

Some Thoughts On the Spirit World.

By Emily Wright.

The study of metaphysics and psychology is a fascinating one. For centuries scientists have been endeavouring to decide not only upon the future disposition of that which for the moment may be termed "Personality" but have sought to discover its composition, its relation to the material, its place of abode in the human body and also the precise time of its arrival. The various theories propounded by these scholars have caused tremendous discussion in their time; they have been ruthlessly examined and scrutinized, refuted or accepted as the case might be—with reason to support the hurling of any denunciation thought necessary.

If there be even a germ of truth in any of their several theories the Christian wants it. George J. Romanes in his "Thoughts on Religion" said: "It is the absence from the biography of Christ of any doctrines which the subsequent growth of human knowledge—whether in natural science, ethics, political economy, or elsewhere—has had to discount," that is one of the greatest pieces of objective evidence in its favour. In other words there is nothing in modern thought of which Christianity as contained in the four Gospels need be afraid. It has stood the test of two thousand years, and now that the Science of Psychology is forcing its way to the front and endeavouring to prove that communication with the departed is established, the evidence adduced must not be condemned in a Corellian, wholesale manner, nor must the exponents of such be thrust into prison simply because there is a panic in the Christian world.

Sir Oliver Lodge has come out into the world to give a plain statement of what he believes to be scientific facts. He believes he has cumulative evidence sufficient to verify his assertions. Arguing from the action of mind upon mind without the use of the senses, he builds up his theory that there are certain minds which can communicate with the spirits of the departed.

Now Christianity must acknowledge scientific facts. If Sir Oliver Lodge can bring reliable evidence to prove the truth of his scientific theories, we shall be constrained to accept them. But the ordinary lay mind expects that scientists with their special training should be generally agreed amongst themselves, before consenting to accept their authority. Not yet, however, is there total agreement, but there is sufficient to make Christians think and investigate.

When the theory of evolution was first propounded, the religious world was shocked and felt that its doctrines would strike at the very root of their belief in the God of Creation; a wave of Materialism swept the land. How soon, however, was the theory adopted as being not incompatible with the simple and beautiful Hymn of Creation as given in the first chapter of Genesis. Indeed, the scheme of creation as carried out by the process of evolution is viewed by many eminent Divines as being the product of a mightier Intelligence than that required for sudden and direct creation.

Similarly, "the new Psychology" is being regarded with an enormous amount of suspicion—and rightly so, until its doctrines are examined and sifted to the uttermost. A wave of Spiritualism is sweeping over the land. Christians think it aims another blow at their religion. Many of them are angry, and loud in their denunciation of the "blasphemous and pernicious doctrine" of Sir Oliver Lodge and his confreres. Twenty years ago the Rev. Alexander Wright, in his "Life: Its Mysteries Now and After Death," said: "Spiritualism under the form of the living having converse with the spirits of the dead, is a grave and a damning sin, and he or she who will indulge in it sins alike against the law of nature and of

reason, against faith and morals, against Holy Scripture and Christianity, and by so doing deliberately cuts himself or herself off from the covenanted mercies of God—from life with Christ and communion with His Church upon earth." A truly terrible indictment! Would he have changed his opinion or would he have become more confirmed in it during the passing years and the increasing trend of thought towards communication with spirits already in the spirit world? One is inclined to think the latter—that he would have ranged himself in line with the protesting bishops.

If we could get used to the idea that a "body" need not of necessity be of flesh but may be of spirit, with form and shape—spirit-body, ether-body, psychic-body—we should gain something which would help us considerably; and if we could still further think that the soul—the ego—is resident or encased in the spirit-body and never leaves it, we should be better able to study both psychology and the Bible.

It is claimed that spirits have revealed the fact that "character" is the criterion of the status of the spirit-body when it has passed beyond the veil. This is very close to the Christian's belief; yet it has been suggested that such teaching puts a premium on sin, that we need not care whether we are "saved" or not. Such a suggestion seems absurd for if the adherents of this doctrine live according to their belief—that their life in the spirit world will be coloured by the character they have made for themselves in the physical—they are not likely to live a worse life than the man who lives a life of sin, relying upon a death-bed repentance to put him right with God—which is placing an extremely low estimate upon the former.

The doctrines of evolution assert that the end of the course in the physical world has been reached. But with the freeing of the spirit-body at death and its passing into its own sphere we might ask: "Has it not just entered upon the greatest 'age' of all?" Is it possible that God's Eternal, Divine Purpose includes the evolution of the spirit-body according to character, the gradual process of the perfecting of the spirit, the progressive change, onward and upward, of the spirit world as a whole towards that state of perfect purity when the spirit shall be accounted worthy to be like Gabriel—to stand in the Presence of the Lord? Some years ago Sir Oliver Lodge said, "there is an immense destiny before each individual"—it was an immense thought. But besides the possibility of a general plan of progress (if we dare express ourselves so) there is the voluntary progress of the individual who takes Christ not only as his Ideal, but who is born of the Spirit, who has thereby attained a high spiritual degree by means of that mysterious, sublime, close communion with Him.

That fraud and trickery and hypnotism have played a part in that which is known as Spiritualism has been acknowledged and exposed by scientists themselves. We should as soon think of doubting the bishops as of questioning the sincerity of Sir Oliver Lodge. It is asking much, as yet, to go the whole way with this scientist but surely there is a great deal of truth in his statements which is not incompatible with the Scriptures. The study of psychology in conjunction with Bible-study will bring out a new set of truths that have hitherto been ignored or neglected. The Bible abounds in "appearances" and "manifestations" which cannot be reasonably explained by the merely "physical"; but popular theology would rather explain these phenomena by any other means or not at all than acknowledge the natural explanation