this century. Suffering of any kind, although it is the effect of the divided psyche is at the same time the agent of psychic transformation. This approach to illness, whether psychic or physical, or to some kind of crisis, individual or collective, lays the foundation for a totally different attitude to suffering which sees it as a call to discover different values and to relate to the transpersonal centre of our being. In this sense we do not cure an illness. It cures us by forcing us to expand the frontiers of consciousness to take account of a hitherto unknown dimension within us. We should therefore never try to "get rid" of suffering but to divine its secret intention, its meaning. The process of healing which is initiated once it is realised that suffering is a call from the self for recognition and integration, can lead in time to the birth of the "divine child"—the new centre in the psyche that is born of the union of the ego with the greater, transpersonal consciousness. Healing is therefore self-realisation. The self is both the cause of the illness and the divine healer.

Union with the self brings us into a closer relationship with the whole of life. By making us whole, it unites us with the whole. We are governed by different values which are reflected in our different response to the problems and challenges of our relationships. It is through this inner transformation that our outer relationships are transformed and through this dual transformation, so slow and subtle that it is almost imperceptible, that the world is transformed.

What emerges clearly from the pages of this profound book is that, as Dr. Adler says: "We have in Jung's metapsychological insights the foundation for a psychology of civilisation and culture."

* *Dynamics of the Self, by Gerhard Adler. (Coventure, £4.95.)*

# Faith

**NEMERAH (through Elizabeth Farrell)**

*(Nemerah is Mrs. Farrell's Teacher)*

I'll speak a little about faith, for it is within. Faith is, to my mind, absolute acceptance that you are part of God's immeasurable force; and that you are where you are, doing what you should be doing. But at certain times you must recognise

the need to place yourselves totally in the dark; to recognise that you are at an impasse where everything that you believe in seems to be tumbling down about you and your value as a participant in the truth you serve, seems to be meaningless.

We come again and again to a certain point where we stand, if you like, upon a plateau and look down from where we have come, the journey behind us; having, as we believe, understood certain fundamental inter-personal needs, having of course grown through the different areas of experience, different understandings, having many times cast out certain things that we believed to be true at the time. But the fundamental inner quality of ourselves doesn't alter, it only enlarges.

I have said to you that we cannot grow without the realisation of our attunement and participation with one another, and therefore that which we are has to become integral before we can offer to another the reality of ourselves. We must know truly what we believe and what is important for us. And once we have accepted a period of growth there comes the testing point in our own reality where we have got to look very clearly at ourselves and say: Now I am being faced absolutely with apparent nullity of my belief.

These spiritual points are like a dark night of the soul. Everyone goes through them from time to time, in the deep spiritual sense. But we also go through them at far lesser levels in our relationships with people, and above all sometimes in the quality of the work that we take upon ourselves to do. Now each of you has interdependence at all these levels—the spiritual quality of yourself, your emotional relationships, friendship relationships, work relationships, and also your service to what you believe to be true. And very often our greatest difficulty comes when we recognise that we have placed ourselves wholly and completely into a point of no return, where we have been true to what we have honestly believed within and have got to face that we have failed. Something within has not been able to meet the demands that have been made upon us. Therefore, what do we do? Do we turn around and say that everything I believe, everything to which I have given this inner quality of myself is all wrong? Why have I failed in this inner attunement of myself? Why have I this tremendous feeling that everything I do is worthless, that every truth of mine is seemingly valueless as I participate in my relationships in life? The quality of myself in my work, the very work I choose to do seems to have no meanng. But usually at these times we have not sufficient strength to relate wholly to God.

If we did there would be no problem, because if we do our faith immediately is strengthened.

But usually at these points God is of no great value, because God very much stands back and says: Now you find out about yourself, find out about your faith, about the quality of yourself, what you really believe and what you understand. At this point faith in the quality that we have attained so far is all that we can hold on to and work through, step by step. In other words, recognise that at this moment I can do no more. All right, my pack of cards may have fallen before me. Maybe it is one of my relationships. Maybe it is a feeling of tremendous failure that we all have from time to time. We always fail, you know, to a degree, because the aspiration is always higher than our ability. If we did not, we would not have the true need to continue. But always you can see the star ahead, and you can never quite make it. Sometimes we attune to it in alignment, and these are the special times of spiritual grace which are given to all of us when we most need them. And I can assure you, they are always given when the tiniest ray is absolute and you yourself have achieved what is necessary. Then you have a time of integrated grace.

But it is while you are waiting for this grace of God to touch and bless you and return you in wholeness to your pathway that you have to rely completely on your own faith. I could say to all of you, at this point: hold true unto yourself and go about your business, perhaps feeling dark and near despair on occasion, understanding that yet again you have to recognise failure within yourself as a person. Hold to your faith, hold to the inner belief that is yours and go in darkness. Do what you feel you must do, for you have not yet your own truth, your old has apparently fallen around you, but do not sit and wait. Strengthen yourself and walk in the path that you have already taken, even though you seem to be standing still. Walk in darkness and go your way the best way you can, taking your pain and your hurt and disillusionment with you, accepting it as a heavy burden for the time being. And I can assure you, those are the times when your faith, according to the quality of the inner reality that you serve, will stand you in very good stead. And our faith then is all that we have.

Now at this point there are certain structural areas of yourselves that qualify an extension for you. Now that sounds a little difficult for me to say. At one stage I'm saying walk through in darkness. But I'm also saying that the mere strengthening and the courage qualifies you to accept into your

own self the need for the darker discipline; it is a dark discipline at this point because there's nothing there, only that which is you and your own strength. And you're tested from time to time at all levels. You are deeply tested in your relationship with God. You have to be, because you cannot be an acolyte or a disciple of any truth unless you're absolutely sure of that truth within yourself. You cannot be true within yourself unless you wholly know it, unless you are wholly able to live and be that which you believe. You are tested very often, those of you who truly take upon your life a complete surrender and so know that, as an integrated being, that which you are is wholly in tune.

Therefore, the job that you do, the relationships and responsibilities that you accept, are all of one piece, all of yourself, integrated and alive to your inner quality, so that everything you do, everything you are is imbued with it. It does not matter, then, what job you do, whether you are at the top or at the bottom; whether you are in a position of extreme responsibility in terms of the world, or whether you hold a very small position in a tremendous collection of people where you're just one amongst thousands. Because what is important is the quality of what you are doing and how you use your life to establish the area of strength and faith which is yours, to give you a living symbol in relationship to what you do, so that even sweeping a road becomes a gift of yourself. You can do it very poorly, you know, or you can do it with quality. And it is the only area of reality—the quality with which you serve the purpose in everything that you do—that can make your faith a living, vital thing.

Faith is complete acceptance and understanding of yourself and accepting that because you need to understand truth, your faith gets tested at many levels. But the inner work, which is what I call the work of God, is ultimate within us all. It is an agony perhaps of self-realisation. At these levels we fail so many times, but in failure is also a true fulfilment, because it is only through these failings that we come to recognise where we need to revitalise, to look again, to renew. I have talked with you many times, perhaps not so strongly, about this, but for your own growth recognise your own faith and be prepared at times just to walk in the darkness without the additional light that comes to you when you are truly in tune with spirit. Would anybody like to speak to me at this point?

*I've asked God many times just to give me the strength to get through the day, and have asked for your help and that of*

*any spirits who were around. But I feel that, becuase I have done this, perhaps I have been questioning my own faith.*

This is not really negation of your faith though, is it? You see, you have your belief in God and this has not altered. Very often we can keep our belief in God. It is far harder to find the faith to recognise that we ourselves have structural defects which do not enable us to see clearly, so we are forced back to view our own values that we have faced in the wrong way. For instance, in your relationships with people it is very difficult to let people be what they truly are: it really is. And sometimes it is very easy to look at somebody and to have great love for this person, and because of that very love you look at them and you give them perhaps attributes that they do not have. Much more likely that you are right in the attributes you see, but you cannot accept them just as they are, beautiful as they are. You have to add little bits to them and then you have to find out that they maybe have expected more of you than you are able to give, and you yourself have expected more from them than they are able to give. These are things that test one's ability to live one's faith, particularly in relationships. To allow freedom within yourselves for people to be as they truly are and to love them as they are is a most important lesson that you all have to learn. From my point of view, it does not work out in quite the same way. Because at the level of *our* integration—my integration with you—we are concerned with exchanging ideas and we are not involved at personal levels.

But all of you have to recognise that you cannot subdivide your lives. You cannot say I have faith which gives me what I understand, and make your faith somebody else's. You must allow them to have their way and their own beliefs without trying to alter them. And I think many of us fail at this level. And also in our desire to participate in our own strength in our own way, we find it very difficult to face our own failure, truly we do. It is very much easier to blame the other person, in relationships particularly, than to face the fact that we ourselves have asked or given or seen incorrectly. Let people have their own faith while you still live in yours.

*Today people are inclined to take rather than to give. How can we help them to achieve a sense of responsibility? Is it possible to?*

You see, my friends, it is as I have been saying. You must

let people grow in their own way. The more you demand of other people your own standards, the less you are likely to find your own strength. You must learn this at all levels—in your personal relationships, in all relationships. You see, you cannot condone, for instance, dishonesty in certain areas, can you? Except that you will look at yourselves and find that there are very few of us who are not dishonest in some way or another. Very few are absolutely true to themselves. You see, the more spiritually advanced you become, the more uncomfortable you begin to feel when you are dishonest! It's very hard. Perhaps you've found that you could make a few small entries, do certain little things that apparently do not harm anybody else. Maybe you take a bus ride and do not pay your fare. But you'll find as you go along the spiritual pathway that it becomes very uncomfortable indeed if you do such things. So from that point you are guardian of your own soul.

But there are certain areas that you decide that you yourself cannot cross, and you are responsible for yourself. At these times there are very hard lessons to be learned, because I recognise that in trying to do what is right always you seem to come up at the bad end. You are doing what is right but everybody does not treat you similarly. Now these responsibilities you have to face and accept, and your faith has to support you at that point and you have to walk in darkness and carry this burden alone.

*This wasn't a personal problem. This was in my work, which is to try and help people acquire a sense of responsibility and I'm finding it terribly difficult. Is it possible really to help a person?*

Yes, I think so, my friend. There are times when you really feel that this is useless. Now here again, you have just so much energy—my medium often speaks with me about this—and there is only so much that you can do. I always say do not hit your head against a brick wall. Give what you can honestly from yourself. All right, you show them by example. You are what you are.

*Don't we have to question our own faith in order to grow?*

Yes, my friend. But it is not the time to question your faith when you are in despair. When you are in this state of recognising that everything that you have trusted seems to be falling around you and you cannot at that moment find a substitute, that is the time to walk in darkness.

You talk about the essence of people who are observing what to them is the outward adherence to a faith. If they do not

have the real faith, you cannot give it to them. You have every right to discuss your own views, but you cannot expect people to pick up your faith. What usually happens, in terms of changing faith, is: when a person is so assured in clarity of vision that their faith for them is a living, vital force, it speaks for itself.

# Book Review:

**The Spiritual Nature of Man. Alister Hardy.** (Clarendon Press, Oxford, £6.95.)

It is now twelve years since Sir Alister Hardy, on his retirement from the Chair of Zoology at Oxford, launched his enterprising project of a Unit to research into the nature of religious experience. Seldom can a "midlife crisis" have proved more inspired. Thanks to the work of this Unit, a whole area of human experience hitherto ignored by philosophers and dismissed by the general public as neurotic or hallucinatory, has come to be recognised as vitally important to the human condition. A dozen years ago Sir Alister began his investigation by issuing a general invitation, through the press and television, to all who felt that they had undergone a "religious experience". Would anybody who had experienced "a direct awareness of a benevolent, non-physical power which appears to be partly or wholly beyond, and far greater than the individual self", send a description of the experience to the Unit? The response was better than he had dared to hope. Within a few weeks replies were pouring in, and by 1976 so many had been received that, even after the dotty, the incomprehensible and the obviously non-religious had been eliminated, there yet remained for study as many as three thousand.

This important book of Sir Alister's is a study of these first three thousand replies, and the fruit of the first eight years' work of the Unit. Much of it consists of verbatim replies, exactly as written by the respondents. "I felt caught up into some tremendous sense of being within a loving, triumphant and shining purpose." "I was buoyed up by waves of utterly sustaining power and love." "The only words that come near to describing it were 'underneath the everlasting arms' ". "I seemed no longer me, with my petty troubles and trials, but part of this infinite power of love, so utterly wonderful that one knew at once what the saints had grasped."

But it is Sir Alister's analysis of these replies which gives the book its unique character, for with a zoologist's enthusiasm for classifying fauna into order, families, genera and species, he has attempted a similar taxonomy for the modes of intuiting God. The result is twelve broad categories and no fewer than ninety-two sub-categories.

Within the general category of "visual sensory experiences", for example, we have subdivisions entitled general light, light in a particular place, visions, out of the body sensations and *déja vu.* Auditory sensory experience breaks down into guiding voices, calming voices, music and the gift of tongues. The sensory experience of touch likewise breaks down into the healing touch, the comforting touch and the warm touch.

Sensory experiences are followed by "cognitive and affective experiences" which are again divided into twenty-two categories. Examples are a sense of peace, of joy, of awe, of timelessness, of release from fear and guilt. Under each heading Sir Alister quotes one or two verbatim replies received out of the total three thousand, and the percentage such a type represents of the whole.

It is at once apparent that there is no one predominating mode by which men and women today experience the divine. Visions of the Virgin Mary are by no means preponderantly numerous, nor are the voices of saints, nor the sense of the everlasting arms, nor the apparition of any recognisable angel or helper. The ninety-two categories are on the whole rather evenly spaced. The obvious inference is that we no longer possess alive in our culture the symbols which traditionally have been the vehicles of the religious experience of a community. In a community still rooted in its own tradition, the revelation is able to express itself in an immediately recognisable icon, as the angels who appeared to the Desert Fathers, or the figures of Our Lady or Christ to centuries of Christians, or the Buddha Amida to many Japanese. Such icons serve as channels through which the divine may make itself known to our limited minds, and which at the same time enable us to reach out to the divine. (The angels on Jacob's ladder were seen to be both ascending and descending). Once these icons vanish from our minds, that which is revealed through them is no longer immediately recognisable. Hence the many examples in Sir Alister's book of people on whom these priceless gifts were bestowed who felt unable to tell anyone about it, and were entirely nonplussed as to what they should do. "I didn't tell anyone, not even my family. They'd all have thought me potty." The recipients felt themselves

utterly isolated, in the midst of an uncomprehending world.

It is for this reason, surely, that time and again these gifts were neglected or squandered. The recipients failed to follow them up by any further spiritual effort, so that only a memory remained. An officer in the First World War, for example, walking by a river at night, felt the world about him burst suddenly into numinous life, and heard from the sky resounding harmonies which he knew to be the music of the spheres. He dropped on one knee and thought, how wonderful to die at this moment. But years later he was to write of his regret that he failed to follow up the revelation in any way.

Sir Alister's book surely tells us two important things. First, that in a "scientific age", when truth is too often defined and confined to that which is quantifiable, measureable and repeatable, there is even so no dearth of these gifts of grace. We may all take heart, for they may fall to us at any time. They occur not only among the saints and poets who gave William James so much of the material for his pioneering work of 1902, but among men and women with no pretence to religious eminence. Nor, according to the reports in this book, do they tend to occur in any particular situation.

Secondly, it demonstrates the work that needs to be done to build up our icons once more, through which these graces may be recognised and which will help us to pass to the next step of the path.

The work of Sir Alister's unit is of great importance in these dark times. He reminds and assures us that at bottom the nature of man is spiritual, and that far more people than we ever supposed know this from direct experience. "The spiritual nature of man," he declares, "is being shown to be a reality." And he encourages us all to make an act of faith whereby this "spirituality of man may be increased in the future". Let us try to pray, for an experimental six months, that we may find God and the strength to do what he wills. "I like to think," he writes, "that our studies at the Religious Experience Research Unit are not only helping to build up an academic knowledge towards a better understanding of the spiritual nature of man, but that they are also providing the evidence which, as it accumulates further in the future, may induce others to make the act of faith which is expressed in the words of Jesus . . . "Ask and it shall be given to you; seek and ye shall find'."

CARMEN BLACKER.

# Moment of Truth

**BERYL HANDCOCK**

Some years ago I was faced with a problem to which I could find no answer. There were two directions which I could take but I was extremely puzzled to know which was the right one. At the same time I knew that it was most important that I should make a right decision. I prayed deeply that I should be shown the way that I should go.

About three weeks later this situation presented itself and I was about to make my decision when the telephone rang. It was a friend of mine who is a very fine medium. She apologised for ringing but told me that my father was with her. Rather jauntily I told her that my father had passed over about 15 years ago and she replied that she knew this but that he had been with her from time to time during the past three weeks, trying to get a message through to his daughter—me—but he could not make my friend understand *who* was his daughter.

That evening she said that he was desperate, wringing his hands and saying that he would be too late. Then suddenly he projected an image of me which she immediately recognised, calling out my name. "My daughter," he said. "Ring her at once" and she says that she was almost hauled to the telephone to give me his message. This was quite simple but quite definite. "Give her my love and tell her to make no decision in a hurry and I will come again."

He saved me from a wrong decision that would have brought me sheer disaster as surely as following that ball of light down the mountainside saved those two travellers from destruction.* My father did come again and it was the beginning of many visits from "the other side" and another dimension of living which brought me new insights and understanding. Since then, in my own life, I have had enough experiences to prove that death of the physical body is just a gateway to more abundant life and I do not just believe, I *know* that our near ones and dear ones are close to us, ready and able to help us here as they live their fuller lives on "the other side".

* *A Light on a Mountain, LIGHT, Summer 1980.*

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