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JOURNAL OF
THE TRANSACTIONS
OF
The Victoria Institute
OR
Philosophical Society of Great Britain

VOL. LXXX

1948



LONDON:

PUBLISHED BY
THE INSTITUTE, 12, QUEEN ANNE'S GATE, WESTMINSTER, S.W.1

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875TH ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING

HELD AT 12, QUEEN ANNE'S GATE, LONDON, S.W.1, AT 4.30 P.M.
ON MONDAY, MARCH 1ST, 1948.

ERNEST WHITE, ESQ., M.B., B.S., IN THE CHAIR.

The Minutes of the previous Meeting were read, confirmed and signed.

The following elections were announced :—Rev. F. M. Cundy, M.A., Fellow ; Rev. W. St. Clair Taylor, Fellow ; Rev. Ernest F. Kevan, M.Th., Fellow ; Rev. T. Christie Innes, M.A., D.D., Fellow ; J. D. C. Anderson, Esq., B.Sc., Fellow ; F. A. Rayner, Esq., M.A., Fellow ; A. J. Crick, Esq., Fellow ; Rev. A. R. Smith, F.R.G.S., Fellow ; J. A. van Niekerk, Esq., Fellow ; W. H. Clare, Esq., Fellow ; Spencer D. Thomas, Esq., Fellow ; L. E. Porter, Esq., B.A. Fellow ; A. Derrick Rose, Esq., M.B., B.S., Member ; W. H. Thompson, Esq., Member ; Rev. R. S. Roxburgh, L.Th., Member (on transfer from Associate) ; Ralph Hulme, Esq., B.A., Member ; A. J. Greenfield, Esq., Life Member ; T. W. Bunyan, Esq., B.Sc., A.M.I.M.E., Member ; J. S. E. Elwood, Esq., M.D., B.Ch., Member ; W. H. S. Thompson, Esq., Member ; D. C. Thompson, Esq., O.D., Member ; G. T. Padgett, Esq., M.B.E., Member ; W. A. Douglas Cole, Esq., Member ; W. R. Coates, Esq., F.B.O.A., Member ; Jan Murray Hofmeyr, Esq., B.Sc., Member ; William Richardson, Esq., Member ; F. I. Anderson, Esq., B.Sc., Member ; R. N. Tyrell, Esq., M.V.O., Member ; Samuel Milner, Esq., Member ; J. S. Phillips, Esq., Member ; F. King, Esq., Member (on transfer from Associate) ; G. K. Lowther, Esq., Member ; Kenneth N. Taylor, Esq., Member (on transfer from Associate) ; A. S. Deeks, Esq., B.Sc., Member ; David Frank Sage, Esq., Member ; Geoffrey Sturman, Esq., B.A., Associate ; M. G. Brown, Esq., Associate ; H. J. Blackmore, Esq., Associate.

The CHAIRMAN then called on the Rev. J. Stafford Wright, M.A., to read his paper entitled “The Bearing of Psychological Research upon the Interpretation of the Bible.”

THE BEARING OF PSYCHICAL RESEARCH UPON THE INTERPRETATION OF THE BIBLE.

BY THE REV. J. STAFFORD WRIGHT, M.A.

NOTHING which concerns the being and nature of man can be regarded as being without importance to the Christian. The Christian may say, as the character in Terence said, “Homo sum, humani nihil a me alienum puto.” It is true that the Christian must add also “divini,” since his concern is never with man alone, but with man in relation to God. None the less, the Christian must be interested in any facts which help to a better understanding of what man is.

Broadly speaking the last two generations have each been faced by a new approach to the understanding of man. Last century there was the doctrine of Evolution, which sought to explain man in terms of his supposed animal ancestry. Then came the New Psychology, which delved into the subconscious or unconscious mind, and explained man's actions in terms of such things as reflexes, complexes and inhibitions.

Is there any movement comparable to these two in the present generation? I believe that there is, and that it is to be found in the assessment of the investigations of Psychological Research, and the recognition by scientific thought of what has been called the Psi factor in man. If one is to give a name to this new science, probably "Parapsychology," will become the scientific title, though "Psychical Research" is more generally used. To avoid later misunderstanding, let me emphasise that Psychological Research is not another name for Spiritualism, and that I am not a Spiritualist.

We should probably agree that Christians were slow off the mark in dealing with the facts and theories of Evolution and the New Psychology. When however, they saw that these things were being used as a handle against Christianity, they flew to the defence of the faith, sometimes with more, sometimes with less success.

The important question for seriously-minded Christian people today is, What is likely to happen with Parapsychology? Is it a menace or is it an ally? It is vitally important that some Christians should be abreast of the movement, so as to assess the results, to sift the facts from the theories, and to show the bearing of the facts upon Biblical truth. In this work, I believe that the Victoria Institute can play an important part as it has done in the past.

We may instance the paper by Mr. W. E. Leslie last year on "Psychical Research in the light of some recent developments." I am assuming in this paper that members are acquainted with the facts and references that he gives there. But since he wrote his paper, there has been a further book published that gives a most able review of the whole field of Psychological Research. It is in the Pelican Series, and is entitled "The Personality of Man." The author is G. N. M. Tyrrell, President of the Society for Psychological Research. Let me remark, as Mr. Leslie remarked, that for the serious student of the subject, there is no substitute for a knowledge of the Proceedings of the Society for Psychological

Research, which can be obtained through the larger public libraries. Many volumes from the enormous collection of books in the Society's library may also be borrowed through the interchange scheme of the larger public libraries.

But, to return to the facts that confront us, let me begin by sketching out very briefly what I think may happen. Three great movements are coalescing, and, if they unite, they will have a radical effect upon religion. In psychology the Jungian school is giving what one might well call a spiritual view of the Unconscious, and some members of that school are moving in the direction of Buddhism. The writings of Dr. Graham Howe are instructive in this connection. The second movement is associated with the popularising of mysticism by such men as Gerald Heard, and Aldous Huxley. They too, are moving in the direction of Buddhism. Both of these movements are emphasising that at a certain depth of his mind man can experience and make use of forces that are not amenable to the observed laws of nature. The laws of the unconscious are of a different order altogether.

At this point the third movement, Psychical Research, comes in as the scientist of the trio. It seeks by observation and experiment to build up an ordered concept of this realm of the Unconscious. It is compelling scientists and philosophers to admit the reality of a new order of being that manifests itself in such things as telepathy and clairvoyance.

The result is that we are rapidly approaching a time when the existence of the non-material (or, as many would say, the spiritual) in man can be established on strictly scientific grounds. The tremendous importance of this for religion is obvious.

If the scope of this paper permitted, it would be fascinating to consider whether this new view will make it easier for people to come into contact with the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. By proving that there is a part of man that cannot be embraced by materialistic laws, we can demonstrate at least the possibility of survival. But merely to shift man on to another realm of existence after death, does not prove anything at all about God. The most that can be done will be to encourage experiments in mysticism, possibly along the lines of Yoga; but it seems that a non-Christian mysticism leads its followers not into personal communion with a personal God, but into a conscious experience of the universal life-force of God that, according to the Christian belief in the immanence of God,

runs through all creation. This is not the same as the Christian truth of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the Christian, which comes as the result of personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and His atoning Blood.

Thus I think that the union of this trio of movements will be the death-blow of materialism, but may be equally dangerous to Christianity in that it will offer a pleasing substitute for the Bible experience of salvation through Christ alone.

Our immediate concern, however, in this paper is to consider the bearing of one member of the trio, the scientific part, upon the interpretation of the Bible. Briefly, one can see in it both a friend and a foe. As a friend, it presents a challenge to all Biblical criticism that is based upon the rigid reign of natural law. It can no longer be regarded as scientific to deny miracles and the fact of prediction. This is tremendously important when it is remembered how many modern interpretations of Biblical statements and events are governed by this outlook. It would be a good thing for some of our Bible scholars to take a course in Psychological Research.

On the other hand, those who are already biassed against the supernatural may use Psychological Research as a stick with which to beat Christians. Granted, it will be argued, that we can no longer explain everything by materialistic laws: but we can still account for them as being manifestations of the Psi factor in man. Hallucinations, clairvoyance, clairaudience, precognition, psycho-kinesis, can all be evoked without bringing in God at all. The mere fact that a prophet had a precognitive vision and interpreted it as coming from God, is no proof at all that the man was really so inspired.

The answer to this would require a very full treatment, far fuller than we have space for here. It would mean going into the field of apologetics and teleology. It would mean a careful comparison between the observed cases put forward by Psychological Research, and the cases recorded in the Bible. All that we can do here is to mention a few comparisons, which may help to show the advantages to be gained through the approach to the Bible by way of Psychological Research, and also the limitations of such an approach. It will probably be best to limit ourselves somewhat arbitrarily to the two fields of prediction and miracle.

Since we have mentioned Precognition several times, we may conveniently start with this.

There are several examples of precognitive dreams in the Bible. Some are symbolical. Joseph dreamed two dreams of which the symbolism was obvious. (Gen. xxxvii, 5-10). The dreams of Pharaoh's servants (Gen. xl, 5-19) and of Pharaoh himself (xli, 1-32) were not so obvious, nor was Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the image (Dan. ii) and of the great tree (Dan. iv.)

The use made by the Unconscious of symbolism has been demonstrated by Freud and Jung and others. But, so far as I know, neither Freud nor Jung have dealt with symbolic precognition in dreams. But the fact of precognitive dreams has been demonstrated by J. W. Dunne in his *Experiment with Time*, and by many well attested contributions to the Society for Psychical Research. Dame Edith Lyttelton's book *Some Cases of Prediction*, lists a number of them, as also does H. F. Saltmarsh in his book *Foreknowledge*.

Some of these modern precognitive dreams are concerned with matters of life and death, others with matters of extreme triviality. It is one thing to list cases, but quite another to explain how the mind of man can foresee the future in sleep, or, indeed, at any other time, or to attempt to construct an ordered philosophy of life in which the future appears already to exist (I use the term "appears" deliberately).

Whatever the true explanation may be, the same explanation might be used of the Biblical examples. It is probably the explanation of the dream of the cake of barley bread in Judges vii, 13. On the other hand, the Bible states in at least two of the above examples, that God Himself sent the dream. (Gen. xli, 25, Dan. ii. 28). The language might of course be interpreted in the light of the Hebrew tendency to by-pass second causes and to ascribe all to God, but a fair reading of the passages would suggest that these were more than what one might describe as naturally precognitive dreams.

Moreover, in some dreams, God Himself or an angel appears and announces the future in plain terms. Abraham's great dream in Genesis xv and Jacob's at Bethel (Genesis xxviii) were of this type.

When we turn to the prophets it is clear that one means of revelation to them was the dream in sleep, as distinct from the trance vision. (Numbers xii, 6, Deut. xiii, 1, Jer. xxiii, 28). On one occasion Jeremiah says, after speaking of the future, "Upon this I awaked, and my sleep was sweet unto me" (xxxi, 26).

The apocalyptic visions of Daniel, and of John in the Book of the Revelation, appear to have been of the trance vision order. Many critics, of course, regard these as purely literary concoctions, but, while granting that some of the non-canonical apocalypses were uninspired and artificial productions, it seems to me that the existence of fakes demands the existence of genuine originals, whose authority was such that they were worth copying. Much of the symbolism appears to be the same "furniture" of the Unconscious that the work of Jung and his school has discovered in the dreams of patients, but the arrangement and plan of the "furniture" to reveal significant points of future history belongs to God alone.

The dream and the trance vision were not of course the only forms in which the prophet received a revelation of the future. Our evidence for the nature of prophetic inspiration is somewhat scanty, though we have sufficient to show that both the prophet himself and his hearers were clearly able to distinguish between an enlightened teacher and an inspired prophet. There was believed to be some direct contact between the prophet and God at a level that involved more than a divine quickening of intelligence. That is to say, prophecy belonged to the sphere of the Unconscious.

Here I feel that one must be cautious. Is this Unconscious only that same Unconscious as is explored by psychologists, mystics, and Psychological Research? Or is it a further extension (to speak spatially) of that Unconscious? The latter is, I believe, the truth, though I do not see how to prove it. But I believe that while the Unconscious is the link with that life-force of God that is immanent in all things, there is a higher realm of spirit that in the Christian is the seat of the Holy Spirit's indwelling, and in the prophet is the seat of the Holy Spirit's direct revelation. Just as psychological research has penetrated to the hitherto unknown, or ignored, Unconscious, so a Christian "pneumatical" research may establish certain facts about the spirit. But from the point of view of the outsider, that which emanates from the prophet's spirit and that which emanates from his Unconscious may appear to follow the same pattern, since both come from the non-material realm. This is what made it difficult for the hearers to distinguish between the true and the false prophets.

Our concern now is with the precognition of the prophets. This of course, is not the only element in the prophetic teaching,

but it is the one that falls most naturally within the scope of this paper.

There are in the prophets some striking examples of precognition. The two that have attracted a great deal of attention are the naming of Josiah as the destroyer of the altar at Bethel in I Kings xiii, 2, some 350 years before his birth, and the naming of Cyrus as the deliverer from Babylon in Isaiah xliv, 28 and xlv, 1, nearly 200 years before he appeared.

It is, of course, open to anyone to deny the facts, and to say that the former account was written after the event, and that the prophecies of Isaiah xl—lxvi were not by Isaiah the son of Amoz. This is too easy a way out of the difficulty. To begin with there is nothing inherently more difficult in the naming of a man centuries before his birth than in giving detailed predictions of the birth, life, and death of the Messiah centuries before His birth. The latter is certain, and therefore we have no right to rule out the former.

In the next place the naming of Cyrus occurs in a context that is vitally concerned with God's ability to predict in a unique fashion, e.g. xli, 22, 23, xlii, 9, xliii, 9, xliv, 7, xlvi, 10.

Commentators who ascribe these chapters to a time when Cyrus was embarking upon his conquering career cannot give any real weight to these claims. There must have been many oracles and politicians in Babylon who could foretell just as much as this Jewish prophet was claiming to foretell in the name of his God. These claims only make sense if the chapters contain a stupendous prediction. Such a prediction is found in the naming of Cyrus and in the promise of deliverance from Babylon.

What bearing has *Psychical Research* upon this? At first sight it seems as though we have cut the ground from under our own feet in pointing out that God claims to be making a unique prediction in naming Cyrus. If *Psychical Research* can produce secular parallels, how can God's prediction through Isaiah be held to be unique?

It must be admitted that the records of *Psychical Research* up to now cannot, to the best of my knowledge, produce much in the way of a parallel to the naming of Cyrus. To descend from the sacred to the profane, the precognitive naming of winners in horse races, as instanced in Dame Edith Lyttelton's book, already quoted, can hardly count as a parallel, since the horses were already in existence, and the "revelation" can be classified as a case of precognitive telepathy.

There is, however, a group of predictions which I do not think have ever been seriously considered by official Psychological Research, though it is possible that by the time this paper is read, something will have been written about them. These are the prophecies of Nostradamus.

Nostradamus was a Frenchman and a Hebrew Christian (Roman Catholic), who lived from 1503 to 1566. From 1555 onwards, he published several editions of a book known as the Centuries, in which, in a series of quatrains, he claimed to foretell the future up to the year 2000. A complete edition of his work has recently been published in America, but he may conveniently be studied in a book by James Laver, "Nostradamus, or the Future Foretold," (Collins 1942).

Amidst a mass of obscurities which can be interpreted in many ways, there does not seem to be the slightest doubt that in a book published before his death in 1566 he foresaw the French Revolution of 1789. We have space for one quatrain only, with its translation. It is found in IX. 34.

Le part solus mary sera mitré :
 Retour : Conflict passera sur le thuille
 Par cinq cens : un trahyr sera titré
 Narbon : et Saulce par coutaux avons d'huile.

Laver translates as follows: "The husband alone will be mitred. Return. A conflict will pass over the tiles by 500. A traitor will be titled Narbonne; and from Saulce we have oil in quarts."

The first two lines could refer to the mob who invaded the Tuileries and compelled Louis XVI to wear the red cap of Liberty, which was not unlike a mitre. But from our point of view the two names are most striking. The Comte de Narbonne was Louis XVI's War Minister, who was deep in intrigues with the revolutionaries. The other man was actually named Sauce, and was the procureur of Varennes, who arrested Louis XVI on his attempted flight: he was by trade a grocer and chandler.

This is a most remarkable prediction, and it is not the only one. It is a secular parallel to the naming of Josiah and Cyrus beforehand. We cannot here discuss the methods that Nostradamus used. Undoubtedly he possessed the gift of clairvoyance. He himself indicates that he practised astrology. Laver also thinks that the evidence of his writings shows that he

was steeped in occult practices. It would take us too far from our subject to discuss the relation between these practices and the revelation made to the prophets. It must suffice to say that Nostradamus was apparently unique amongst secular seers, and according to his own showing his inspiration was not of the same type as that of the Biblical prophets. Those quatrains that are at all clear and that can be identified with historical facts are few and far between: they are spasmodic outcroppings of truth amidst quantities of what may or may not be error. In this they differ from Biblical prophecy. Isaiah, for example, is solely concerned to exalt God. His prophecies are not rambling masses of obscurity with occasional flashes of light, but a broad and sweeping revelation of God's care for His people, with the introduction of Cyrus as God's chosen instrument of deliverance. It is thus possible to point to a parallel to the naming of Cyrus without thereby surrendering the uniqueness of God's claim to be revealing through His prophet Isaiah the whole scheme of deliverance from Babylon.

We notice also in this connection that Isaiah writes as one who is a sharer in the events of the closing days of the exile. There is a Babylonian atmosphere about the chapters. So far from this being an argument against Isaianic authorship, it is consistent with other Biblical prophecies. When Jeremiah speaks of the coming destruction in iv, 19-21, when Micah sees the invasion in chapter i, or when Ezekiel is transported to Jerusalem in viii and ix, they see and feel that they are sharing in the events of which they speak.

A parallel to this would be those people who have the gift of what is called psychometry, in which by contact with some person or object belonging to some person, they can perceive facts that concern this person's past, present and future. Two writers on the subject are Eugene Osty (*La Connaissance Supra-normal*, translated into English under the title *Super-normal Faculties in Man*) and J. Hettinger (*The Ultra-Perceptive Faculty* and *Exploring the Ultra-Perceptive Faculty*). Although there appears to be no single method in which the facts present themselves to the subject, there are occasions when the subject speaks as though he or she is feeling and experiencing those things of which he speaks.

Before leaving the subject of prophecy, it is worth mentioning a point about the recording of the prophet's vision or revelation. The greater part of the prophetic books cannot have been taken

down in shorthand, but must have been set down after the prophetic vision had died away. There is in fact a classic example in Jeremiah xxxvi, where Jeremiah dictates to Baruch all his prophecies up to date, and later, when the copy is destroyed, repeats them.

There is an interesting parallel to this in Osty's book on page 78. One of his subjects, M. de Fleurière, told Dr. Osty that he remembered accurately afterwards the exact words that he had repeated while he was exercising his gift of psychometry. Since Dr. Osty always had his words recorded in shorthand, he was able to prove that the subject's claim was true. M. de Fleurière said that the exact words returned to him under the form of large printed letters that he could read as one reads a book. There is thus no reason why, once the prophets had had the divine revelation imprinted upon their subconscious minds, they should not be able to repeat it accurately afterwards.

It is tempting to continue the discussion of prophecy, especially in relation to the time element in what is foreseen. But to avoid overmuch attention to one subject, we must turn to the bearing of Psychical Research upon the miracles of the Bible. Undoubtedly a student of Psychical Research will be most hesitant about denying miracles. Here again the old materialistic concepts have been smashed, and the incredible powers of mind must be accepted, even though as yet they are little understood. E. J. Dingwall's book, *Some Human Oddities*, is a recent work by a leading member of the S.P.R., that tackles some of these post-Biblical miracles in a careful and scientific manner. The evidence for levitation for example, appears undeniable in the case of the friar Joseph of Copertino in the 17th century and others later. Dr. Dingwall also records extraordinary examples of insensibility to pain and freedom from bodily injury under conditions approximating to trance.

If one admits in addition some of the stories told of Eastern yogis, it is clear that the limits of the power of mind are so far beyond our normal experience as justly to be termed miraculous. The difficulty is that so few of these yogis have demonstrated their powers under the rigid conditions demanded by Psychical Research. Thus, without doubting the good faith of those who record them, one feels that there is always a loophole for questioning whether the facts actually occurred as they seemed to the writer to have occurred. Otherwise such a book as Dr. Alexander Cannon's *Invisible Influence*, takes us into

realms where physical miracles such as levitation and destruction of living things by the power of mind are almost commonplaces.

One of the most spectacular miracles of the Old Testament is the preservation of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego in the fiery furnace in Daniel iii. The nearest secular parallel to this is the eastern fire-walking. Dr. Cannon describes one that he witnessed in which the participants walked for a considerable distance through a fiery trench without harm. According to him, even those who walked in stockinged feet did not have their stockings burnt. Similar examples are quoted from Africa by Dr. Frederick Kaigh in *Witchcraft and Magic of Africa* (recently published). Dr. Dingwall records that one of the *convulsionnaires* at the tomb of the Jansenist François de Paris, who died in 1727, was at her own request repeatedly roasted in flames without her clothes suffering damage. There is some evidence too, that the medium, D. D. Home, carried blazing coals about the room without injury.

But controlled fire tests in this country have not been so spectacular. The most famous one was televised by the B.B.C. in 1937 at the Alexandra Palace, and is recorded, amongst other places, in Harry Price's *Search for Truth*. The fire trench made from logs and other inflammable material was twelve feet long, with the surface temperature at 800° C. (water boils at 100 degrees centigrade). A professional fire walker, Ahmed Hussain, walked first, and he was followed by a Cambridge undergraduate who had had no special training. Both were unburnt. The solution, according to Mr. Price, was that if the walker walks without hesitation, any one part of the foot is in contact with the surface only for a tiny fraction of a second. Wood is a bad conductor of heat, and fire-walking on red-hot metal would be an impossibility.

It seems then that controlled tests cannot show any parallel to the miracle of the burning fiery furnace in Daniel, but that there is some evidence that on occasions people have by some means handled fire without being burnt. The miracle in Daniel goes far beyond anything that can be paralleled, but the lesser examples warn us against dismissing the whole thing as a fairy tale.

The New Testament miracles are still the subject of discussion. It is quite common to ascribe Christ's miracles of healing to the psychic powers that were inherent in Him as they appear to be in some healers today. We cannot now discuss this.

It is, however, the so-called nature miracles that are frequently rejected on scientific grounds. Healings can be paralleled, but these other miracles are thought to be infringements of the laws of nature.

Psychical Research has demonstrated that the laws of nature go far deeper than the observed laws that govern material phenomena. This should make us hesitate before we deny the likelihood of the occurrence of nature miracles in the life of Christ. None the less, so far as my own reading has gone, I am convinced that there is a uniqueness about Christ's nature miracles, and that at present no well-attested parallels to them have been found. One must of course, freely admit that evidentially even the miracles of Christ, with one exception, do not come up to the exacting standards required by the best Psychical Researchers.

That one exception is the one with which the Christian begins, namely the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. To a fair-minded enquirer the evidence is overwhelmingly convincing. For a recent review of the evidence one may refer to G. R. Beasley-Murray's *Christ is Alive*. The evidence is clear that the resurrection of Jesus Christ was not a mere resuscitation of a corpse, or survival of the spirit, but the transformation of the body into something of a new order altogether. Here is something unique in history, and a divine miracle.

To the Christian this is an attestation of the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, and therefore one is prepared to say that not only the unique miracle of the Virgin Birth, but the other recorded miracles during His life on earth are congruent with His Deity. But if we are wise we shall not attempt to draw a line too rigidly between what was possible for Him alone, and what may be possible for others to do.

Thus Dr. Alexander Cannon in his book *Invisible Influence*, states that he has several times witnessed personally the withering of trees by the power of directed thought-energy. If this should appear absurd, let us recall recent experiments at Duke University and in this country, which appear to have established the existence of a psycho-kinetic force (spoken of as PK), whereby concentration on given numbers affects the fall of dice over a series of throws in a proportion greater than chance. In addition to articles in the *Journal of Parapsychology*, a summary of the facts is given in Part 170 of the *Proceedings of the S.P.R.* (Aug., 1945), and further experiments are recorded in Part 173 (May, 1947).

Such miracles as the turning of water into wine and the feeding of the 5,000 and 4,000 cannot I think, be paralleled, though in *Modern Loaves and Fishes*, a small book in typescript published in 1935, Philip S. Haley, president of the California Psychical Research Society, claims that he and one or two others, under seance conditions, have increased the number of small pieces of food. The evidence did not strike me as convincing.

Such attempts to reproduce objects come under the classification of what are called apports. Mediums have claimed to produce objects miraculously in the seance room, but so many cases of fraud have been found that the production of apports must still be regarded as non-proven. It is interesting that some anonymous investigators have offered £250 to any medium who can produce genuine physical phenomena before the infra-red telescope in the seance room of the Society for Psychical Research. At the time of writing this paper there has been only one response, and this proved to be a failure.

The miracle of walking on the water might be regarded as a form of levitation, but such an example of lengthy and controlled levitation would be, I think, unique, though it is claimed that some disciples of the Buddha did actually walk on the water, and Peter himself walked on the sea for a few moments without sinking.

In a similar connection, Christ's stilling of the storm by a single word of command seems to have been a unique manifestation of his inherent deity, and is something that lies beyond man's power to accomplish.

These few examples must suffice to show how far Psychical Research is a help and how far it is inadequate in approaching the subject of Biblical miracles.

In bringing this paper to a close, I recognise that I must have disappointed those who want all or nothing. I have not been able to set Psychical Research on one side as irrelevant or dangerous, and on the other hand I have not been able to use it to prove the Bible. I trust, however, that I have been able to show that, like all other branches of research, Psychical Research has a very definite relevance for any serious study of the phenomena of the Bible. It is in no sense a substitute for the revelation of the Bible, but, in so far as it can discover truth,—and I believe that it can—then that truth will fit into the scheme of revealed truth that forms the Holy Scriptures.

DISCUSSION.

Dr. E. WHITE (Chairman): I am sure that I am voicing the feelings of all present this afternoon when I express thanks to Rev. Stafford Wright for a very interesting and informative paper on an obscure and little known subject.

In comparing Psychical Research with Evolution and the New Psychology, he describes Psychical Research as the scientist of the trio. I hope that he does not mean to suggest that Psychology does not rank as a science. That might have been true fifty years ago, but to-day so much objective experimental work is being carried out, that I think Psychology may fairly claim to be a science. A book recently published by Eysenck, *The Dimensions of Personality*, records the results of experimental work done by a team of workers at Maudsley Hospital. Most ingenious objective experiments are described, and certain inferences made from them. This is but one example of the large amount of scientific work which psychological research has called into being.

On page 37 the author states that "neither Freud nor Jung has dealt with precognition in dreams." In one of his reprinted papers Freud has a brief essay on this subject.

Having read J. W. Dunne's book, *Experiment with Time*, I am not convinced by the evidence he produces of precognition in dreams. There are other possible explanations of the phenomena he describes. In Freud's analysis of the phenomenon known as *Déjà Vue* he points out that the repetition of an emotional state may give the sensation that one has experienced certain circumstances before. It would be possible, in the case of a certain event happening, to connect its emotional content with a similar emotional state in a previous dream, and to interpret the content of the dream in terms of the event. There are further reasons for doubting Dunne's interpretation, and there is room for more careful research into the question of precognition in dreams.

If the paper we have listened to stirs up a further spirit of enquiry, it will serve a very useful purpose. There is plenty of scope for further investigation, and perhaps we are on the threshold of new and important discoveries concerning the depths of human personality.

In the discussion several speakers made contributions.

Mr. C. H. WELCH complimented the lecturer on his use of the word "pneumatical." He drew attention to the confusion which has arisen as a result of using the word *psyche* as a synonym for *pneuma*, though the two words are always used with discretion in the Bible. It was possible for a man to be psychically alive but spiritually dead.

Mr. O. R. JOHNSTON wondered whether forces of evil were involved in such prophecies as those of Nostradamus. He also asked the author if he could give, in the briefest outline, what he had in mind when he spoke of "Christian pneumatical research."

Mr. RONALD MACGREGOR also drew attention to the various biblical miracles, stated to have been accomplished by the powers of evil. He wondered if the speaker had any views on the matter.

Mr. W. E. LESLIE pointed out that Mr. Wright, in the course of his paper, had devoted so much space to the discussion of modern physical phenomena, that he thought that readers would often be in danger of forgetting that the evidence for them was rather slender. He also wondered whether Mr. Wright could explain more definitely what he meant by the expression "the life force of God."

WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS.

Dr. L. R. WHEELER: I agree that Christians should welcome Psychical Research and co-operate in it as far as possible.

The Victoria Institute is doing service to religion and science by publishing thoughtful and informative papers like those by Messrs. Wright and Leslie. As the former says, psychical research is compelling even materialistic scientists and philosophers to admit "the reality of a new order of being." It contributes with other modern ideas and knowledge to discredit materialism among thinking people. This applies particularly to the study of miracles and other abnormal events recorded in the Bible, concerning which Mr. Wright's paper is most helpful, notably his description of the resurrection of Christ as a unique occurrence.

I have seen fire-walking by Indians in Malaya, and there is no doubt about the genuineness of this phenomenon. Even after full

allowance has been made for exaggeration or fraud, it certainly seems as if various happenings which are difficult or impossible to explain on the usual lines occur among non-European peoples.

Unfortunately it has not been possible to trace the author of the following comments :

The paper has been read with great appreciation, and all sections are worthy of study and comment. For the sake of brevity, however, these remarks will be restricted to the difficulty of differentiating between false and true prophets. Possibly the clearest presentation of the data underlying this particular problem was by William James in his book *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, and I am surprised that more reference has not been made to this work. It has, it is true, a strong agnostic atmosphere, yet it contains a vast amount of evidence which any Christian whose object is truth would be foolish to ignore.

Possibly most people who think of prophecy, think of it in terms of *Deut.* xviii where a sharp distinction is drawn between divination (seeking knowledge of the future from elemental powers intermediate between God and man) and prophecy (divine guidance from God speaking through the lips of man). In this chapter it is suggested that the prophet speaking in the name of Yahweh may be tested by observing whether his word comes to pass. What is not so often recognised is that this test is secondary in importance, and applies only to a prophecy *in the name of Yahweh*, since in *Deut.* xiii, 1-5, it is stated that a prophet speaking in the name of another god may give a correct forecast, but, nevertheless, is to be condemned. The primary test, therefore, is consistency of message, God is not a God of confusion, and only the man speaking in accord with His known character is to be considered.

This test is admirably illustrated in 1 *Kings* xiii, where the second prophet claims to have a message negating the clear instructions previously given to the first prophet. The first should have applied the criterion of consistency, and was justly condemned for listening to that which *he*, who had personally received the message from Yahweh, knew to be contrary to His instructions.

So also an expression used by St. Paul (1 *Cor.* xii, 2) suggests that the spiritual gifts (*glossalalia, etc.*) had been experienced by some of the Corinthians while serving idols, and he clearly outlines

the test of consistency—"Wherefore I give you to understand that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed : and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Spirit." St. John, in his day, found the same necessity (1 *Joh.* iv, 1-3), "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits, whether they are of God : because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God : every spirit which confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God : and every spirit which confesses not Jesus is not of God."

Several citations of Old Testament prophecy which are made in the New Testament (*e.g.*, *Matt.* ii, 15) prove that in some cases where the prophet spoke with local events in mind, the Holy Spirit guided his message to cover wider spheres of which he was ignorant. An extreme case of this type is recorded in the New Testament (*John* xi, 47-53). The High Priest, afraid that the people will rebel against Rome under the influence of Jesus, and foreseeing that such an event would terminate his period of authority as virtual ruler of Judea, counsels His death as the only effectual preventive. Speaking thus, even under motives of self-preservation, and counselling supreme wickedness, nevertheless, being High Priest that year, the Spirit of God spoke through him of the universal salvation which was to be wrought in that Name. It is not suggested that any Old Testament prophet (with the possible exception of Balaam) framed his prophecy while striving against God : the witness of this case to the nature of inspiration is important, however, as demonstrating that a prophet of Yahweh may concentrate his human energies upon the affairs of his day, and unwittingly utter the depths of God's wisdom.

Lieut.-Col. P. W. O'GORMAN : The scope of Mr. Wright's paper is too wide to review briefly, but I offer a few observations.

Several phenomena of "Spiritualism," not attributable to fraud or a small minimum to evil spirits, are explicable by *telepathy*, which may be defined as a psychic force communicable between human and animal minds, conveying messages appreciable by the senses. Animals normally communicate by telepathy. As man becomes civilised he loses much of this faculty. Intuition or instinctive feeling may thus be influenced and knowledge in an

obscure way can be transferred. But in certain cases positive information can be transmitted long distances, especially among minds *en rapport* with each other. This has been experimentally proved by transference of visions, as well as by other means. Notable cases are of distant tragic deaths of relatives perceived by visions of events. Physical analogies are electric wireless, telegraphy, and television.

Clairaudience and *Clairvoyance* are super-normal faculties of audibility and visibility of distant events gifted to certain seers. Hypnotism greatly manifests here.

Prophecy is more than *Prediction*. *Prediction* may be said to be logical inference from extant knowledge: *Prophecy* is a penetration through the screen concealing future events. How are we to account scientifically for this? We rightly consider prophecy as a special sacred gift of God to select persons for the benefit of humanity. How is this brought about? I venture to make a suggestion with all due reverence. *Time* is a temporal succession of events due to things created. *Eternity* has no past, present, or future. It is an ever-existent eternal NOW. This is how the Creator regards eternity and time. God sees and resolves unalterably from all eternity, for He is immutable—"I am the Lord, I change not."—*Mal.* iii, 6). Prayer has already been accepted, ordained, and answered. Dr. Eugene Osty's *Supernormal Faculties of Man* (Ch. iii, pp. 38-45) gives some authentic examples of supernormal cognition ("metagnomy") in detailed vision of coming events, *e.g.*, the French and Polish wars.

Time began when God created out of nothing the first creature. If we conceive that God has designed a recording chart, as it were, of all events, He may permit a peep through a misty screen beyond this curtain to select individuals, holy persons and prophets. This chart suggests a living *Camera Obscura* or a Cinema of sound and television life pictures. Prophecies are not precise expressions of what are actually perceived but *are the interpretation in words of the percipient's vision*, which may be written down some time after experience. As Osty says of experimenters, "our modes of thinking have to adapt themselves to an order of phenomena manifest indeed on the natural plane of our ordinary sensations, but *originating* on another plane of which our physics can give

us no idea." Sacred prophecy, however, may be in a separate category, as it is more intimate with its origin, *e.g.*, Isaiah's visions which are dictated to him, and he asserts "Thus saith the Lord," as in ch. 53, describing Christ, whom he perceives as present before him, depicting Him in His Passion.

Hypnotism manifests amazing phenomena, and *Spiritualism* is much indebted to it. Narcotic drugs also affect the mind and are apt to deceive. I personally know Dr. Alexander Cannon, but reliable witnesses are needed of the levitation and other feats in Tibet which he records. (See also Mrs. A. David Neal's *Mystics and Magicians in Tibet*.) But the astounding levitations of St. Joseph of Copertino (A.D. 1602-1662) are well authenticated. (See life by Rev. A. Pastrovichi, trans. by Rev. F. S. Laing). Minor raisings of the body during prayer are frequently related in the history of the Saints, *e.g.*, St. Teresa of Avila.

Miracles—defined by modern theologians, are a *sensible, unusual, Divine, and Supernatural work*. And, they may be divided into *above nature, beside nature, and against nature*.

Dr. R. E. D. CLARK : It appears that much more might be made of the remarkable story of the resurrection of Christ. This falls into no psychic pattern and comparison with the hundreds of modern instances of hallucinations, etc., only serves to show how unparalleled it is.

Two modern instances of apparent prophecy which are frequently cited are (1) that of Swift, who says that when Gulliver visited Laputa he found that the astronomers there had found two moons associated with Mars. Swift then tells us their precise distance from Mars and also their periods. The moons in question were not discovered until 1877 and the figures Swift had given were not far wrong! "Several writers," we are told, "took a mystical view," believing that the prophecy had been divinely inspired. Even Camille Flammarion, the eminent French astronomer, referred to it shortly after 1877 as "second sight," and asserted that the prophets of many religions had been far less accurate. However, investigation has shown that Swift was only repeating, and satirizing, a common conjecture of the period, and the figures he gave were not obtained by inspiration but by arithmetic. (See S. F. Gould, *Journal of History of Ideas*, 1946, 6, 91.)

(2) Tennyson's prophecy in *Locksley Hall* (1842). This has often been quoted as if it were a wonderful prediction of modern warfare. The relevant lines are these (II, 119-124) :

For I dipt into the future, far as human eye could see,
 Saw the Vision of the world, and all the wonder that would be ;
 Saw the Heavens fill with commerce, argosies of magic sails
 Pilots of the purple twilight, dropping down with costly bales ;
 Heard the Heavens fill with shouting, and there rain'd a ghastly
 dew
 From the nation's airy navies grappling in the central blue.

Here Tennyson was picturing balloon flights and balloons had already aroused much enthusiasm in his day. Moreover, his "prophecy" was in no way original! (See C. Emery, *Isis*, 1944, 35, 139.)

In view of these instances one is inclined to wonder whether the long-term prophecies of Nostradamus will fare much better. Certainly any one who tries to read him will, as Mr. Wright points out, meet with little but frustrating obscurities.

An interesting modern prophet is Te Kooti, a Maori by race. His prophecies were written down at the time by a private secretary who alone had access to them and, in some instances, they are said to have had very remarkable fulfilments. (See Greenwood, *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, 1942, 51, 65.)

One other point. The Bible very often suggests that there is at times a kind of all-pervading idea, implanted in the world by God, which can be "picked up" by men. It is extremely interesting to note that, though with no reference whatever to the Bible, Mr. Whately Carington reached an almost precisely similar point of view in his book *Telepathy* (1945). This view will, it seems to me, explain a great deal in connection both with Biblical and non-Biblical prophecies. Has Mr. Wright any views on the subject?

AUTHOR'S REPLY.

I am grateful to the Chairman for correcting two lapses on my part. The expression about Psychological Research being the scientist of the trio was badly worded, and was not intended to deny that

Psychology was a science. I am interested to learn that Freud dealt with precognition in dreams. Personally, I am impressed with Dunne's evidence, and there are other examples of precognitive dreams in the books that I have mentioned. Some of these at least appear to lie beyond the suggested explanation of *déjà vue*. From time to time I find precognitive elements in my own dreams.

The problem of the powers of evil is complex. The Bible indicates that Satan and others may use miracles to deceive mankind (*Matthew xxiv*, 24). But does Satan have *complete* knowledge of the future? Apparently the angels do not possess this (1 *Peter i*, 12). But this does not exclude *some* knowledge of the future. If we grant that some human beings can on occasions penetrate the curtain, it would be unreasonable to deny some powers of precognition to Satan. One might then, if one chooses, hold that Nostradamus obtained his knowledge through the Black Art, in spite of his denials.

Mr. W. E. Leslie calls attention to the slender evidence for supernatural physical phenomena. It is true that the evidence is less strong than for the purely psychical phenomena of clairvoyance and telepathy. But Dr. Dingwall, who is one of the most "sceptical" men I have met, accepts the fact of the levitations of Joseph of Copertino, and of some others. The physical phenomena of the seance room are still a bone of contention. Personally, I think there is adequate evidence for some of them. A notable instance would be Rudi Schneider, who was willing to work "under merciless conditions of control never before imposed upon any medium or sitter." Mr. Harry Price testifies that under these conditions he and others witnessed "the intelligent movements (sometimes to order) of waste-paper basket, hand-bell, toy zither, handkerchief, etc. (*all these objects were right out of reach of medium or any sitter*); the tying of knots in handkerchiefs. . . ." (H. Price. *Search for Truth*, p. 142.) What is not proved is that these things are due to the spirits of the departed. The P.K. experiments at Duke University and elsewhere would suggest that they are due to latent and unexplored capacities of certain human minds; so that on occasions mind can have incredible effects upon extraneous matter. It is a pity that so far mediums

have not produced any phenomena of this kind in front of the infra-red telescope. I should have mentioned on page 45 that a part of the £250 challenge was the production of phenomena in front of this telescope, which enables the observer, though sitting in total darkness, to see all that is happening on a fluorescent screen. When I gave this paper, three mediums had accepted the challenge, but with negative results. Provided that the phenonema in their own home circles were genuine, the most likely explanation of their failure in the S.P.R. rooms was that the knowledge of the stringent test inhibited their minds, so that they could not produce the results. If the phenomena were due to spirit intervention, it is difficult to see why the test conditions should have hampered the manifestations, especially since it is alleged by mediums that the spirits of the departed are so anxious to convince us of their continued existence.

Mr. Leslie asks what I mean by "the life-force of God" (p. 35). This is an attempt to work out the implication of "In Him we live, and move, and have our being" (*Acts*, xvii, 28), and "In Him all things consist (margin 'hold together')" (*Col.* i, 17). I believe that all life and existence perpetually derives from God, and in this sense God is immanent in the world. This life manifests itself according to the quality of the creature. In man it produces a personal and self-conscious being, but it is none the less the same life that runs through all creation. The non-Christian mystic sinks, or rises, into an awareness of this life, and thus reaches the sense of impersonal oneness with all creation. By itself this awareness has no saving capacity, since man has fallen, and must be redeemed from outside. He also needs the incoming of a new quality of life that results in fellowship with the personal God. He must not only be born of the flesh, which brings him into the stream of life in the world, but he must be born again of the Spirit, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as his Saviour, into the higher plane of divine life that is often called in the Bible "eternal life." The story of the Tree of Life is relevant here, but it would be going beyond our subject to amplify this whole theme now.

Dr. Clark's warnings on prediction are salutary, but I think that some of Nostradamus's predictions go beyond the type of thing that he quotes.

I find myself in close agreement with Lt.-Col. O'Gorman, except that I think he has overstated the effect of hypnotism on releasing supernormal faculties. Mr. Eric Cuddon has experimented along these lines with almost, though not quite, negligible results. This emerges from his book *Hypnosis; its Meaning and Practice* (pp. 40—53), and when I heard him speak recently he had nothing further to add.