

internal complaint, and was apparently fond of music, as she was building up an harmonium.

used to play the harmonium in church. An old album belonging to Mary had on her recent death passed into the hands of Mrs *Grant's* sister. It proved to contain two photographs on the third page, one of which was of "Aunt Susie." The sitters had no idea of the existence of this album, of which Mrs *Grant* was at once reminded on hearing of the above. She immediately telephoned her sister who lives at no great distance from her, and the statement was verified forthwith. The rest of the sitting was interesting, but not evidential.

A factor which lends a special interest to this case is that we have here a group of sitters connected by various family ties. The connection between them seems to be clearly recognised (this is by no means always the case, even where the medium might be thought to have some normal reason for assuming a connection), and the statements made at the different sittings form a consistent whole. The sitters were persons of education and intelligence, not convinced spiritualists and with a good grasp of evidence. Mr Thomas writes :

"All the ladies knew about telepathy and were chiefly impressed by statements made unknown to the sitters . . . They were anxious all of them to get at the truth. . . .

"I have heard a great deal about or known all the persons concerned in these scripts living and dead, and have been greatly struck by the livingness of the 'personifications' of the communicators, like the rest of us."

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## REVIEWS.

C. J. WRIGHT, *Miracle in History and in Modern Thought*. 8vo, pp. ix. 433. London : Constable & Co., 1930. Price 18s. net.

This book is divided into two Parts. The first deals with the general question of miracles and the miraculous ; the second applies the results gained in the first to the miraculous element in Christianity.

Chapter I gives an account of the development of European thought on the subject in the recent past. A profound difference of

opinion has gradually disclosed itself. There is, on the one hand, the traditional view that a miracle is an event which cannot be accounted for by the laws and agents of Nature and must be ascribed to the direct action of God. On this view the occurrence of miracles is an essential premise, without which the existence of a God who governs and directs the world cannot be established. On the other hand, there is the view that "miracles," in the sense defined above, can never be known to happen; that their occurrence is not necessary in order to establish the existence of a governing and directing God; and that, if they did occur, they would be a positive embarrassment to theism.

Mr Wright takes the second view. He carefully distinguishes with regard to any event which has been alleged to happen and has been called a "miracle" the two questions: (a) Did this event in fact happen? and (b) Supposing that it did, was it inexplicable by finite natural agents and the laws of nature, and must it be ascribed to the direct action of God? To the first question he answers that there is no event, however startling and unusual, with regard to which it is impossible that there should be such good evidence as to make it reasonable to believe that it happened. In this connection he discusses Hume's theory in Chap. II. He rightly concludes that Hume's contention that *no* evidence could suffice to make it reasonable to admit the occurrence of an event which contradicts a hitherto uniform experience is quite worthless. But he recognises that Hume did good service in pointing out the many sources of weakness which infect *most* evidence for the occurrence of such events. After allowing for this, he concludes that, among the enormous mass of strange events which have been reported in connection with various religious and magical practices, there probably is a residue of genuine fact.

In Chapter III the author describes the relation of natural science to miracle. Here the above distinction becomes highly important. When it is said that natural science cannot admit miracles, what is true is that it cannot admit that there are any events which are in principle incapable of that kind of explanation by natural agents and natural laws which science always seeks to give. "Explanation" in this sense is, of course, merely subsumption under *de facto* general rules, and it is a postulate of science that this is always theoretically possible. But natural science has no right whatever to assert of any alleged event, no matter how startling and unprecedented, that it could not have happened. The scientist who asserts of an alleged event that it could not have happened, and the theologian who asserts of it that it is a "miracle" in the traditional sense, are guilty of precisely the same kind of unwarranted dogmatism. Both are assuming that we know *all* the laws and *all* the agents in nature: for it is only on this assumption that the former could be

justified in denying that such an event could have happened, and it is only on this assumption that the latter could be justified in denying that it could be explained by natural causes.

In Chapter IV Mr Wright gives a sympathetic account of psychical research and kindred subjects, and uses their results to reinforce his contention that many alleged events which have been called "miracles" may well have happened, and yet may not be "miracles" in the traditional sense. It is plain that human minds have many latent powers; and it would not be surprising if great personalities, like the founders of religions, had these powers to so high a degree as to generate by natural causation very singular phenomena in the mental and even in the physical realm.

Mr Wright brings his argument to a head in the long chapter which ends Part I. This is entitled "The Idea of God and the Miraculous." He holds that belief in God is not something which has to be inferred from and justified by either the general order of nature or alleged "miraculous" interferences with it. Religious experience is a form of *knowledge* which does not need external support, though it has to be reconciled with the deliveries of other alleged sources of knowledge. To the theist who has this knowledge the whole order of nature is a manifestation of God's character and workings, though certain features in it may exhibit the character of God more clearly than others. To rest one's belief in God on "miracles" in a traditional sense is dangerous to theism in two different ways. In the first place, no event could possibly be *known* to be a "miracle" in this sense. At most the theist could *suspect* the presence of miracles at those points at which scientific explanation has so far failed. As scientific knowledge advances this kind of theism must continually defend positions which it will eventually have to abandon. Secondly, if God performs "miracles" in the traditional sense at all, his choice of the occasions for performing them, and his omission to perform them on other occasions, presents a most formidable ethical difficulty.

I do not propose to discuss the second Part, which is concerned with specifically Christian miracles. In conclusion I would say that Mr Wright has provided a most interesting and sensible discussion of a difficult subject. His range of reading is very wide, and he appends a useful bibliography of fifteen pages. I think that the book might have been shortened with advantage by the omission of some of the enormous mass of quotations, but this is a matter of opinion.

C. D. BROAD.

PIERRE QUERCY, *L'Hallucination. I. Philosophes et Mystiques. II. Études Cliniques*. 8vo, 2 vols. Paris: Félix Alcan, 1930. Price 100 fr.

The first of these volumes is historical: it contains an account of the various theories of perception and its relation to our mental life