

A HAND IN DIALOGUE

C. E. J. Fryer

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FOREWORD

As I was reading the pages of Mr. Fryer's typescript, I could not help comparing it with that courageous book by the late Bishop Pike entitled *The Other Side*. Both were written by Anglican clergymen; both were about paranormal phenomena in which the authors had become involved; both writers were (eventually) inclined to accept the genuineness of the phenomena; both are characterized by Christian honesty and intellectual integrity; both have dared to lay bare their inner feelings and possible heterodoxies, convinced that the cause of truth is greater and more important than their own reputation or future within the institutional Church. Finally, both books are so engagingly and expertly written that they are a pleasure to read and a regret to lay down.

Automatic writing is a strange ability which is little known except to parapsychologists and a few psychologists. Often, if it is practised, it results in script which contains nonsense, obscenities, or threats of violence and imminent death. On such occasions I believe the writer is under the control, not of malevolent spirits, but of the contents of his own repressed unconscious. The process brings material to the surface which the analyst might otherwise have to work at for a long time before uncovering. If such be the case, it ought not to be indulged in without professionally competent psychological supervision; those who try it 'for kicks' may well find that they get kicked harder than they bargained for.

Be that as it may, it is undeniably true that sometimes there emerges a writer whose automatic script is neither trivial nor nasty, but which makes sense of the hypothesis that it is the work of a discarnate intelligence making use of human hands and fingers. What are we to say of it then? It is one great merit of Mr. Fryer's book that he has strong convictions as to the provenance of the writing (or at any rate as to the identity of the guiding mind behind it, though he freely acknowledges that he may himself be a distorting medium through which that guiding mind has been refracted), but that he has not reached those convictions without a great deal of critical self-questioning, and he pays his readers the compliment of assuming them to be equally critical and questioning. 'Here are the facts,' he says, 'what do you make of them?' and we cannot escape the responsibility of making up our own mind about them - he will not make it up for us.

Chapter six of this book purports to be an account by Mr. Fryer's father of his life after death. Is that what it really is, or is it a likely tale invented by the subconscious mind of his son? If we take it at its face value, it implies that the father kept silence for forty years and only began to utter when his son had progressed from being a member of the Open Brethren to an Anglican of catholic persuasion. During that period, the father had himself made a very similar pilgrimage in the life of the world to come and had reached very similar convictions. It is easy for the sceptic to assert that the son has projected his own theological development on to the figure of his father; that the writing is entirely a product of his own unconscious mind, but he is interpreting it as a legitimation of his theological position by a departed spirit in Paradise. That is the sceptic's view - and it is difficult to say him nay. On the other hand, it is just as open to the believer to say that the father is really

alive and really communicating and that he was unable to begin doing so until his son was sufficiently spiritually attuned to him to receive the messages that he wanted to send. On this view the forty years wait was necessary before father and son were sufficiently in step with each other for communication to be possible.

We shall probably never know for certain which explanation is the true one. The relation between faith and knowledge is a delicate and subtle one. The data of psychical research are among the most difficult and elusive of any facts to interpret, and it is possible to be excessively sceptical, excessively credulous, or to take a position at any point on the scale between these two extremes. Thus the person who hopes that parapsychological studies will endorse the Christian faith, or will replace faith by certainty, knows neither the nature of faith nor the nature of psychical research. What I believe it is possible for the Christian to say is that it does not lead to self-contradiction if parapsychology is taken critically but seriously by a Christian.

That by itself will not release a man from the need to make his mind up with respect to Christian claims; and he will have to make it on the basis of faith rather than proof. What it *may* do is to strengthen the faith of the Christian to whom, despite the tenets of his religion, the 'assurance of conscious personal survival after death does not come easily'. That sounds a modest aim, but in our present critical age it should not be despised. It provides ample justification for the Christian to study psychical research with as open a mind as he can bring to it.

So far I have written about the effect of this book on the reader: What about the writer? The Church in the past has been at best lukewarm and at worst downright hostile to the psychic sensitive. This has done neither the theologian nor the sensitive any good. Each needs the other. The theologian needs his eyes open to facts which are in need of a framework of theological understanding, and the sensitive needs that critical discrimination which the theologian can exert upon his gifts and their exercise.

The sensitive also needs the help of spiritual direction. So does every Christian, but the sensitive has particular needs. It is possible, in being open to psychic influences, to be attacked by the forces of evil. In this connection, I was sorry to read of Mr. Fryer's experiences with the exorcist. That whole episode underlines the wisdom of, wherever possible, bringing exorcism under episcopal supervision, so that no member of the Church is exposed to that trigger-happy type of exorcist who is hidebound by his prejudices, ignorant of psychology and parapsychology, and insensitive to the real needs of the person to whom he is trying to minister.

Quite apart from the possibility of danger from the influences of evil, however, the sensitive needs to be under the care of an experienced spiritual director. It is possible to be so bowled over by one's own unsuspected psychic powers as to get the whole thing completely out of perspective, and to regard psychic gifts as the be-all and end-all of Christian life. Mr. Fryer shows how his own gift has developed in an atmosphere of prayer and spiritual discipline, with constant monitoring by experienced Christians whose judgement he trusts. This is vital if the exercise of the gift is not to lead to a lowering of the

spiritual temperature and the distortion of Christian insights. But can such monitoring *really* be done adequately and safely by a spiritual director who is not himself a sensitive as well as a Christian? Probably not; and here we can applaud Mr. Fryer's suggestion that there should be formed an Order of Christian Sensitives, though not everybody may want to see it as highly organised as he does. Is this not one of the things the Churches' Fellowship for Psychical and Spiritual Studies is uniquely in a position to sponsor?

Mr. Fryer would not expect me to endorse every statement or opinion in this book (and, for example, I find his book-tests too complicated and recondite to be convincing, and have the gravest of reservations on his views about re-incarnation); but I can wholeheartedly commend the reading of this book to the serious and questioning reader. He will be forced to ask the same questions which Mr. Fryer has been led to ask himself. He will not be forced to any answers; but if he comes to the conclusion that here we have a record of genuine communication between this world and the next (however distorted through human frailty and fallibility), I believe his conclusion will not be in conflict with his Christian faith.

Michael Perry Archdeacon of Durham

INTRODUCTION

An ordained minister of the Church of England who, in late middle life, finds that he has developed a paranormal ability in which his hand can apparently be used to write the thoughts of another man, who had died forty years before, has three options open to him. He can suppress it entirely; he can keep it as an entirely private activity; he can make it public and invite comment and investigation.

Had the writing at any time shown unpleasant tendencies, I certainly *would* have suppressed it. It has not done this, and if indeed it is my own father who guides my pen I would not have expected it to. Had it merely displayed trivial concerns and interests I think I would have discontinued it for that reason alone, for certainly that would not have been in character with my father as I remember him. I do not think anyone who reads chapters six and seven will think the controller of my hand has trivial interests, however:

For over six years now I have allowed my communicator to express himself at regular intervals, and from the nature and content of what is written I have become more and more convinced that it is my father writing, though I believe I sometimes unintentionally distort what he wishes to say. The things he says are helpful, spiritual in intention and Christian in essence. Up to now I *have* kept it as a private activity, and I have friends who would wish me to continue to do so for to many people any psychic ability is *ipso facto* suspect, unhealthy, tarred with 'spiritualist' associations, or a sign of mental instability. Such objections are understandable, and seven years ago I might well have shared them. However, the thing has now happened to me; my hand *does* take part in this strange dialogue; I am, I think, sane, and have suffered no discernible ill effects from practising this ability over a long period. Remembering the parable in the Gospel which reflects critically on the man who buried his talent in the ground because he was afraid of the consequences of using it, and influenced also by the belief which every scholar holds, that research ought to be published for the information of others, I have written in this book an account of the phenomenon, as it has so far developed, and given in the last chapter my own reactions and reflections, subjective, no doubt, but considered and I hope not uncritical, of the whole affair. This has not been easy, but I have tried to be fair and I have no wish to be fooled.

Since the communicator purports to be my father, I have thought it best to begin with an account of my early life during the sixteen years of my boyhood while he was alive, to show what sort of man he was. The subsequent account of my own life I have kept short, but have written at fair length about the way the paranormal ability developed, and followed this with examples of evidential material. Two chapters follow containing my father's 'posthumous autobiography' and his account of the sphere in which he now finds himself, and I conclude with my own thoughts about the writing.

As to the latter, I do think that it is largely what it purports to be. I have tried to set down a plain story for the benefit of those who are interested in parapsychology (which nowadays means most people, I suppose) and to add a small contribution to the pile of paranormal productions which exist in bulging profusion on the shelves of libraries such as the one at

the headquarters of the College of Psychic Studies. If, additionally, it happens to be helpful to any Christian who, like myself, has a sceptical mind and sometimes finds his faith hard to hold, it will have served a still better purpose.

1. FATHER AND SON

I was born in Harrow, Middlesex, in July 1914, the elder in a family of two; my father was then forty-two and my mother thirty-one. My father was at that time a professional photographer employed by a small firm in north-west London, and he kept to the end of his life a craftsman's love of this work; however, it was poorly paid, and marriage and parenthood made an increase of salary desirable, for he was only receiving two pounds a week. His younger brother, a chemist in an insecticide factory in West Kent, found him a post in his own department, and when I was six months old we moved to Tonbridge. My earliest memories are all of that town and its surroundings. We rented a small, semi-detached house at the south end of the town, about five minutes' walk from the church of St. Stephen, with its conspicuous spire, and it was here that I had my first introduction to corporate Christian worship,

My parents were not, as it happened, members of the Church of England, but belonged to a Nonconformist religious group, the Open Brethren, often miscalled the Plymouth Brethren (for the sect really originated in Dublin). More later of their tenets and practices; here I am concerned to emphasize my father's deep attachment to them. He was a fundamentalist Christian, and his religion was the centre of his life; he adhered to its principles resolutely, and nothing ever made him call in question the convictions in which he had been reared. A severe attack of rheumatic fever when he was eight years old had permanently weakened his heart and made him a lifelong invalid; even moderately vigorous exercise was out of the question, and to have run even a few yards might have brought on a heart-attack. This disability to a large extent cut him off from friends and youthful activities when he was a boy, and he became introspective and something of a solitary. As a man he had few friends, but they were close ones. He read deeply rather than widely - mostly in the Bible and in religious books sympathetic to his own outlook, but also in verse, making friends among authors as he did among people, few but choice. After my mother's death I found among her effects a *Book of Confessions*, the sort of thing which was popular in Edwardian times, in which contributors were invited to write their opinions on topics of contemporary interest and indicate favourite characters and passages in literature. Most of the contributions were trivial, banal or conventionally pietistic; a few showed taste; only my father's showed depth - as when he copied out George Herbert's poem *Love bade me welcome*. Among the Biblical writings St John's Gospel was the book he pondered on most, and from which he read aloud most often in Brethren's assemblies.

There was a Brethren's Assembly Hall in Tonbridge, but it was at the wrong end of the town for us, a mile and a half distant. It was small and not very active, with no children and no Sunday School, and there was no easy way of getting there on a Sunday. My father could not have walked the distance without acute discomfort, and a double journey with a

pram or push-chair would have been a strain on my mother. There were no Sunday buses; even if there had been I think he would not have felt easy about using one. However, the uncle whom I mentioned before, who had found him work in his factory, and who also lived in Tonbridge, suggested that we should attend Morning and Evening Prayer at St Stephen's instead, where he himself went with his family. The services were evangelical and fundamentalist in their tone, and there was a Sunday School of sorts conducted by the curate's wife. It would be a much better place than Cage Green Gospel Hall, the Brethren's place of assembly, for growing children. My father agreed, so every Sunday at eleven and six-thirty we were taken there, and in the twelfth pew from the front on the right hand side of the central aisle I became familiar with the sonorities of Anglican ritual and the haunting phrases of Thomas Cranmer.

St Stephen's was a Victorian church, one of the many built in imitation gothic in the early part of the nineteenth century by an Evangelical trust with deeds which secured the provision of clergy of safely Low Church fundamentalist persuasion in perpetuity. The services had to follow the pattern in the Book of Common Prayer, and this was done strictly, with no ritualistic accretions or modernistic excisions. Morning and Evening Prayer followed the printed seventeenth-century plan: specified psalms, canticles and set prayers alternated with selected hymns and readings from the Old and New Testaments, and there was always a sermon from either Vicar or Curate. There was no robed choir; there were no elaborate anthems; no incense (perish the thought!) was ever burned; everything was acceptably Protestant. We used small red-edged Prayer Books with dark blue cloth covers on which were embossed the Chi-Rho monogram. I often wondered what the monogram meant, but no one ever explained it; probably only the Vicar and Curate knew. So much of the liturgy was unvarying that I soon came to know it by heart, from the impressive opening sentence: 'When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive', to the concluding benediction. An observant child was bound to notice certain peculiarities. 'There is no health in us...miserable offenders': a little overdone, surely? Nobody looked very miserable. 'That we may hereafter live a godly, righteous and sober life', and not, presumably, get drunk. 'Lord God of Sabaoth', who or what was Sabaoth? Why did we say the Lord's Prayer twice, not quite finishing it the second time? Why was the *Venite* called by that strange name, which I associated with the sort of nightie my sister wore in bed? Why did it end so strangely? Did God really swear in His wrath? I had been taught it was wrong to swear. Above all, why did we 'pray for the good estate of the Catholick Church', when I knew very well that we were Protestants, and that Catholics were not proper Christians at all, but idolaters who worshipped the Virgin Mary, never read the Bible, and used to burn Protestants at the stake? Were a Catholic and a Catholick perhaps different people? The church interior, too, had its intriguing features: the fierce-looking eagle on the lectern, the surplices of the clergy (sacred nighties?) and, to the right of our pew, a stained glass window with a figure of a young knight in shining armour entitled FORTITVDE (why the V?).

Of sermons I remember nothing, though I must have heard many, which I am sure were

lengthy, full of Scriptural exposition, and evangelically sound. I do not recall hearing the stern, admonitory side of fundamentalism, though it must have been there. It was in a sister-church to St Stephen, St Peter's at Southborough, three miles away, that I first heard the uncompromising trumpet-call against sin. My father took me there one summer Sunday evening for a change - perhaps we went in my uncle's car, for we could not possibly have walked it - and there I heard a really frightening sermon, with an alleged quotation from some famous judge, repeated over and over again: 'Ignorance of the law is no excuse in an offender'. I cannot remember the context of the remark; I do remember thinking that the saying, so approvingly quoted, was unfair. However, it sent one small boy in a straw hat and sailor suit on his homeward way in a solemn mood, thinking of his own faults.

Going to church was on the whole a pleasant experience, which associated God and Jesus in my mind with dignity, grace and beauty. Sunday School was a more informal affair, held in the front parlour of the Curate's house. My memories of it are indistinct, and I do not think I could have gone there very often. I remember the Curate's wife as a young, pink, fair-haired, rather earnest woman who sat us around the room on chairs and stools and played the piano when we sang hymns and choruses. Crowded in as we were, I do not suppose we behaved very well, though only one boy achieved the distinction of being naughty enough to need praying for by name. Mrs. Griffiths read the Bible to us, and would expound it as far as she thought we could grasp its meaning.

The only piece of instruction I can recall was a reading from the First Book of Samuel, about the choice of David as future king of Israel from among his elder brothers: 'Look not on his countenance or on the height of his stature, because I have refused him, for the Lord seeth not as man seeth, for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart'.

My father was concerned that I should have religious instruction at home, and before I went to Sunday School he or my mother would read Bible stories to me and teach me to say my prayers. The stories, of the Old Testament patriarchs and other worthies, and of Jesus and the apostles, were told from a red-bound book with Holman Hunt's picture, the *Light of the World*, embossed on its cover; I think it was entitled *The Peep of Day*. I was taught to say my prayers every evening in the words of a children's hymn, and to ask God to bless my parents, sister, relatives and, friends. Once I incautiously added, 'and Pussy'. I was gently rebuked: animals had no souls so it was not proper to pray for them. I cannot remember when I was first given a Bible and told to read it, but this must have happened as soon as I could read with some fluency, for my parents set great store by Bible reading. I do not think I ever became attached to the practice to the extent of liking it, and I am sure I often stamped it as a duty, but there was no evading the regular Sunday exercise, when I had to sit down in front of a sheet of foolscap paper and attempt the 'Bible Searcher.' This was a task set for young people in *The Christian*, an evangelical weekly paper whose Editor, calling himself 'Uncle Tom', set a series of questions each week which could be answered by turning up a particular chapter from the Bible and reading it carefully through. The youngest contributors were required to do only three questions each week; the number

increased as one grew older until eventually twelve had to be attempted. On Monday morning the script was posted off to 'Uncle Tom', and in the next issue of the paper my name would appear with others in tiny print as having sent in a correct entry. Once every year a more thorough test was set, based on one particular Biblical book. I remember my researches into Job and his misfortunes ('Satan smote him with sore boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head') and his unsatisfactory friends Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite, and the three daughters he was finally blessed with: Jemima, Keziah and Keren-happuch. I enjoyed the savour of Biblical names, and one reason why as a boy I sided with the Roundheads rather than the Cavaliers was because they had sonorous Biblical names. Not that I would have wished myself to be called Bildad, or to have had to address my sister as Keren-Happuch; it was merely the amused enjoyment of the slightly incongruous. My favourite, the consequence of random browsing (for I do not think the Bible Searcher ever directed me towards him) was the 'great and noble Asnappar' in the book of Ezra.

In general, household religion, like church religion, was simple, reverent and reassuring. Quite early, however, I was made aware of fundamentalism's more sombre side - the emphasis on sin and the inevitable divine judgement and unending punishment that would be visited on the Last Day upon the unrepentant sinner who would not in this life (for there would be no second chance) accept Jesus as his Saviour and 'close with God's offer of mercy.' My father would kindly but gravely insist on this from time to time, perhaps after some childish tantrum, or after I had been disobedient or told a lie. More of this later; it became an important issue in my later teens and a reason for my detachment from fundamentalism. Enough here to emphasize that sin was taken seriously, and that as I grew up I was carefully watched. I was told that I too must make this personal decision for Jesus; I was not too young to do so. A little child could give his heart to Jesus; equally, he could die without having done so, and be punished in everlasting fire for his childish faults. I did not expect to die just then, however, and while we were in the house in St Mary's Road I was not pressed very strongly towards professing conversion.

When I was nine we moved to a larger house in the north of the town. I think this was done to make room for my mother's parents, who contributed some furniture and probably part of the rent as well. I did not much care for my grandmother, who had a snappy temper, but I liked my grandfather, a genial man with a short white beard and a sense of humour, who would take me out walking in the woods on a Saturday afternoon and who once cut me a bow and made arrows from springy hazel-shoots, using his tortoise-shell handled penknife. I was sorry when eventually friction developed between my mother and my grandmother to the extent that the latter made a sudden decision to leave, refusing to speak to anyone before she left; my grandfather had perforce to go with her. So we were alone again, and it was necessary to take in a 'paying guest' in order to make ends meet.

From my father's point of view there was one great advantage in living where we now did; we were only a few minutes' walk from the Brethren's Assembly Hall, to which we had not before been able to go. I am sure it eased his conscience to be able to go there every

Sunday, since with other Brethren he believed that their manner of worship was the only one then practised by any church which followed the true New Testament pattern, supposedly lost for seventeen centuries and only found again by earnest men in Dublin and elsewhere in the early nineteenth century, who left the Anglican and other churches to meet according to the Scriptural method. Open Brethren did not suppose (and do not) that true Christians are only to be found among their own number, but to their way of thinking fundamentalists in other churches went very much astray in the manner in which they offered corporate worship. For Low Church Evangelicals in the Anglican fold, such as those at St Stephen's, they had the warmest regard; their adherence to Scripture in matters of belief was much appreciated. It was unfortunate, therefore, that they continued in non-Scriptural practices in their corporate worship, and their persistence in baptising infants and their use of a baptismal liturgy which plainly said that the act itself imparted spiritual regeneration were regrettably unsound. The time had come for my sister and myself to be made acquainted with the truer pattern of worship, so after we moved to Manor Grove we regularly attended Cage Green Gospel Hall.

I had now to become accustomed to services that were less dignified than those I had so far known, and devoid of any graces to please eye or ear. I do not say this in derogation, but in order to stress that the virtues of the worship of the Brethren were different ones. I did not feel the change greatly, or hanker after the past; the new pattern was more tedious, that was all. My parents wished to go to Cage Green, and I did not doubt that they were right; more truthfully, it did not occur to me either to doubt or to approve, I was indifferent. What intellectual or imaginative life I had was lived on other levels, in the reading of boys' adventure stories or magazines about railways, ships or aircraft. A rusty Meccano set gave my creative instincts plenty of opportunities, and taught me more of the principles of mechanics than ever I learned at school. Literature in the accepted sense meant little to me, though when I first went to the secondary school to which the 'scholarship' examination assigned me I remember being issued with Homer's *Iliad* in the Lang, Leaf and Myers translation, whose style, pretentious and full of Victorian gadzookery though it was, appealed to the side of me that relished funny Hebrew names.

As for Cage Green Gospel Hall, I remember it well - a plain, rectangular box of a place, corrugated iron outside and pitch-pine within. The exterior was painted in dark red; of the interior memory preserves a general impression of dark brown and muddy yellow. A malodorous coke stove with a long flue which pierced the ceiling provided winter heat. At the far end from the door was a platform with a rail and central lectern and above it on the wall was a large text: PREPARE TO MEET THY GOD. Varnished benches served in place of pews, and the varnish was sticky in warm weather, so that when one rose to sing a hymn it was not unusual for the seat of one's pants audibly to peel away from the tacky surface, a glance down at which would then reveal the indented herringbone pattern of trouser cloth. The hymns we sang were such as I had never heard at St Stephen's; the pace was slow and solemn and without the benefit of an organ; there was a harmonium but it was only used during Gospel services in the evening. We did not kneel to pray, but sat with closed eyes. It was very unlike the gentle formalities I had hitherto been used to.

Vocal ministry in a Brethren's Assembly is open only to men; had not St Paul plainly said: 'Let your women keep silence in the churches. I suffer not a woman to speak or to usurp authority'. Only in meetings for women were sisters allowed to give addresses or offer vocal prayer. The principal Sunday morning service was the Breaking of Bread, which commonly lasted for an hour and a half. At the beginning, one of the brothers would announce a hymn of his own choosing, and a precentor began the singing at what he felt was a suitable speed and pitch. Another might then offer vocal prayer, standing up while the rest remained seated with closed eyes. Readings from the Bible, prayers, hymns and extempore homilies then followed, as one or another felt moved to break the silence. After about an hour one of the brothers would move forward to the table around which the benches had been placed, and on which was a white linen tablecloth; thereon were a china plate bearing a whole white loaf, a glass wine-cup, a decanter of wine and a two-handled money-box. He would make a prayer of thanks over the bread, using his own words but quoting at some point the words Our Lord had used at the Last Supper; he would then break the loaf into portions and break off and consume a small fragment himself, then passing the plate round the whole company for each one who was 'in fellowship' to do the same. (Those who had not yet been baptised were expected to refrain.) The same brother would then step forward to the table again, fill the cup with wine and give thanks over it, again quoting the words Christ had used, and after taking a sip from it he would pass it round for all who had broken bread to do the same. The money-box was then circulated, for contributions to the Assembly's expenses, overseas missions and any other cause which the Assembly thought worthy of support. The pattern of hymns, prayers, readings and homilies was then resumed. At length someone would offer what was plainly meant to be a concluding prayer; one of the leading brothers would then give out the notices, and the meeting would break up with people exchanging greetings with one another before they returned home.

Barely described in this manner, it does not sound an impressive rite, and to a young child it certainly had its *longueurs* and patches of boredom although I do not wish for a moment to belittle its devotional value for sincere participants. A sacrament, in the accepted religious sense, it was not, and it did not claim to be one. It was thought of as a specially solemn way of remembering the event of the death of Christ in the context of edifying ministry. Thus, it was supposed, the Early Church had worshipped; this was the pattern extracted from a careful examination of the scattered mentions of worship found in the New Testament.

Its supporters did not know, and would not have thought it mattered if they had known, what the Early Church Fathers had to say in the matter. The Breaking of Bread is the heart of their religious life, as the silent gathering is for Quakers or the Mass for Catholics. Insofar as it centres on the bread and wine, on the table rather than the pulpit or reading desk, the rite of the Brethren is nearer to the central Catholic tradition than are those Free Churches who (many of them) accord to preaching a greater importance than to the sacraments, and one need not doubt that for those Brethren who meet 'around the Lord's table' it becomes a means of grace.

For never anything doth come amiss
When simpleness and duty tender it.

This was how we worshipped on Sunday mornings at eleven o'clock. Six-thirty in the evening was the time for preaching the Gospel. The Brethren have no professional ministry, and any adult male member might be invited to conduct a Gospel service in his own or another meeting hall if he had sufficient readiness in speech. The evening Gospel service was for the benefit of unbelievers, the unsaved, as they were sometimes called - among whom the grim logic of fundamentalism included the children of believers who, though old enough to make decisions, had not yet made the great decision for Christ and been converted. There, accordingly, we were taken after tea each Sunday, to 'sit under the sound of the Gospel', to sing hymns and hear prayers and Bible readings, and to listen to an address on the Gospel theme.

The Gospel, as fundamentalists understood it when I was a child (and I do not think their convictions have changed in the last fifty years) was that all men were sinners, both by inherited taint from the sinfulness of Adam's disobedience, and also because of each one's personal wrongdoing. They therefore lay under the dreadful judgement of a just and holy God, Whose own perfect holiness was such that He could not do otherwise than punish them in eternal torment if their sin remained unexpiated, but Who also, in His inscrutable love and wisdom had sent His own Son to earth to be a propitiatory sacrifice for human sin. Christ had died on the Cross, and his Father accepted this perfect sacrifice as an expiatory offering for the sins of all mankind, so that everyone who repented of his sin and trusted, by a personal, deliberate, conscious act of faith, in Christ for his salvation, could claim freedom from punishment and a place in Heaven

Because the sinless Saviour died
My sinful soul is counted free,
For God, the just, is satisfied
To look on Him and pardon me.

So we sometimes sang. The sacrifice of Christ made this offer of pardon *potentially* open to all, but it could only become operative if a sinner consciously accepted it, in an individual act of faith to which he could give a time and place. For those who did not make this decision in the single earthly life which they had been granted, who either rejected or throughout their earthly lives foolishly neglected this offer of salvation, there was no blessed future state, but only the torments of Hell, infinitely prolonged, the just deserts of those who scorned the offered deliverance. 'So, my friend, be saved tonight! Accept God's offer before it is too late and the day of grace is ended.' Hymns echoed the preacher's warning:

Be in time! Be in time!
While the voice of Jesus calls you, be in time!
If in sin you longer wait
You may find no open gate,
And your cry be just too late.

Be in time!

I do not think I have been unfair in my presentation of what, in my boyhood, the fundamentalist believed the Gospel of Christ to be. I do not want, either, to seem to belittle the good that such preaching may do in recalling the careless to a sense of spiritual responsibility and in turning them towards the light. The urgency and sincerity of such simple ministry could redeem the underlying theology from its crudeness, and those who did respond were often better men and women in consequence; they did not *all* become religious prigs. The attribution to God of such savage rigidity, the cruelty presupposed in the infliction of endless torment for the relatively few sins committed during a single lifetime - even for the single sin of non-response in an otherwise virtuous person - by men and women who were in any case supposed to be fatally addicted to sin through the fault of their first parents: how can these be true of a God Whose nature is perfect love and goodness? However, those converted in this rough and ready way do usually (if my experience is anything to go by) develop into kindly people who learn to believe in a God of Love as they experience His love, and who avert their eyes from the logical consequences of what they believe, in the matter of fundamentalist doctrine. People like my father and mother, though they held these rigid views, were not always brooding on the dark side, and their own daily lives rebuked the crudities of the theology they felt bound to adhere to. My father was the soul of honour, straight in all his dealings, and generous too - as I learned when I once saw him give his dinner away to a tramp who called at the door. He had inherited fundamentalism from his parental upbringing and his whole spiritual life had developed in that milieu; it was something he could never question. He got from it all the good it could do him, but it never made him unfeeling, arrogant or Pharisaical - only, one now feels, needlessly unhappy at times.

We remained at Tonbridge until I was nearly thirteen, and during the last year or so pressure was brought to bear upon me, kindly but with increasing firmness. Had I been converted? Had I given my heart to Jesus? I now began to come up against a difficulty which remained with me as long as I did not question the validity of my parents' viewpoint. I must believe in Jesus as my own personal Saviour - yes, but what exactly *was* belief? It did not mean mere intellectual conviction, I was assured; it was not head-belief, but heart-belief that was needed. As St James had said with regard to mere head-belief, 'the devils believe and tremble'. But was heart-belief something one could be sure one really did have? How did one achieve it? 'You must come to Jesus!' Yes, if he had been visibly there I could have done so; he could have straightened out my difficulties and helped my unbelief. But he was *not* visibly there, and I could not feel that I was ever inwardly in touch with him; to try to talk to him inside myself, in mental conversation, seemed mere pretence if I did not first have the assurance of his presence. How did others manage to have such an assurance? How did they succeed in being so emotionally happy about it? I never dared to voice my difficulty; if I had done so I would have expected to hear that it was wicked to doubt. I am pretty sure that no one in our religious milieu, least of all my parents, would have understood my failure to understand.

When I was eleven I *did* profess conversion. Someone - I think it was my mother - asked me the familiar question, and I said, 'Yes, I did, last night.' I think it had been an emotional evening, with Gospel hymns played on the piano; I do not think I was consciously lying. General pleasure was expressed, but as I continued to be just the same kind of boy afterwards as before, doubts about the reality of my conversion were soon felt. I was now beginning to drift away from my parents in thought and spirit. I was also not doing very well at school. In my first term at Skinners' School, Tunbridge Wells, I had come third in my class, but subsequently slipped back term by term to somewhere near the middle, and school reports began to be critical. Now and then I was caught out in a lie, told more to prevent awkward questioning than because I had done anything very wrong. My world was a boy's world, which my father, now in his fifties, had forgotten and my mother had never known. Childish faults were magnified into great offences; a *Christian* did not do such things. Once I tore my trousers while climbing over some iron railings to play cricket in a field which, in theory, though not in practice, was private ground. My father was very upset. One day, he assured me, we should stand in the Last Judgment before the Great White Throne, and I would have to answer for all my sins; what could he then say on my behalf, but that he had faithfully brought me up in a Christian home and had showed me what was right, though I had not followed it, but had gone my own way?

Things like this upset me, for I was attached to my father - much more than to my mother - and I would have been glad to confide in him, as I am sure he wished me to. Instead we were drawing apart. I know he was worried about this, but he did not know, any more than I did, how to bridge the gap.

By the time I was twelve my father's heart condition was worsening, and in the summer of 1927 he was given notice at work. The poisonous chemical fumes that he could not avoid inhaling in the laboratory were affecting his health, and dismissal no doubt seemed to the firm which employed him the only course they could take. He was obliged to retire at the age of fifty-five on a very small pension, and it was decided that we ought to move back to Harrow. Somehow or other he managed to raise enough money to buy not only a house but also the goodwill of a small private school, which he and my mother planned to run together, and he hoped to supplement the income from that source by commissions for photographs; in this way they would make ends meet and complete the upbringing of my sister and myself. We moved in June 1927 and Tonbridge and Cage Green Gospel Hall saw us no more.

Going back to Harrow meant attending a new secondary school and worshipping at another Brethren's meeting on Sundays. I settled in at the new school without much difficulty, but my academic performance scarcely improved, and a tendency to lark about and be silly was reflected in report comments which greatly upset my father and caused him once to pay a visit to my form master. I was now on the verge of adolescence and beginning to develop appropriate interests such as a liking for poetry, at which I somewhat woodenly tried my hand in compositions, a few of which achieved print in the school magazine.

Girls were now beginning to matter. Perhaps I developed slowly, but it was not till I was thirteen, after we had come to Harrow, that I began to feel the attractions of the opposite sex. I do not know to what extent my father expected me to have developed any such interest at this stage, but about eighteen months after we had moved to Harrow he came into my bedroom one evening after I had retired, and said he wanted to read something to me. There was a book in his hand which he had carefully bound in a brown paper cover, and from this he began to read aloud. It was to be a serial, a chapter each evening. After one or two readings it began to dawn on me what he was getting at; this was my introduction to what used to be called the 'facts of life.' The earlier readings were about flowers and insects. I was bored and embarrassed and dreaded the chapters that were to come, about the real thing. I knew it all already - well, not all, but enough to be going on with, having been given the information a few months before by a school acquaintance who had been astounded and amused at my ignorance (I think I had failed to see the point of a joke he had told me) and who had made it his business to enlighten me on successive days as we walked home from school together, using direct language and blunt, Anglo-Saxon terms. He told me enough to shock me, but the shock wore off, and by the time my father tried to introduce the subject I had absorbed the new information and was quite ready to make jokes about it myself. I had to pretend by my attitude that it was all news; he would have been horrified if he had thought otherwise. Fortunately he did not seem to expect me to ask questions or discuss the matter with him; he was embarrassed as well, and when he reached half-way through the book and we were about to consider animal reproduction he handed the book over to me and told me to read the rest for myself, saying I should find it very interesting. I never did read it; it went to the bottom of a clothes-drawer and stayed there. He never referred to the subject again.

I do not think that he was the right one to guide me into this field of knowledge; had my Bible-class leader been a sensible person he might have been the right informant but it never occurred to people like him that this was something they well might do, that this was a matter too important to be left to half-informed and prurient schoolboys. Something of enormous importance was happening within one's body and a new emotional dimension was coming into being; a girl ceased to be a mere female and became a sort of mystery. However, in the circles in which I moved sex was a subject very carefully avoided by our elders; if the matter were referred to in sermons it was done so indirectly that one scarcely knew what was meant. A general reticence prevailed; the topic was taboo and so the more indulged in at school-playground level, in stories and limericks. It was 'smut'; no one ever suggested we were talking about something that could be considered holy; it was either animal, funny and gross, or confined to embarrassed hints; people were either obscene or tongue-tied - the ones I met, anyway.

I was now beginning to read more widely and extend my imagination beyond previous literary limits. I cannot recall any novels read at this time; verse was more to my taste. But two prose books stand out in my memory. One was Scott's *Voyage of the Discovery*, which I read and read again, wishing I could be an Antarctic explorer myself, imagining myself a fur-clad figure watched by staring penguins as I prepared to drag, with a few well-chosen

companions, a train of sledges into the unknown South. The other book was Macaulay's *History of England*. Outmoded it may be, and wrong-headed in its judgements, and partisan in its admiration of William of Orange, but it was written well, and a pleasure to read, as many works of history are not; it gave me my first taste of real history, as distinct from the sort of thing we were getting at school.

The Brethren's Assembly Hall at Harrow was a quarter of an hour's walk away from our home. Each Sunday my sister and I made the double journey three times: at eleven with both our-parents for the Breaking of Bread, at three in the afternoon for the Sunday School (or, later, the Bible Class), and with one parent at six-thirty for the Gospel service. Belmont Hall was larger than Cage Green Hall and had many young people; besides the Sunday services there were evening gatherings of many sorts during the week. It was therefore also a social centre around which its members' interests could cluster, and where its young people could make friendships, pair themselves off and discover future partners. The building was lighter, newer and more pleasant than the one at Tonbridge. There were chairs instead of varnished benches, hot water radiators in place of the coke stove, and beneath the floorboards of the preacher's platform there was a large cement-lined tank used twice or three times a year for adult baptisms. Behind the Hall were additional rooms for classes or committees. Some thirty families formed the basis of the Assembly, with about a dozen of the older men forming the Committee of Oversight which managed the Assembly's affairs and kept a general eye on its spiritual state and effectiveness. It was a predominantly middle-class gathering; there were only two working-class couples there, and the occasional vocal contributions to the ministry provided by their menfolk were, I'm afraid, sometimes mimicked and laughed at by some of us younger ones.

Attendance at the Sunday morning Breaking of Bread was a matter of obligation; only illness could excuse one from going. The table was placed centrally, with chairs arranged in rings about it. The more important brethren sat with their families on the inner ring of chairs. We sat in the second ring behind the broad back of Mr Donald Cameron, a Scot from Inverness and a leading brother, who was weighty both in frame and intellect; he was later chosen to be my guardian after my father's death. Worship followed the pattern I had become used to in Tonbridge, with the number of vocal contributions now more numerous, and the intervening silences shorter. I think, too, that the ministry was more intelligent and lucid. Mr Wren, the leading brother, was rather ponderous and used to speak weightily about 'these things' (meaning fundamentalist doctrines, or the special views held by Brethren about Church order), but Mr. Cameron was easier to understand and spoke in clear and beautiful English. During the silent intervals it was permissible to read one's Bible to oneself, and I soon found that the most exciting reading was to be found in the Book of Revelation. The Great Whore of Babylon intrigued me. Who was she, and what was a Whore? The answer to the first question, according to the general opinion of the Brethren, was the Church of Rome, 'drunk with the blood of saints.' The answer to the second question I obtained from school sources.

At this time, during my early teens, no devotional feelings occupied my mind during the Sunday morning assemblies. They were something to be dutifully sat through. One could always day-dream. I can only remember two occasions when a discourse by one of the brothers really impressed me. One was when Mr. Hawksworth, a dear old bearded man who had been a stationmaster on the London, Tilbury and Southend Railway, made an eloquent plea for the reunion of the different sects among the Brethren (of which there were certainly three, probably more) and the other was the only time when I heard a self-critical note struck. Mr. Cameron stood up, and in the kindest possible way spoke his mind about something which seemed to him to be a blemish on the Christian witness of our assembly. 'Suffer this word of exhortation, brethren', he said, and I was astonished. Such self-criticism was something almost never heard in the Assembly. I do not want to seem to sneer, because thanking God that we are not as other men are is a fault common in almost all religious bodies (though I never found it in the Society of Friends) and especially among the smaller ones which compensate for their smallness by an insistence that they alone hold to true teachings or true patterns.

Who has not known how pleasant is to sigh,
'Others, thank God, are less correct than I!'

One of the most firmly-held of fundamentalist doctrines was that of the imminent Second Coming of Christ to the world. The Coming itself is a part of the Christian faith, expressed in its creeds; I believe it myself, but not that it is necessarily imminent. Christ himself said that no man knew the day or the hour, but only his Father. My parents and their co-religionists, however, believed from their reading of the Bible, and especially of the prophetic books, that it was about to happen, and that when it did happen the 'day of grace' would be over. There would be no more opportunities for the unsaved to accept Christ; the dispensation of grace would end and another dispensation would begin, and all un-Christian people would be removed from the earth to await judgement. So the promise of Christ's return, eagerly awaited by the 'saints', as Brethren often termed themselves, became yet another warning element in Gospel sermons to alarm the unsaved into making the great decision. As I remember it, the teaching we were given about the Second Coming, derived from the Bible, and in particular from the Books of Daniel and Revelation, was that the world would rapidly become more evil in the last days (and was this not plainly so?) and that the Jews would return to their own homeland of Palestine (and were they not doing this?). At a certain moment all true Christians would suddenly be rapt away from the earth to meet Christ 'in the air', in company with the blessed dead. Deprived of all good influences, the world would rapidly become evil and corrupt. A wicked world ruler would arise, the 'Man of Sin', and in collaboration with the Pope and the Roman Church he would rule the world. Dreadful plagues and natural disasters would then follow, and millions would suffer in the 'great Tribulation'. (One school of thought held that Christians would have to endure this Tribulation before being caught away; there was much solemn debate on this point.) At length Christ would appear with the hosts of heaven, and a great battle would be fought with the followers of the Man of Sin on the plains of Palestine; Christ would be victorious and all his enemies would be destroyed. The Devil and his angels, who

had inspired the Man of Sin, would be chained and rendered harmless, and Christ would reign as king of the world from Jerusalem for a thousand years while the whole earth enjoyed a millennial Sabbath of peace and prosperity. At the end of this time the Devil would be 'let loose for a season' and a final conflict would follow; Christ would be the victor, and the Devil and all who had never accepted Christ as their Saviour, would, after condemnation at the Last Judgement, be thrown into a lake of fire, there to be tormented eternally. The New Jerusalem would now descend from heaven to a purified earth, and Eternity would begin, a future of perpetual blessedness for all Christians.

These ideas, or something like them, believed to be undoubtedly true because the Bible forecast that they would 'shortly come to pass', were firmly held by all the Brethren. I did not at that time doubt them myself; indeed, I did not, in my father's lifetime, ever doubt the truth of his religious opinions. I do not think that I pondered much on them, however. On one occasion, I must admit, I was alarmed after surreptitiously reading one of my father's books about the Second Coming, which was entitled: *The Midnight Hour and after*, by a certain Mr Naish. The author, by means of mathematical calculations derived from the Book of Daniel and Revelation, fixed the date of the Rapture of the Saints in 1927, while the Second Coming would happen seven years later. I had often heard solemn warnings from the preacher's platform that those not truly converted would be 'left behind'; others would hear the Last Trump, but not they. I remember, one Saturday morning in November 1927, waking up and realising that there were no sounds of movement in the house. I called out, but there was no response, and I thought: 'It's happened; I've been left behind.' I began to cry rather noisily.

My mother's younger sister, who was staying with us at the time, heard me and came to my room to see what was the matter - to my great relief, for she had undoubtedly been converted, so if she had not been caught up, no one had. I pretended to have been upset about something else.

Gospel meetings at Belmont Hall resembled those at Cage Green, but attendances were larger. Mostly it was the already converted who came, but they were expected if they could to bring any unsaved friends or acquaintances. We sang hymns from *Sankey's Sacred Songs and Solos*, a collection of twelve hundred hymns, some of them rather curious. I do not remember singing:

I should like to die, said Willie,
If papa could but die too,
But he says he isn't ready,
He's got such a lot to do...

but it was there for the inquisitive browser, as also was one with the lugubrious refrain:

Five minutes after I die!

After the Gospel meeting had ended, if the weather were fine, some of the younger brethren would wheel out a sort of portable rostrum from the room behind the platform, and would propel it after the manner of a porter's trolley half a mile along the road to an open space

near the Metropolitan Railway Station. Here an open air service of testimony would be held for an hour or so, as the young men and women from the Assembly stood around in a circle. After a hymn or chorus, a prayer and a round of shouted texts such as: 'Because there is wrath, beware, lest He take thee away with His stroke; then a great ransom cannot deliver thee!', the brothers in turn would mount the rostrum and each give a brief witness of what Christ had done for him. This often took considerable moral courage, especially when it was still broad daylight and the speaker's face could be clearly seen. The presence of the others, and especially of the young women, helped to fortify the timid.

Sunday afternoon was the time for Sunday School, which began at three and lasted for an hour. On arrival I would join my own age-group, a circle of boys under the leadership of one of the older members of the Assembly. We would all sing a hymn together, listen to a prayer by the Superintendent, have the register marked (there were prizes for regular attendance) and repeat if we could the text we had been given to learn by heart the previous Sunday. The aim appeared to be to instil a knowledge by heart of choice parts of the Bible, especially the Psalms; however, a text standing by itself might sometimes sound rather odd. I recall repeating: 'When I kept silence my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long', from Psalm 32. The group would then be taken through a passage from the Bible, and the class-leader would expound it; the occasion was informal, and one might ask questions.

At about twenty to four the Superintendent rang a bell, and all discussion ceased while he gave us a short homily. Another hymn and prayer, and we were then dismissed, changed our library books and went home for tea, to return two hours later for the Gospel service. I did not much care for Sunday School because, little snob that I was, I disliked some of the boys in my class who were less endowed intellectually, talked roughly, could only read the Bible in a very halting manner, and had no attachment to the Assembly. I think they came because it was one way of spending Sunday afternoon which guaranteed them an outing on a Saturday in the early summer, when we all went out by train to a common on the Chiltern Hills and disported ourselves appropriately. I am sure I was equally disliked by them. I once incautiously used the word 'precisely' in a class discussion and it was received with hoots of derision; it stuck to me for a long time as a nickname.

By the time I was fifteen I had graduated out of the Sunday School into one of the Bible Classes. There were four of these, Junior and Senior, for boys and girls. The Senior boys' class was large as its members tended to remain there till they either became Sunday School teachers themselves, or married. In the Junior Bible Class I first began to feel myself having a positive reaction towards the Assembly and all it stood for. I began to think that I did, after all, belong to this community. Not that my reasons, had I tried to give them honestly, were particularly spiritual. I was now beginning to think about having a girl friend (if there were one who would have me) and I knew that no female acquaintance outside the circle of the Brethren would be tolerated at home - and in any case I never met any others. I had a good memory for the Bible and a ready tongue, and I suppose I must have given my Bible Class leader the impression that I was a devout boy. At any rate, he

invited me to go round to his house one evening. I did not know why he had asked me to do this, but he was not long in coming to the point. Did I not think that the time had come when I ought to be baptized?

This was a very significant question. The Brethren believe that baptism is an act of obedience and Christian witness by one who has already been converted in consequence of a personal decision to accept Christ as his Saviour. In Catholic tradition baptism is the sacrament by which God receives a soul of any age into the society of His Church; this tradition is as firmly Anglican as Roman (though many of the Low Church find it embarrassing) but was strongly repudiated by the Brethren. To regard baptism in this way, the latter felt, was to suggest that one could become a Christian entirely apart from one's own choice, which was by fundamentalist definition impossible.

Baptism was for believing adults, not for young children who did not know their right hand from their left. Nothing *happened* to anyone who was baptized; it was the Scripturally appointed way by which one publicly confessed an allegiance to Christ which had already been inwardly given. Brethren, however, preserved this much of Catholic usage: no one who had not been baptized might share in the bread and wine in their morning assemblies, even though such a person were believed to have been converted. Only the baptized could break bread. My class leader was saying in effect: 'I am sure you are already a true Christian; you ought now at your age to take your place as a full member of the Assembly.'

I was very pleased that he thought so. He was the only person who had ever taken my conversion for granted. I had never told him I had been converted; he had just assumed it. If my parents had ever alluded to the matter, it was to express doubt as to whether I ever could have been, since my behaviour did not bear it out. I was really very grateful to him, and when he suggested that I should ask my father about it, I readily agreed to do so.

Now, I knew perfectly well that I had never had the sort of 'conversion experience' that others I knew claimed to have had. I could not give a date and a time to the 'great transaction.' But I also knew that some people had not had any sudden experience of this kind, yet were undoubtedly Christians in the eyes of all their friends. No doubt I was that sort of person myself. I *had* been thinking for a while in a serious way about the great issues; I believed about Christ as my parents did, though without fervour, and I had not yet felt the impact of influences which were later to erode that pattern of belief. I was certainly not the only person at Belmont Hall who took his religion calmly rather than enthusiastically. On a less spiritual level, I felt that the indignity of having to refrain from breaking bread when my friends, some younger than myself, were already doing so, was something I should not relish. So I told my father the same evening, plainly but without any enthusiasm, that I should like to be baptized.

At first he was utterly delighted; then, almost in a matter of hours, the pendulum swung right back when he found that my class leader had suggested the idea to me. He was indignant with him for, as he thought, trying to force me into a position that my manner of life so far did not seem to justify. If indeed I were not really converted, for me to be baptized would be a horrible thing and he did not really have any assurance that I had been

converted. I did not show the expected signs; I was often enough up to some boyish mischief; my school reports declared I was not working hard enough - and a good Christian is not 'slothful in business.' I never talked about spiritual things either to himself or my mother. It would be a tragic mistake to let me be baptized now; I might be acting a lie. So he flatly refused, and made a pained remonstrance to my class leader.

My request to be baptized, and my father's refusal, indicate and emphasize the extent to which we had grown apart. Knowing, as he must have done, that he had not now very long to live, he must have suffered a good deal of unhappiness from the distance that there now was between us. I was his only son, born to him late, the object of many hopes and expectations; he must certainly have wished to see reproduced in me the pattern of Christian manhood which he had come to regard as the ideal, and discover in me the sort of young man he would himself have wished to be if he had been able to live a normal, healthy life. He must have wished for a son sincerely evangelical in his convictions, with a serious outlook on life - no prig, indeed, but unassumingly pious, showing appreciation of the things of the spirit, and able to achieve, even in his teens, some sort of communion of mind and spirit with himself. Instead I had turned out to be, so it seemed, rather lazy and irresponsible, at most conforming without enthusiasm to the usages of a pattern of religious life which meant more to him than anything else in the world, never denying the things he stood for, but never showing concern for them either, and avoiding conversation with him instead of seeking it. We were inevitably at cross-purposes, and there was nothing that could be done. He had wished for one kind of son, and another had grown up in his home. Neither he nor I knew how to cross the barrier. Perhaps his age was one reason for the estrangement; perhaps, too, his inability imaginatively to realise how a real boy grew, developed and matured, for here his own memory could supply nothing. He had never had a proper childhood, or taken part in the activities of the young, in consequence of his heart condition. As for myself, I felt he never could understand the thoughts I had and the problems I faced; better to keep my own counsel and work things out for myself.

I was now on the point of leaving school. I had entered the Lower Sixth in September 1930 after quite a creditable performance in the London Matriculation Examination, despite my propensity for larking about instead of applying myself to my work. I knew, however, that I had no chance of going to any university, for I had not done well enough to merit any special consideration, whereas my sister's school achievements suggested that she ought to be the one to profit from any such opportunity, if one were to come along. Whatever real education I had gained at this time had come from omnivorous reading in whatever field specially interested me. I knew and cared nothing about politics; I never read novels; our religious standpoint prevented me from ever seeing a play or a film. I could write English essays acceptably; that was about the limit of my scholastic competence.

So far as the religious instruction received at school was concerned, I did not think much of it. It was dull, and flavoured with what my parents termed 'modernism', which meant a tendency to criticise the Bible and pick holes in it. I could see well enough that those who taught us 'Scripture' had no real interest in it, and I learned nothing at school to make me

question my 'parents' conviction that the Old and New Testaments (but no other books) were the Word of God, uniquely inspired and infallible, with no errors or inadequacies at all. Such questioning was to come later.

This centrality of the Bible is the heart of Fundamentalism. Where the Middle Ages accorded ultimate authority in spiritual matters to the Catholic Church, Protestantism, reacting against the Church's claims, posited the Bible as the only source of authority in matters of religion. The Fundamentalist holds this position without qualification. This is not the place to discuss the matter and suggest weaknesses in the Protestant standpoint, but this I should say, that it was upon the reef of its untenability that my faith was to founder in my early twenties. It was still safely afloat while my father was alive; at least, he never had a concern about *that* to distress him. I remember being able genuinely to reassure him, when he discovered, to his distress, that my sister was being taught in school that the human race had begun, not with Adam and Eve, but through evolution from lower forms of life. He asked me whether I believed what the Bible said, and I replied that I did. This relieved him, though I am pretty sure that he wrote an earnest letter of remonstrance to my sister's head-mistress.

His health began to fail rapidly from the spring of 1930; his heart was deteriorating and he had to spend long periods in bed. He was ill, on and off, till after Christmas; early in January he was sent into hospital, and I think he knew he would never come home again. I was called in to say good-bye to him as he lay in bed on the day when the ambulance came for him. I remember him telling me that he knew I was going to have a very troubled life; he said this as if he had had a disclosure to that effect. I do not think I was impressed by his forecast, but the earnest way in which he said it made me remember it.

On January 26th the word came through, by a telephone call to a neighbour's house, that he had died in his sleep at ten minutes to six that morning. My mother was in tears; I was completely unmoved. I had respected him, liked him up to a point, preferred him to my mother, whom I found fussy and irritating - but I knew as I looked out of the window at the grey January sky that I did not miss him. My own life and his never had been bound together by mutual sympathy, so there was now no wrenching apart. What he had done for me, in giving me the sort of upbringing he had provided, was something I could not have appreciated at the time.

By advice, training and example he had given me some things that were priceless - chiefly a firm belief in God which never left me even in my most agnostic moments. However, at the time his death seemed almost a non-event. I was equally unmoved at his funeral a few days later, in the cemetery about a hundred yards down the road from Belmont Hall, when I followed the coffin in a mood of emotional blankness, wearing my green school blazer with a black band round my arm. My mother had a simple memorial put over the grave, with his name and the date of his death and some words from a favourite hymn:

Severed only till He come.

Twenty-three years later she followed him there.

2. FORTY YEARS

Of the years which followed my father's death a brief outline should be sufficient. Nothing that happened to me during the forty years which followed upon his death can have much bearing on my relationship with him, which had ended in a lack of mutual understanding when I was a boy, and was to begin again (if my controlled writing is to be accepted as a genuine link with him) in my mid-fifties. Each of us had learned a great deal from experience by that time, and he has written his own account of his posthumous development (if that is what it is) in the sixth chapter of this book.

For some time after my father's death I remained a practising member of the Open Brethren, my beliefs being generally in alignment with theirs, though not in any fervidly enthusiastic way. When, about a year after the previous refusal, I again asked for baptism, my mother raised no objection, and I was baptized at Belmont Hall together with my sister and several friends, and from that time broke bread every Sunday as a full member of the Assembly. The baptismal ceremony itself, though certainly impressive and emotionally evocative to the spectator, did not much affect me; my religious life was pitched in a low key and emotion seldom entered it. It was not surprising, therefore, that I took no part in the vocal ministry at Belmont Hall and was never asked to conduct a Gospel service anywhere. I did a certain amount of open-air speaking, a sphere in which the younger menfolk were encouraged to practise their abilities in giving addresses and to learn the art of saving souls, so that on Sunday evenings near the railway station, and on Thursday evenings at a street comer in the nearby district of Wealdstone I might be seen and heard taking my turn in text-shouting and giving short testimonies. I never had much to say. Someone in the Assembly - one of the young women - produced some verses about a typical open air meeting, which included the lines:

Eric [as I was then called] gives a brief word,
Gazing into space....

and that more or less sums up my activities as a Christian propagandist during my later teens.

I left school within six weeks of my father's death in order to earn a small salary and contribute to my family's needs. My mother was now having to carry out unaided all the duties of running the small school which she and my father had taken over; it kept going but brought in only a small income to which my pound a week was not a great addition.

I remained at Harrow, living at home, till I was twenty, when I was posted (I was now in the Civil Service) to appointments first in Northumberland and then in Yorkshire, and Belmont Hall saw me on only rare occasions. Living on my own gave me more time to think and reflect; I began to develop political and cultural viewpoints of my own, and my attachment to the doctrines of the Brethren became weakened, changing by gradual stages into a sort of barely Christian theism in which what one did was all that mattered and what one believed was not of much consequence. After I had reached twenty-one I ceased to attend the meetings and shopped around for a while, eventually finding my way to the

Society of Friends, where I remained for twenty years. It was a religious attachment which did not commit me to any dogmatic position, for Quakers have no doctrines in the usually accepted sense of the word. I found the long silences of their meetings meaningful and helpful, and discovered that I was at one with them in their 'special testimonies', especially their pacifism. As a Quaker I spent the war years as a conscientious objector, partly in Civil Defence, partly in the Friends' Ambulance Unit and partly in doing forestry work.

Marriage removed me from home and turned my mind towards training for a profession. I settled on teaching and became a schoolmaster by way of the Emergency Training Scheme, specialising in English at first and later obtaining a degree in History as an external student. By the time I began teaching in 1947 I had passed through the period of greatest detachment from religious commitment and had begun the road back. A great amount of reading in the spheres of Biblical study and religious history began to inform my vague convictions. I began to have an appreciation of what Catholic Christianity stood for, and understand why men and women had lived by it and died for it. I have never as an adult been other than liberal in religious belief, and find it hard to side unreservedly with any viewpoint, but I felt the greatness of the Catholic European inheritance, whether in its Roman or Anglican form. Newman's *Apologia pro Vita Sua* moved me profoundly when I read it, and if only my emotional and aesthetic reactions had mattered I might have become a Roman Catholic, but Roman dogmatic insistences deterred me.

When I was forty-three, and teaching Divinity in a boys' Grammar School in North London, I began to feel a pull towards the Church of England. It was not that I was unhappy in the Society of Friends, but something, I scarcely knew what, was missing from their worship, which I needed. During the summer holidays of 1957 I was conscious of this persistent inward pressure; powerfully, though wordlessly, it seemed to say, 'You will go to the Church when you begin next term.' I cannot explain this from past influences, for I had only twice entered an Anglican Church to worship since leaving St Stephen's at the age of nine, and I had not read any specifically Anglican books.

However, at the end of that summer I was due to take up a new post in a Comprehensive School in Coventry, and when I went there I began to attend Holy Trinity Church.

Within six months I was confirmed. During that time I came into contact for the first time with Eucharistic worship, as it was done in the central tradition of the Anglican Church, and I knew at last what I had been missing. Even through the medium of Cranmer's rite, beautifully worded but theologically faulty as an expression of Catholic Eucharistic belief, I could feel the power of the Eucharist to draw and hold, and it brought me every week to the altar, to be present though I could not yet communicate. 'Draw near with faith, and take this holy sacrament to your comfort ... meekly kneeling upon your knees'. For twenty years I had worshipped sitting on a bench, but kneeling now seemed the truer posture; from between the lighted candles a voice was calling me to something deeper and more central. I had discovered that I was a Catholic. The moment of formal commitment and acceptance at Confirmation moved me almost to tears. It was like coming home after a lifetime of exile.

A few weeks after my confirmation on Layday(?) 1958 there occurred one of the only two experiences of a mystical nature which have ever come my way. I had been planning to make my first communion in Holy Trinity Church on Easter Day, and then to travel north to join my family who were on holiday in the Scottish Highlands. They had gone there a week earlier, and while I was alone I began to feel an inner pressure similar to the one I had experienced the previous summer - a monition this time to travel to Lindisfarne on the Northumberland coast, the island from which the north of England had first been evangelised by Aidan and his missionary monks thirteen centuries earlier, and make my first communion there. At first I wrote it off as a piece of sentimentality, but I could not get the impression out of my mind, and felt it would have a spiritually meaningful sequel. So I went. It meant a long night journey with many changes of train, and a long walk during the early hours, while dawn was breaking, along the shore from Berwick-upon-Tweed, made in complete solitude, with only the crying of gulls, the sound of the waves and the rustle of the dawn wind to break the silence. I had taken a chance with the tides, as the sands that divide the island from the mainland are covered at high water, but I was lucky, for the ebb had set in when I reached them, and I arrived at the church on the island only five minutes after the Easter Communion had begun.

As I went forward to receive the elements I wondered what I was about to experience.

I expected some sort of manifestation of the presence of Christ, but it did not. I left the church feeling disappointed and emotionally flat, had breakfast in a nearby inn, and then walked slowly back across the sands, downcast and blaming myself for being a sentimental fool. Nothing remained now but to catch the bus for Edinburgh at the junction of the road from Beal Sands with the Great North Road, and to make my way to Scotland. It was while sitting in this bus, on the front seat of the top deck, somewhere between Berwick and Dunbar, that something *did* happen, silent, inward and intense. A sense of the love of God came over me very powerfully. I do not know how to describe it. The setting was entirely secular and matter-of-fact; I sat on a bumpy seat clutching a rucksack and gazing forwards along the road; I simply looked out of the window and knew that God was Love. The experience lasted for a few minutes. In retrospect it validated my journey; I had not obeyed the voice for nothing.

Soon after being confirmed I began to think about taking orders. At first I meant to postpone this step till after retirement, but events in an unexpected way expedited my decision, and after a year's training at Lincoln Theological College I was made deacon in 1963 and ordained priest in 1964 in the new Coventry Cathedral. On neither occasion were there any emotional overtones. I was rather surprised to find myself so lacking in feeling, for my commitment was genuine, and the service of ordination splendidly and movingly done each time. However, I do not enthuse easily.

The three years after I was made deacon were spent as an assistant curate in a Coventry suburban parish, predominantly middle-class and very secular, which out of a total population of nine thousand contributed about a hundred of its inhabitants as more or less regular church members. Here, working under a humble and spiritually minded Vicar, who

treated me with great courtesy and understanding (for I think he must have found me difficult at times) I made more friends than I had made in the whole of my previous life. I enjoyed the conduct of services; sermons were no problem to one who had been a teacher. Celebrating the Eucharist, which I could do once I had been priested, left two special memories with me: one of the last Sung Eucharist I had celebrated before leaving to take up my present work, and so with a touch of melancholy about it to salt the bright autumn day; and the other of a midnight Christmas celebration to which a former pupil, a brilliant pianist, came from another parish to make her own first communion, as she wanted to receive it at my hands. No morning sunlight on this occasion, but candles flickered from a hundred holders on stands and window-sills; the church was full, and everyone sang the familiar hymns with a will. About such moments I am unashamedly sentimental.

In the flickering light it was as if we were in the 'lowly cattle shed' with Christ coming sacramentally into the hands and lips of old and young as quietly and unassumingly as he had come long before in the flesh.

One other memory remains vividly from those three years, though it does not centre on St Martin's, but on a valley in the Black Forest. It was like the moment on the Scottish bus, a disclosure situation, and happened in the spring of 1965. I had a week's holiday and went for six days' walking across the Rhine east of Strasbourg. I do not think I have ever felt so much alone in my life as I was that week, for I know no German and so could not converse with anyone I met. I was feeling my way into strange and marvellous country, with hills higher than any English mountains but covered with trees to the very summits, and netted with pathways along which one could walk from one end of the forest to the other if one wished, guided by small signposts bearing diamond-shaped signs. I walked chiefly at the three thousand foot level as far as Freudenstadt, one of the most attractive towns I have ever seen, and then returned by another route. It had been a severe winter and the snow was still deep in places; once I got lost among the pine-trees and knew for a while the primitive fears of one who has lost his way in unknown country; I had a bad half hour that evening! Coming down from the heights of the Hornisgrinde on the last day but one, I found a remote Youth Hostel near Sand, where I was the only occupant. I turned in early after supper; lying in bed in a large attic dormitory I read for a while in Ethelbert Stauffer's *Life of Jesus*. Here was a modern German scholar actually contending for the reality of the Virgin Birth! I was thinking about what he had written, when I felt something very hard to describe - not quite a presence, but a sense of meaning and of profound peace, like the previous experience in a way, but more tranquil. I lay awake for a while, letting it suffuse my mind, before drifting off into sleep.

By 1966 I had made up my mind to go back into the educational world to earn my living. I knew the parish ministry was not for me; there were some sides of it which required abilities that I knew I did not possess. Also, I was missing the actual work of teaching, which I had come to enjoy as a schoolmaster. The Bishop and Archdeacon were understanding men, and made no difficulties about my return to the teaching profession, this time to teacher training in the college where I now work. I could not forsake the altar,

but in a day of acute clergy shortage there would always be opportunities of doing voluntary work in churches on Sundays. In September I made my farewells to St Martin's, and experienced such kindness that I almost wished I were not going, but I do not regret the decision. I believed I could work best on the margin of the ministry, and looking back now, I believe that it was as well that I did.

3. HOW A DOOR OPENED

Nothing in particular calls for remark during the first two years of my work as a lecturer in a training college for teachers. It was good to be back in familiar surroundings and routines, and to feel once again the chalk between one's fingers. I also found plenty of work to do on Sundays in the old grey stone church in the small village where for a while we made our home; the Vicar was a cripple and very glad of assistance, so, until I moved into College three years later as a resident Warden, he and I alternated in celebrating the Eucharist or in conducting Evensong. Preparation for daily work now involved a different sort of study; I had to switch from theological, devotional and church matters to the reading of secular history again, though I was able to overlap the two in a course of study in the History of Christian Worship undertaken for the Divinity Department.

I found myself turning increasingly to wider matters of religion, and in particular to the problem of human destiny and the possibility of continued conscious life after physical death. A very deep, rather harrowing, but ultimately beneficial personal experience that came my way during the first six months of my lectureship was perhaps a directing influence here. Possibly it sounds surprising, but assurance of conscious personal survival after death does not come easily to many Christians, despite the tenets of their religion, if they are endowed with a critical and sceptical attitude of mind. 'Take me when I die to heaven, happy there with Thee to dwell'. Such were the sentiments expressed in the lines of the hymn I had been taught to pray as an evening prayer when I was a child, but it is not so easy for an adult in his fifties to envisage the survival of his personality in this simple way. This is something which one tends to assume cannot be demonstrated and is inherently unlikely in itself. As someone once told me: 'A dead body looks so very dead'.

We assume we can know nothing about 'that undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveller returns'. We tend to question, also, whether there is such a country at all. Eternal life as a gift from God is something in which Christians necessarily believe, but, when one asks what the term comprises, a number of philosophical questions need to be asked as well. Does such eternal life necessarily involve the persistence of human consciousness? Need personality as we know it persist? Are we justified in supposing that human relationships begun in this life can be continued in another? Is eternal life in any sense a demonstrable thing? For my part, I did not find the idea of surviving death at all unbelievable, nor did I find it, as some seem to find it, a distasteful prospect.

However, there is a difference between finding that something is believable, and actually being sure that it is so. People who can accept Christian dogmas on the authority of the

Church, or Biblical statements because they are made in the Bible, are able to feel sure. But one who has been born with a sceptical mind can never be sure in this way, though he may be ready to take the incompletely-known on trust.

The consideration which weighed most with me, in inclining me to believe in conscious human survival, was the feeling that only if there were such survival did it seem to me that human life made sense. What Shakespeare called 'immortal longings' are a part of the true life of man; expressed in art, music or literature they lift us, even the most agnostic of us, above the trivialities and animal levels of life, and make us feel that 'we are greater than we know'. I find it impossible to believe that such presentiments are compatible with a life that is tied to an ageing body that decays as it decays, and disappears into nothingness when decay turns to dissolution. A life with overtones of goodness, truth and beauty becomes a mockery if it lasts for only a short while, like the glowing iridescence of a soap bubble. Conceivably it is so, but the moral and ethical side of my nature rejects such a conclusion, just as what is logical in me rejects a manifest absurdity.

One morning in October 1968, when I had a spare half-hour before lunch, I went to the College library to fill in the time with some reading. I usually read through *Theology* and *The Modern Churchman* as they appear, and having already seen the current issue of the latter I fetched from the shelf the most recently bound volume of previous issues and thumbed rapidly through the pages to see whether there might be any article specially worth attention. I noticed a name among the contributors, that of a man whom I greatly respected for a stand he had publicly made, perhaps to the detriment of his career, on a controversial church issue about which he felt as I did myself. This was Canon J.D. Pearce-Higgins, at that time Vice-Provost of Southwark Cathedral. The article was entitled 'The Christian Hope', a heading which might have prefaced a string of platitudes. It was anything but that. I had not read very far before I found myself in a field that was new to me, for the article linked the Christian hope of immortality with the so-called psychic evidence for human survival of bodily death.

Pearce-Higgins was putting forward the proposition that when one considered the ultimate goal of human life lived on this earth, there was more guidance to be had than Scriptural statements or philosophical arguments alone could provide, valuable though these might be. He dealt with the picture that emerges when the utterances and writings of the psychically gifted, are considered and compared, showing how they pointed to the reality of a postmortem life in which the human personality could continue to grow and develop when the physical body had been discarded. He thought it was time for theologians to take this field of enquiry seriously instead of becoming involved in and speculations such as 'death of God' theologies, or fighting old battles over again.

Reading this article was for me a moment of significant discovery. A door had opened on a new prospect, and I felt that this was the most important thing that had happened to me for years. I had been given a clue to follow - the possibility that one article of my faith, which I had thought could never be demonstrated, could be put to the proof. If it were rejoined that one was expected to walk by faith and not by sight - well, I had been so

walking for a long time, but why reject a measure of sight if it were to become possible - if the mist looked like clearing, at any rate in patches? No reader of the New Testament can have any doubt that the earliest Christians believed that they had external assurances for the validity of their beliefs. There were 'signs accompanying the Word' - some of them very like what we would now call psychic or paranormal phenomena. People were healed through prayer (and still are, as anyone can discover who is prepared to look into the matter) and prophets had insight into future events. In those times, it is true, the supernatural was taken for granted; there were seers and soothsayers everywhere and even emperors took account of their pronouncements in framing their policies. The number of gods believed in was enormous. Against this background of religious superfluity Christians asserted that there was only one God and were called atheists for their pains; they did not deny the existence of other spiritual powers but thought them to be evil spirits masquerading as gods. Phenomena that we now call psychic were not denied but evaluated according to whether they came in a pagan or Christian context.

'Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they be of God', was St John's advice.

It is otherwise now. The usual reaction to the allegedly miraculous is one of incredulity, of refusal to consider spiritual influences of any sort. Paranormal happenings are explained away by various theories with varying degrees of plausibility. Christianity now has to assert itself not against a multiplicity of other religions, but against the negation of faith which a scientific attitude is supposed to support. With a few exceptions its exponents do not appeal to 'signs following' and perhaps do not think such signs are really possible now. A fashionable approach now is to present non-Christians with a non-supernatural Christ for their acceptance; it is not a very successful one.

Inevitably affected by the world-view of my own time, I had always discounted the supernatural. Yet it is not possible to harmonise the historical origins of the Christian faith with a wholly scientific-materialist conception of the universe. As St Paul insists, the Resurrection of Christ is vital to the Christian faith, which falls to pieces without it - and the very notion of a bodily resurrection is nonsense to the materialist. Is one justified in supposing that only what is humanly observable and comprehensible is real? Could there be other regions, equally real, to which the senses and rational mind could not penetrate, in which supernatural phenomena might be initiated and in which truth and ultimate meaning might reside? Was eternity perhaps the true reality, out of which time and its events were a sort of special extension? If so I had never supposed till now that there was any way of entering it.

What I had read in the library that morning suggested that some sort of accessibility was possible - to some people, at any rate. There were spiritual faculties by which inklings, at the least, might be gained of the eternal realms. The whole business was mysterious, and obviously open to misunderstanding and misinterpretation, and all too readily invited an unhealthy and obsessive interest. There were risks - but so had any form of investigation into the unknown. The apostolic injunction to 'prove all things and hold fast to that which is good', seemed to apply here as elsewhere.

That human survival of death seemed to have evidential support was something that heartened me. It was not the whole truth, or even the main truth of the Christian religion (and here I felt the Spiritualists went astray) but it showed a rift in the mist. If a mind that had once been associated with a particular body continued to operate when the body itself was dissolving into dust, then it could not merely be a function of that body. Either it was operating in a completely mental, intangible way, or (as Christian teaching asserted) it was re-clothed in a spiritual body. Any demonstration of survival would not of course prove the truth of Christianity, or of any other religion; even if the dead declared that one religion and no other was true, they might be subject to error, as we are. Christianity cannot be proved to be true; one can only live on the assumption that it is true, and see whether it works in practice. However, an obstacle to faith is removed if the survival of death can be shown to be a fact.

During the three years which followed my moment of discovery in the College Library I spent much time reading in the subject and making my own personal investigations. Of the books I read, by far the most interesting and impressive was *The Other Side* by James Pike, at one time Bishop of California. In this book Pike set down an account of the paranormal manifestations which had gradually convinced him that his son Jim, who had taken his own life while under the influence of a drug, was alive in another sphere of being, and developing his personality in an atmosphere of sympathy and help, moving from an immediate post-mortem condition of agnosticism which he had carried over from his life on earth to an awareness of the love of God and a sense of joyful wonder at His purposes. The special attraction of the book for me was that Pike, like myself, though an ordained clergyman, had a critical mind which found it hard to believe beyond the evidence and tended towards caution in theological assertion.

His book impressed me by its honesty and readiness to apply critical standards. Psychic literature exists in profusion and much of it is naive and gushing. However, I now felt that I had gone as far as reading could take me; if it were proper to do so, I felt I should now try to have personal acquaintance with paranormality in others, and see whether I could myself receive evidence of the sort that had convinced Pike. I had no strong personal motives for doing so, as he had; still, when one is a student, one is expected to verify for oneself, if one can, the conclusions that others have reached; in this matter I was a student and personal verification seemed a reasonable thing to attempt. This meant making the acquaintance of people who were psychically sensitive, and seeing what they could produce.

Two such people, who lived within easy reach of my College, became known to me. I made visits to them at intervals, taking a portable tape-recorder and going through the records carefully afterwards to see what evidence might be there. I will not say who they were - confidences have to be respected; I will only say that they bore no resemblance to the popular image of a medium. They were both unassuming women in later middle life who had been gifted paranormally since their youth. Both were religious: one was a Christian Spiritualist, the other a member of my own church, highly thought of by her Vicar. Neither

used her gift for personal gain. In the course of my visits I came to value them as friends, quite apart from their gifts as sensitives. From all the sittings I had with them, and occasionally with others of wider repute, I believe myself to have made three genuine discarnate contacts - a child, a young woman who had once been a pupil at the school where I taught in Coventry, and my father. I will confine myself to the case of the child for the present.

Sharon was the daughter of two of my friends, both teachers, who contracted a painful disease and died after unsuccessful hospital treatment. I was with her on two or three occasions before her death, and at her funeral I read the lesson in church and afterwards stood at the graveside. Her death affected me more than I would have expected, and her parents felt it very deeply indeed, for she had been a very talented and intelligent child. During a session with one of my two sensitive friends - I will call her Mrs. A—, some while after Sharon's death, I made enquiry after her and asked if all was well with her. After a short silence a correct description of her face and features was given, and some references, mainly correct, to the interior of the house where she had lived. Yes, she was alive and happy, but her mother's grief was holding her back. Would I tell her mother not to grieve? After the sitting I cut out from the reel the part of the tape which dealt with Sharon, drove to see her parents and played it to them. The mother, Janet, felt that it represented a real contact, especially as there was one reference, which was correct, about something I did not know, so that telepathy from the sitter could be ruled out here. I suggested that Janet might like to make a visit with me to Mrs. A. This was agreed and fixed for a date early in May 1970.

A few days before this I went by arrangement with a clerical friend of mine, Alun, who was then the incumbent of a parish in North Lincolnshire, to visit a clairvoyant in London who had a considerable reputation. He gave us a very interesting sitting with much evidential material, and towards the end he told me of a young person who had died 'in tragic circumstances' and who wished to send a message to someone - and the Christian name of Sharon's father was given. Then two other names were given, one being that of one of Sharon's uncles (as I found out later - I did not know it at the time) and the other being given as Lily or Nellie - I'm not sure which. Sharon's grandmother had been known as Millie. All this looked like a real and unsought contact with Sharon.

When I took Janet to see Mrs. A a few days later, there was, therefore, some degree of expectation. Mrs. A first went into a clairvoyant state, and spoke to Janet about a childhood friend who had died before reaching her teens (which corresponded with fact) and was now with Sharon. Then she asked Janet for 'what she had brought along with her'. Janet had brought a favourite book which Sharon had often read, and she handed it to Mrs. A to hold. The latter now went into trance. Neither of us expected what happened next - an address to Janet as if from Sharon herself, in the first person, in a manner consistent with the way Sharon herself would have spoken. Memories were adduced which she and her mother had shared. Janet was told not to grieve, for Sharon was happy. She spoke of the life she was now living, and became emotionally very much affected (Mrs. A was shedding tears).

Presently the trance-condition gave place again to a clairvoyant state, and a number of evidential references were made to Janet's present life, including a description of the buildings and surroundings of the school where she taught, which Janet could not place at the time, but recognised subsequently.

How persuasive this sitting was I could not know, but Janet felt sure the contact had been real. She decided to persevere in attempts to reach Sharon in another way. I did not know this at the time, but it was to have a very surprising sequel which involved me personally.

In the late summer of 1971 I had a short letter from Janet. She wrote to say that she had developed the ability of automatic writing and that Sharon was communicating with her; would I call and see her as soon as I could? I was surprised and intrigued. I had only been in occasional touch with her since the sitting in May 1970, and I did not know in what ways she might have tried to follow up what had happened there. I had no reason to think she was psychically gifted. At the time when she wrote I was in Scotland on a lengthy visit, but as it was necessary for other reasons to make a quick journey back to my College at the end of August, and as the detour to call and see her would not take me far out of my way, I did this.

When we met she filled in the background. Since Sharon had died she had been pondering on methods by which contact might be successfully gained, and had been 'trying for script', on and off, sitting with a blank sheet of paper before her and waiting to see what communication might come. She had done a good deal of reading, as I had, in the subject of paranormal communication, and was aware of automatic writing as one means; it had seemed a sensible one to employ since it could be practised privately and needed no recourse to others, and since there could scarcely be a closer link than that between mother and daughter, it should have been easier for Sharon to reach her in that way than through anyone else. Such attempts for a long while had no result, but she persevered, and eventually, after meeting with someone who had a friend who successfully practised such writing, and making an indirect approach to the latter, she was given advice about optimum conditions for success and the desirability of observing a certain 'decorum' (such as the placing of an empty chair for the unseen communicator). Janet observed these instructions, and in a short while was receiving script; her mother and deceased brother were among the purported communicators, but it seemed to be Sharon who sent most of the messages.

These latter were all of a private nature, seldom mentioning anyone not in the family circle. Now and then references were made to events that had not yet occurred but which later did occur. For example, she was told that the cat would disappear; shortly afterwards Tiger left the house one morning and never returned. She was told that the headmaster of the school her husband taught at was going to leave; no one supposed he meant to do so, but to everyone's surprise he soon announced his intention of retiring. A few such paranormal swallows do not make a summer, but they did help her to feel that the contact was real, and not an illusion of her own mind. As for myself, when she exercised her newly found ability on my behalf, I found the result impressive.

We discussed the whole matter and I looked at some of her scripts. It suddenly occurred to me to ask if she would allow my father to write a message through her, or to convey one through one of her controllers, supposing that he himself were willing to do so. I have already indicated that I had felt that genuine contacts had been made with him before, and I thought he might welcome the opportunity to do so now. Janet agreed, and I began to formulate my questions, asking them aloud in turn. A written answer to each one was given, and Janet felt they were coming in a manner different from that in which her other messages came. The pencil she held was strongly pulled back into a position in which it slanted away from her hand, and the style of writing was different from those of her other communicators - though I cannot say it bore any resemblance to my father's handwriting, of which I have some specimens. She also received a strong subjective impression of the presence of a good and benevolent personality; as she put it afterwards, 'If death means coming into the presence of people like that, then it's worth while to die'. This surprised and touched me. I have never myself had, either before or since the development of my own paranormal ability, any such impression; I feel nothing at all, when sitting with a sensitive or when writing under control. Janet does have such feelings.

I cannot now remember exactly what were the questions I asked, but in the copy which follows I show what I believe them to have been. The answers are a verbatim transcription from the script.

THE FIRST SCRIPT

I enquired whether my father was present - and also whether my mother was present; the reply suggests so.

A: We both are.

I asked whether it was permissible to make this written contact.

A: It is.

I asked whether I might use the same means to make later contacts.

A: He would prefer Charles to contact him personally through automatic writing, preferably at ten when others are doing it too, as he'll give it quicker this way.

I asked him when he wished me to begin the attempt to write.

A: The sooner the better. There is important work to be done. I cannot recall what the next query may have been.

A: He says, Pass on the message. He mustn't waste time; he's apt to delay doing things he thinks don't matter, but these are the important ones.

Another question which I cannot remember brought the answer;

A: Mother.

I made an enquiry about Elizabeth W., the young woman who had once been a pupil of mine, mentioned earlier in this chapter.

A: He says Elizabeth wants him to work at this writing too.

I asked if she were now able to reach her own mother by direct contact.

A: Not always, but there is some sort of communication, largely while the mother is asleep. Otherwise she is unable to accept Elizabeth's full survival as it really is.

I asked if direct mental contact would be eventually obtained.

A: She will reach her eventually. She does need the help of a medium. It is best to make as much contact as possible and as regularly as she is able.

I cannot recall what query gave rise to the next reply.

A: He can, but I think the answers will have to come from us. Yes.

I now made an enquiry about my father's present understanding concerning Jesus Christ - whether he still believed as he did on earth.

A: I feel more deeply so than ever I could feel on earth. Jesus is not only the go-between that I thought him to be on earth; he is the mediator between God and all living creatures everywhere. It is as though all transmission has to be made from Divinity through Christ. The Cross is most important. Remember its value and make its sign at every important juncture in your life. Remember the sign of the Cross. Things are as I told you so, but they are more so because I was not able to do them justice.

I asked if my life had proceeded in a way that seemed satisfactory to him.

A: I'm completely happy that you should follow your present interest in the Church. I approve formal ritual as I never did on earth. It is necessary as it protects.

I must now have asked what procedure to follow in attempting to let him write through me.

A: You will. It will take only a few weeks. But he must be regular. At a table facing the window with the curtains drawn. Wait till I have contacted you. Make no new moves till then.

I enquired about a personal friend; the reply was good advice but private and not relevant here. Finally I made some sort of valediction.

A: I wish you to write with me. Abandon the use of mediums until you have contacted me personally. Have faith in your own abilities; they are at least as great as those of the mediums by whom you set so much store. I know your love has increased.

We are both looking forward to being with you. You must regard it as an hour's loving conversation which we shall all enjoy. Pull the worlds together in this way and you'll do more good than years of church sermons.

THE SECOND SCRIPT

A day or two later Janet was given some further messages for me. Some I am omitting; they were warnings against associating with certain persons. The sequence ended with these words:

A: He will learn to accept my changed character as easily as I learned to change it. At least the seeds of wanting truth were always with me on earth, as they are with Charles. He needs my guidance to develop his spiritual awareness and to help him to judge his fellow-men more wisely. At present he, like you, is apt to make too many allowances for deliberate faults, and this hinders both the work he has contracted to do and blinds him to the truth which, as you are finding out, not without some discomfort to your own equanimity and peace of mind, must be reached at all costs, at all costs. Help him to feel the warmth of my love as you feel it. He needs this warmth. I too need the warmth of his affection, not in the prosy way he tends to treat me now, but in the true give and take of easy friendship. I thoroughly approve of his life and his present spiritual attainments. He need feel no doubts at all on this score.

I do not think that these scripts contain anything that can properly be called evidential, deeply interesting though I found them. Some features, however, call for remark. Firstly, there is that phrase: 'Regard it as an hour's loving conversation'. Neither Janet nor I uses that sort of language; I think it may well be in character with my father as he used to be. I do not in fact think that affection was at the time my dominant feeling; it is difficult to feel affection for someone you have not seen for over forty years. Interest, curiosity, expectancy, yes - but I would not have thought of the occasion as a loving event.

Then there is the reference to 'the prosy way he tends to treat me now'. Another surprising adjective; is it a word one uses much nowadays? Again, why should Janet criticise an inner attitude of my own towards a person she had never known? As to the criticism, there may be substance in it. I am not a naturally demonstrative person whereas my father may have been - I am not sure. Some of the scripts my own controlled writing has later produced do seem to reflect a rather impulsive man, a 'jumper to conclusions.' If one has to say which seems the most probable originating mind of the three of us, his own seems the most likely.

The most striking feature, to my mind, is the reference to Our Lord as a mediator. The allusion is clearly to a passage in St Paul's First Letter to Timothy: 'There is one God, and also one mediator between God and man, Christ Jesus, himself man'. Now Janet did not recall this text, though I thought of it when I read her script. I do not think it came from her mind. I do not think that she, any more than I, usually thinks of Jesus Christ in those terms. It is more like an echo from the Bible-reading background in which my father was nurtured. I remember the text I have just quoted as one which used to be shouted in open-air meetings when I was a teenager. A person of Protestant outlook, whose theological opinions included a great emphasis on the distance between a holy God and the sinful imperfection of humanity, 'whose righteousnesses are as filthy rags' (another text we used to shout!) is more likely to think of Our Lord as a mediator than someone of more Catholic outlook, who is more likely to think in terms of reconciliation than of mediation. Neither aspect is here being unfavourably compared with the other, of course; it is a question of emphasis according to viewpoint. My concern is to stress that the reference to mediation is not likely to have been imposed on the writing either by Janet or (telepathically) by me.

What Janet's scripts had done was to issue me with an invitation. Another door, an inner one this time, remained to be opened. It was up to me whether or not I made the attempt.

4. THE DEVELOPING DIALOGUE

'I wish you to write with me'. I had never expected to develop a paranormal ability myself, nor particularly wanted such a thing to happen, though I had naturally wondered what it might be like to possess one. Before describing how I tried to put my father's precept into practice, I ought to mention two previous events occurring since my interest in psychical research developed, which some might see as a shadow of what was to come cast beforehand. In the second sitting which I had with Mrs. A, her control, speaking through her, said, 'You will develop automatic writing', and nearly six months later, in a sitting with my other sensitive friend, I was told the same thing. Now, I suppose one could argue that I began to write in this way because I was told I should. But it is not as easy as all that. Would the fact that someone had been told he could run the mile in four minutes enable him to do so? It is not as if I had tried continuously to develop this faculty, as Janet had done; I remember making one or two unsuccessful attempts out of curiosity and then not trying again. The other premonitory incident took place when I visited a colleague in his home shortly after someone had presented one of his children with an Ouija board. I have a perhaps irrational dislike of this device but my friend is an intelligent and hard-headed man and regarded it with a certain amount of intellectual curiosity, especially when he found he could make it 'work'. From what it spelt out, he decided that a deceased relative was apparently operating it, if it were coming from a source outside his own mind. I was curious about it and asked if I could borrow it, so he got it out and showed me how it operated. In front of my eyes the thing spun round on its board, pointing first to one, then to another letter of the alphabet. It went too fast for me to see what it was saying, but my friend remarked when it had finished, 'It has just said, The man Fryer is highly psychic.' To which I remarked in reply, 'Well, that's what he thinks!', or something similar. I took the object back to my rooms with me and spent ten minutes or so with it, being careful to say appropriate prayers first. It did not 'work' with me at all, so I returned it the next day, confirmed in my belief that I certainly was not 'highly psychic'.

The request had been for me to attempt to write at ten o'clock in the evening in my own room, with the curtains drawn. For the next two weeks I did this carefully, observing the time and the conditions, and using the simple rituals that Janet observed, with salt water sprinkled round my desk and an empty chair beside it. I sat before a blank sheet of paper with the tip of a ball-point pen held touching the top left-hand corner of the paper.

Janet's writing had told me that it would only take a few weeks if I made the attempt regularly. What, I wondered, did 'a few' mean? It had taken her about six weeks.

For about a week nothing of any significance happened. The pen made a few zig-zags which may have been due to involuntary muscular movements. It was a tedious and boring business, and I would try to avert my mind from the paper and think of other things, or

(not so easy) let it go blank. An hour each evening passed this way. After that followed a period of squiggles and random marks, with my own Christian name occasionally appearing - though I could not feel sure that I had not written it myself. On September 18th, however, definite words appeared, including CHARLES HENRY (my father's name), and this continued for a while. On the 21st I found myself writing the opening phrases of the Lord's Prayer, and two nights later came the whole of the Prayer Book version of the *Veni Creator* ('Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire...'), slightly misquoted. Of course I knew both of these by heart already, but now I was quite sure that I was not consciously moving the pen - and if I were, why the misquotation? I had been told it would take a few weeks; in fact it took less than two. Disconnected words appeared again the following evening, but on the 23rd some lines of a Eucharistic hymn were written out, and two days later I found that when I wrote questions I received replies. Something like a dialogue was now possible - something rather like a long-distance telephone conversation - with incalculable possibilities, if only one could be sure that the activity was genuinely and entirely what it seemed to be. Over the next three years I was to discover to what extent this was not so, and how far there might be interference with the transmission - but also I came to believe that there was real contact with a mind not my own, and that mind a benevolent one.

In the rest of this book, for the sake of simplicity, I shall refer to the influence guiding my hand as 'my father.' In so doing I am aware that I am begging the principal question, but to introduce cautious and discriminatory qualifications every time I refer to this influence would make the book clumsy to read. It is to be understood, therefore, that I mean by the term 'the agent operating my hand, who claims to be the discarnate spirit of Charles Henry Fryer, who was my father on earth'.

My first reaction to the development of this writing was unthinking acceptance. Here at last, I thought, was a mode of communication which was clear and direct, with no intermediate medium to alter or distort the message or transpose it into symbols that might be hard to interpret. The writing came coherently, and frequently gave me material which bore no relation to what was in my own conscious mind at the time.

So, provisionally, I accepted it as what my father wanted me to know. For the first six weeks after it began I used to sit at my desk from ten o'clock in the evening onwards, sometimes for four hours, covering up to twenty sides of quarto paper, asking questions and being given replies. I kept to the instructions as regards place and manner of writing, and for a while kept the whole thing to myself, as I had been asked to do; only Janet knew of it. In retrospect, I think that I overdid the activity, though it does not seem to have had any ill effects. One consequence it did have; my periods of sleep were reduced at this time to about four hours a night. I did not, on the other hand, feel tired during the day. My sleep soon returned to normal when I later cut down on the quantity of writing done.

I asked a great many questions about my father's discarnate life, about others I had known who were now dead, about the extent to which his present understanding of things corresponded with or differed from what he had believed when on earth, and about

personal matters of my own on which his comments were invited. I shall not include any extracts from these early scripts because I am much more wary now, and realise how much my own presuppositions and, elements from my subconscious mind, and perhaps intrusive elements from other directions also, may have affected the end-product as it left my pen. I am sure there was much distortion, and I do not know how to sieve out the one from the other. In these early scripts, as in all subsequent ones, there was free response to my queries and comments which kept the conversation flowing, and it was almost always my father who brought each session to a close, as he still does, with a valedictory message and the sign of the Cross - a sign, he gave me to understand, that he would invariably use, even in the shortest messages.

In these earlier days he was concerned, among other things, to warn me against associating, with certain people - particularly one person - whose influence, he thought, was evil. The person in question was someone not at my college, nor associated with my religious life, whom I did not like personally anyhow, but if these warnings were no more than reflections of my own dislike of the man they were much overdone! I observed the cautions, however. He seemed very concerned at this time with the possibility of evil influences getting at me - something that I would not have worried about if left to myself - and insisted during the first few weeks on my employing ritual protections such as the cross marked in salt water on my desk and other parts of the room, and the utterance of the *Veni Creator* before each session. I still say the latter as a matter of course before writing. This apprehension of evil rather surprised me; I have never at any time of my life had any apprehension of evil as a thing to be sensed, and if pressed would probably have said there could be nothing to worry about. My father thought differently; he seems to believe as strongly now in discarnate malevolence as he did on earth, and in such evil will showing itself in particular persons on earth; there are demons, he says, who are fated to be defeated and destroyed, but the time for this has not yet come.

My scepticism regarding the factual reliability of the writing was aroused as it became evident that forecasts made by my hand did not always tally with events as they turned out, nor did its statements about an existing fact always tally with what I later discovered about it. Sometimes there was complete non-coincidence; sometimes the coincidence was partial. Contrary to what I had thought when the ability first showed itself, controlled writing is as liable to distortion as what is transmitted through a voice-medium. To quote two examples: during October 1971 I was told one Saturday evening that someone I knew was in grave trouble; the nature of it was indicated; would I go and offer the sort of help that was appropriate? The person was well-known to me, so I could make an unexpected visit without it seeming strange. I went across - it meant a twenty-mile drive - after church the next Sunday. It was very plain that there was nothing at all wrong. I took the matter up afterwards in a five minute dialogue on a scrap of paper, and my father seemed really puzzled. (But it is perhaps worth mentioning that over a year later something like the trouble that had been mentioned did come upon this person, so it may have been a piece of distorted and misunderstood precognition.)

An example of partial coincidence occurred in the same month. I had to buy a small article of jewellery as a present for someone. At the time I was paying regular visits to a nearby town in connection with teaching practice arrangements there. My hand wrote that a suitable shop would be found in that town near the Crown Inn. I had never heard of such an inn in the town; I looked for it and could not find it, doing a good deal of walking around, for I tried to follow the directions my hand gave me, using a pad of paper, and continually received misleading information that took me at least two miles from the town centre. I had been told to look for a large sign that said Crown Inn. At last I saw a huge notice painted on the blank end wall of a house: Crown Wallpapers. Sure enough, a few doors away there was a jeweller's shop, and I found what I wanted. But I should have probably found it much sooner if I had relied on my own powers of observation! Perhaps I had noticed the advertisement on a previous perambulation of the town and had remembered it unconsciously. But it could also be that my writing was exhibiting the trait it displays sometimes, of being half right about something.

If these demonstrable errors were bound to induce in me a scepticism that has not yet been entirely dispelled, there have also been a considerable number of hits to set against the misses. Two of these, from the earlier months, will be mentioned here, and there are others in the chapter which follows.

I have a cousin, a professional man of about my own age, whom I often visit as we have a good deal in common and enjoy one another's company. During late October 1971 I called to see him one Saturday, and we had a short joint-session in which he asked some questions, directed at his father, who had died in 1954 and was my father's youngest brother. Most of the written replies my hand gave, though plausible, were not evidential, but one of them made a reference, cryptic to me but clear to my cousin, to an event of which I knew nothing, which had happened twenty five years earlier; it was a matter which, while in no way discreditable to himself or to anyone else, he had chosen to keep to himself. This reference startled him and inclined him to believe that the link with my father was a real one.

A second incident occurred during the same autumn. While in my working room at College I was visited by the Vicar of the church I attended in the town where I live, and whom at that time I was assisting on Sundays. I had just that morning received a letter which disconcerted and upset me, and I was 'writing' about it; Neil surprised me while I was doing so. I do not think he knew what I was doing, but on impulse I told him about the letter and about my newly gained ability. We spoke about it for a few minutes, but he had an engagement to see a member of the staff about one of the students, who was involved in some activity which Neil wanted to discuss, so he said he would come back later. I resumed my writing, which told me that he would be discussing someone named Mary Anderson the name was spelt out in capitals. I at once turned to the list I had of all the students in the College at that time, but found no M. Anderson there; I wrote to this effect and was further told that it was not in fact a student whose name had been written, but someone who came at times to join in one of the student activities. When Neil came back half an hour later I

showed him the writing. He said: 'That is the name of the person about whom I have been talking to Miss C.'

Whereas at the beginning my father had wished me to keep my writing to myself, after a short while he said I might tell my Bishop about it. I had in fact wished to do this, and perhaps the wish affected the writing, which suggested that the Bishop would react positively towards what I was to tell him. This can hardly have been said to be the case. I discussed the matter with him; he was uneasy, and I cannot blame him. Another bishop once told John Wesley that 'Enthusiasm is a horrid thing, sir, a very horrid thing.' I suspect my Bishop, too, thought I had a horrid enthusiasm.

When I first wrote to him I had not realised how mixed the ingredients might be of what I was then receiving, and I may have given him the idea that I thought I was some sort of latter-day oracle. I had hoped that some kind of ecclesiastical investigation of the phenomenon might be possible, and that he was the one to approach in the first instance. He was extremely kind and courteous, and apart from asking me not to use this phenomenon in the course of my ministry (which I was very ready to promise him) he did not try to inhibit it. As to an investigation, he recommended me to get in touch with Canon Pearce Higgins, and I think he rather expected the matter to end there. When I contacted the Canon the consequence was not discouragement but a qualified assent; he seemed to think it might well be my father writing, and in any case, since the activity appeared to be doing no harm, and even supposing that it were instead the product of my own subconscious mind, it might be better to let it continue and allow my thoughts to escape, much as steam escapes from a safety valve when the pressure in the boiler is too high. But, he said, I ought not to write too frequently, or for too long a time. He recommended me to have a sitting with a reputable sensitive whom he named, to see whether anything came out that could cross-check with what was in my writing. All this did not remove my Bishop's uneasiness. Paranormal abilities are so little studied in Church circles that I think he was probably right to let the matter stay where it was. In any case, the ability appeared to be one that might develop over a long period of time, and investigation later rather than sooner might be better. If I had been officially examined then, and not been given at least a *nihil obstat*, I should have been obliged out of loyalty to discontinue the writing.

As regards the Canon's advice to cut down on amount and frequency, I took it and wrote, first for a very short period in mornings and evenings, then in the mornings only, and latterly, unless I have a special reason for consultation, on only three mornings a week. My father brings these sessions to an end and co-operates by ending them after from twenty minutes to half an hour, unless he specially wishes to say more. In regard to getting a cross-check, the sensitive the Canon suggested was very fully engaged at the time, so I managed to secure a sitting with a well-known Swedish sensitive, Mr. Bo Goran, in January 1972. We had never met before, and he knew no more of me than my surname, but he correctly divined a number of things about me, including the fact that I was in Orders, and made a clear reference to my writing. This seemed hopeful - though telepathy from the sitter may have been the explanation of the apparently evidential statements. Canon Pearce-Higgins

had also recommended me to make the acquaintance of a fellow Anglican, a lay reader in the diocese of Chester, whose paranormal abilities ran not only to clairvoyant and trance mediumship, but also to automatic writing, healing by imposition of hands, and even painting in oils at very high speed while in trance. I wrote to [Edward] John Cotton and arranged to visit him without saying why I wanted a sitting, and he was good enough to give me one. He went into trance, and his control, 'David', spoke with an upper-class university accent quite different from John's usual manner, and told me that he could see that I had a clairaudient ability. This seems a fair description of it. When I write I hear nothing through the ear, but I am aware in my mind of what I am about to write by means of a sort of inner ear. John and I became friendly through our mutual interest, and we met many times. He has written his own story in a recently-published book, *They Need No Candle*.

In January 1972 I took one obvious step to counter criticism, and went to see a consultant psychiatrist. I did not myself feel that there was anything wrong with my mental balance, nor could I detect any signs of concern about me in others; however, the mad commonly suppose they are sane, and it was at least possible that indulgence in a paranormal activity might have attendant risks. At least I could put myself in the way of getting informed advice. I went to see my doctor, who gave me an introduction to a psychiatrist in Sheffield, and I went to see the latter one afternoon. There was a preliminary interview with his assistant, a young lady who sported a rather bizarre manner of costume, but who was courteous, and seemed to want me to do most of the talking. So I told a plain story, was asked to wait outside the room for a few minutes, and was then called in to see the great man himself. He did not have much to say. Rightly gathering what was my chief concern, he assured me I was as sane as he was, and talked learnedly about partial dissociation, indicated that such writing was once more common than it is now, but was by no means unknown, made no reference to possible harmful effects, did not seem to be particularly interested anyway (and I do not blame him; he had many genuinely ill people to see), took his farewell, and that was that.

It was at about this time that my writing began to show two new features: the devising of 'book-tests', apparently meant to demonstrate to me that a mind other than my own was operating, and the occasional appearance of another person identifiable as someone I had known and who had recently died. To the first feature I have devoted part of the next chapter; with regard to the second, I will say more here. I do not want to give offence to any of the dead man's many friends, so I shall do no more than detail facts without making comments or attempting interpretations.

John Allen had joined the staff of our College two and a half years earlier as a member of the Music department. He was a popular, genial, hard-working man in his early forties, particularly well-liked by students, who would come to him with their problems, sensing that his interest in them was real, and he would put himself very much out of his way to help them. He was also a devoted lay member of the Church of England. It was he who obtained an organ for the college from a church which no longer needed it, and who spent

the best part of a summer vacation assembling and erecting it in the College Hall with the aid of student volunteers; it remains as his memorial. One Friday evening in February 1972 he died suddenly of a heart attack in his own house. He was a bachelor, and the work of informing his next-of-kin and straightening out affairs that needed immediate attention fell to my Vicar, Neil, who had been his closest friend and who alone knew of John's intention to leave the College at the end of the year and train for the Anglican ministry. Within three days of his death I was sitting at my desk, doing a short spell of writing with my father, when I found myself producing what was apparently a message from John.

The message was that he had left a folder of students' work on the table; would I see that it was returned to the Music department? I at once picked up my telephone, rang Neil, told him what had been written, and asked if there were any such things in John's house. He was astonished. There was a folder of students' work on the table; he had already removed and returned it. Now, I knew nothing of what John might have had in his house, and when the message was written I had not been thinking about him. Since this event there have been other messages which apparently originated from him, and more often than not they have been, in Neil's judgement, (for they were always for him) evidential. On occasion the manner and phrasing have not been unlike what John would have said - as when he wrote that he was very happy, and 'would not come back again for all the beer in the Horse and Plough', the hostelry he used to frequent. But this is scarcely to be counted as evidence.

During the later months of 1972 I began to be confronted by the criticism that my writing might have an infernal origin. Although the communications were always Christianly religious in tone, done in the context of prayer, and healthy in content, this did not remove the disquiet of some of my friends. The practice of any sort of psychic gift except spiritual healing is felt to be necessarily of demonic origin by many good people, who adduce the Old Testament denunciations of witches and soothsayers, and stigmatise sensitives as tools of Satan. Those who hold this standpoint are commonly fundamentalists who have no personal acquaintance with those whom they condemn; a little personal knowledge might erode their dogmatism.

No one who knew my own two sensitive friends would ever suppose they were inspired by demons. Still, the objection had to be considered. If one allowed that malevolent spirits could exist (and my father seemed to think they could), and if one further allowed that they could make use of human psychic abilities, and if one also admitted the likelihood that such spirits would deceive those they influenced, and be ready to pretend to piety at first until they had their victims thoroughly hooked, then the objectors had a point and it had to be looked at.

It could also be maintained that the activity, even if of purely inward origin, might yet be unhealthy, detaching one from real life and becoming an obsession. I was surprised to find that my friend Alun, who had shared in my earlier investigations when he had been vicar of a church not far from my College, but who had now moved to the south-west of England, felt in this way. I had kept him apprised of what was happening to my hand, and he felt very uneasy; he had a hunch that something was wrong somewhere. When I visited him in

February 1972 I attempted to write in his presence, and what I was given was quite meaningless - some nonsense about laying coconut matting down the aisles of his church, which made no sense to him at all; this naturally confirmed his reservations. I did not feel I could merely ignore his aversion; how was I to know that his hunches were not more reliable than my supposed cosmic telephone line? Alun is no fool and he had studied psychic matters for longer than I had. He recommended me to contact an elderly clergyman in Wiltshire whose judgement he greatly respected. I did so a few months later, and my interlocutor, after some discussion, seemed to think that the phenomenon was at least harmless. 'It's certainly benign, not malignant.'

I think this eased Alun's mind somewhat, but I was now beginning to feel that I wanted more assurance myself. The Church of England, like most other large bodies, shelters under its umbrella many groups with special interests, one of which is the Churches' Fellowship for Psychical and Spiritual Studies, which is professedly an inter-Church organization, though predominantly Anglican in membership. Its Chairman was Chancellor E. Garth Moore, a Fellow of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, and one of the most acute legal minds in the country - perhaps its foremost expert on ecclesiastical law. He had recently been ordained in the Anglican ministry. I wrote to him, and he wrote back sympathetically and asked me to go to see him. We discussed the matter and at his request I 'wrote' for him in the hope of getting something evidential. What actually came, as for Alun earlier, was quite without truth or relevance; among other things his mother's name was wrongly given, and wrongly given again at a second attempt.

Perhaps I was not writing in favourable circumstances; it was late at night and I was tired. None the less, his reaction was positive: 'I think you definitely have extrasensory perception.' He did not seem to think I was mentally or spiritually at risk. He introduced me to two very well-known psychical researchers, who were polite, considerate and cautious, but not prepared to plump for E.S.P. as Garth Moore had done.

However, I did not feel I had entirely excluded the possibility of demonic deception. Here, perhaps, I should volunteer a personal opinion. Non-religious persons will of course write off such a possibility in advance; if there is no God, equally there are no devils. However, quite apart from the fact that Christ and the New Testament writers speak of demons as if they took their existence for granted, poltergeist activities and some of the nastier manifestations of psychism support the existence of discarnate malevolence, I have never sensed the existence of such beings, but others have. There may also, conceivably, be evil discarnate beings who were once human. I had to allow for these possibilities. And one characteristic of evil is lying deception.

How far may one suppose an evil spirit will go with intent to deceive? Could a spirit which had written out a confession of faith in Christ, who expressed a horror of evil, who signed his messages with the sign of the cross, really be a demon who was prepared to give much in order to catch me at the end, like an angler playing a fish at the end of a long line, let out only to be reeled in later. Well, there is a Scriptural passage which speaks of Satan as one who can array himself as an angel of light in order to deceive the very elect. However, in

Scripture one can find a rejoinder to those who risk attributing good results to evil origin. 'How can Satan cast out Satan?' Evil can only produce evil; there is a self-consistency about it. 'A corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit.' One must speak with due humility here, but as my writing has gradually developed I cannot detect any signs in it that it is corrupting me. It has produced erroneous material in plenty, but nothing morally or spiritually damaging. I thought so a year after it began, and it still seems so to me. However, I decided to take expert advice.

A friend of mine on the College lecturing staff, who knew of my writing, and for whom I have had more than one evidential message, said to me on one occasion: 'Have you ever thought about getting yourself exorcised?' Till then I had not. Would it be a good idea, I wondered? If such an operation were to cause the writing to cease, then it could be taken to be the consequence of malevolent influence; in that case, good riddance to bad rubbish. If not, then, whatever the cause, at least the thing was not evil. It would be a rough and ready test, perhaps, and might have side-effects; should I perhaps be thrown into a fit? If the controller of my hand really were my father, was this not rather a discourteous way to treat him?

I asked him whether he objected, and received the reply that I could be exorcised if I wished; it would be an interesting experience for him. I consulted Neil.

Exorcism is not something which is lightly undertaken in the Church of England. Practices vary, I believe, in different dioceses. In ours there was at the time no man licensed to do such things. Presumably requests for exorcism come from those who are convinced that they are under an evil influence. It was otherwise with me; I found it very hard to suppose that my communicator was an evil spirit. Yet conceivably he was. Could something in the nature of a conditional exorcism be done, by a properly authorised person?

I consulted an Anglican priest whom I knew to be rather knowledgeable about such matters. He was the incumbent of a church some distance away; I had once assisted him in 'cleaning up' a haunted house. Since what he is here reported as doing was a trifle irregular, I will merely call Father X. He recommended me to go and see another priest, Father Y, who lives a four hours' journey away from me by car, so I set a Saturday aside and went to see him by appointment in November 1972.

The interview did not turn out very well. Father Y had himself had an unhappy experience with automatic writing, when he found his hand writing blasphemies; he had sought and received the appropriate treatment. He was not at all the sort of man to regard my own experience as a possibly good thing. I told him how it had begun. He was very kind and patient, but left me in no doubt that in his opinion I was possessed by a demon of a peculiarly cunning and malignant variety, prepared to go a long way to deceive me. A conditional exorcism would be useless; the thing could not be removed from me if I was not prepared to renounce it utterly at the outset.

We did not argue about the matter; I felt he was unreasonably dogmatic and that his own unhappy experience was colouring his attitude. He asserted as a fact that no contact

between the living and the departed was ever sanctioned by God. I know of no passage in the Bible which asserts this. There are texts, if one is to bandy texts around (an unsafe practice), which suggest that such contacts were not unknown in New Testament times. The injunction, in the First Letter of St John, 'not to believe every spirit, but to try the spirits, whether they be of God,' suggests that the first-century Church did not reject such communications out of hand. An Anglican is not supposed to make doctrinal assertions unless they can be 'proved by most certain warrants of Holy Scripture,' and although that sort of proof might have to be rather different now from what it was in the seventeenth century, when Biblical propositions were regarded, more like Euclidean theorems than they are today, yet it was still the recognised yardstick. By that standard Father Y could not prove his point.

I parted from him rather sadly, and drove unhappily home. It seemed as if I were now up against a brick wall. How could I pretend to call my communicator evil, when there was no evidence to that effect and much to the contrary? Nonetheless, I felt I had to face the matter out. Was I prepared to discard the writing if it did appear, after all, to have demonic origin? Yes. Was I prepared to take the chance that it might disappear of its own accord, even if it were good, because an exorcism might for some reason be inimical to its continuance? I felt that the answer here, too, would have to be yes. I had to take that risk.

I told Father X how I felt, and he listened sympathetically. I was not at all prepared, however, for the next step that he took. Among his friends in the 'Spirit baptism' movement was a Pentecostal minister who had co-operated with him in services of healing, and of whose ability to cast out demons he had no doubt, whatever his position may formally have been - he was not in any recognised ecclesiastical orders. One Sunday afternoon he suddenly arrived with his friend at my rooms and suggested that an exorcism be performed that very day. I wanted to think about it, but both were insistent; better get it over, they said, there was a car outside, and in a short while we would be at the church and the matter could be settled, they would perform the exorcism together. I was not at all happy. Father X stood in the apostolic succession, for what that is worth (and to me, as a believing Anglican Catholic, it does matter). I did not much care, however, for the young Pentecostalist, who was polite and pleasant but brashly patronising. He had not the slightest doubt that there was a devil waiting to be expelled. Despite my reluctance, I went with them.

At the church I knelt at the altar rail and prayed very sincerely that if my paranormal ability were indeed of demonic origin it might be removed. The others then placed their hands on my head and began the exorcism. The Pentecostal minister appeared to take the lead. He became very excited and emotional, kept repeating the name of Our Lord and bade the devil go back to the pit from which he had come. Eventually, after much repetition of 'Praise the Lord!' the process was deemed to be complete, and the minister began to reassure me, in a 'There, there, now!' sort of manner, that there was nothing to fear any more; the demon had gone and I was free at last. I suggested that they should both come back to my room, and we would see if anything had happened to my writing - whether the ability were still there or not. If the former, I should accept that it was harmless. They

agreed. On reaching my study I took out the book which I was then using for my writing, repeated the *Veni Creator*, placed the pen on the paper and waited. After a few seconds it began to write as usual, beginning with a text: 'Ye are my disciples if ye love one another'.

I do not think that this is a text in the sense of being an exact quotation from the New Testament, but the sentiment seems unexceptionable. There was no difference at all in the manner of the writing. I asked the others for their reactions. Father X accepted the harmlessness of the phenomenon. The Pentecostal minister could not understand it and supposed that he had not done it properly. He could not accept that he might have been wrong. I have never since then been worried on the score of possible demonic origin.

Since the non-event of the exorcism in November 1972 I have continued to let my father express himself through my hand. While most of what he has had to say has been personal advice and comment on the circumstances of my daily life, he has from time to time had more to say about the spiritual regions he himself inhabits. During September 1973 he wrote the 'Posthumous Autobiography' which is given in its entirety in chapter six. The following summer he wrote a long series of comments on contemporary earthly affairs - a sort of 'Reflections on Church and State'. They are extremely interesting and include many things I would never have thought of myself; they purport to be the considered opinions of the group of workers in the 'fourth sphere' to which he belongs. They are shrewd and perceptive, but far too long to include in this book, whose readers I would judge likely to be more interested in life in the discarnate world, than in what discarnate spirits think of our world. I have included, however, my father's account of the 'fourth sphere' and the relationship of those who inhabit it with beings on higher and lower levels; this is in chapter seven.

There have been occasions when my father has tried to give me 'book-tests' over the past two years, but this happens rarely now. He accepts that I do believe in his independent existence as my communicator, and I believe this more from his ability quite often to give me a correct prediction or a statement of what is happening elsewhere than in my own sphere of awareness, than from his manipulation of figures or his ability to read a book at which I am not myself looking. So I no longer question that he can reach me; my problem is rather: to what extent am I unwittingly hindering him from doing so more fully?

I have had the benefit, too, of sympathetic advice from a highly placed Anglican priest who has had a great deal of experience in the psychic field, and whose attitude towards what he has seen and heard is friendly but cautious. His decided opinion is that my writing might be a genuine contact with my father - the chances he places on that are about fifty-fifty - and certainly is not an expression of spiritual malevolence. He agreed with me, that I could not personally sit on the fence indefinitely, halting between two opinions, but would have to make up my mind one way or the other, bearing in mind not only the views of others but also the sort of things that no one except oneself can possibly feel. If I myself tend to favour the view that my father is really there, though the contact with him is distorted to an extent that I cannot estimate through the intrusion of my own thoughts into the disclosure process, this is because of a multiplicity of reasons. There are little touches and nuances in

the writing, mannerisms which repeatedly show themselves: it is all so like what a father would say.

With some diffidence I mention also the matter of my daily prayers. When my writing began I was accustomed to pray daily, but the duty was often done in a perfunctory manner and was sometimes forgotten. Christians are expected to pray daily for their families and friends, and perhaps this rule is often more honoured in the breach than in the observance; this is the sort of thing one can only know in regard to oneself. Since becoming an Anglican I had become more observant in this regard than in my Quaker days, though that in itself is not to say very much. During my curacy it became a matter of duty; one said morning and evening prayers every day in church. However, when I left the parish ministry in 1966 omissions of observance became common again; there would be distractions; one would leave it till late evening, when one was too tired, and so on. It was too easily possible for a busy person to find excuses.

It was my father, in my writing, who over and over again directed me towards greater regularity and expenditure of time in daily prayer. Besides personal prayers and intercessions for others, living and departed, he asked me to give time to daily reading of the Bible and to meditation. The details of the advice varied from time to time, as if he were tentatively suggesting, first this, then that way of doing it, but the main requirement was clearly stated: one hour daily in all. I find meditation a difficult thing, as I imagine most people who have active minds do; one can only hope that practice will bring one nearer perfection. At present I try to keep to a three-times-daily routine of short periods, including the saying of Morning and Evening Prayer, and use a rosary as a convenient device for keeping my mind on a fixed set of themes when I meditate. There is nothing out of the way in all this, of course; I make no pretence to being a spiritual athlete. I only mention it as an indication that the advice I am given in such matters is good and healthy. If these are good fruits, the tree cannot be corrupt.

So much for the development of this faculty; now for some account of it as observable phenomenon. I do not know whether any other similarly endowed person has tried analytically to describe his ability; such a person, reading this book, may find it interesting to make comparisons and contrasts, and I should welcome his views and reactions.

The appearance of the writing. The words, as they appear on the page, come in a handwriting not my own, though in some respects resembling it; the two are sufficiently different to be readily distinguishable. My father's writing has a pronounced forward angle to its strokes, from top right to bottom left; my own is nearer to being upright. His letters, too, require more room on the page, since the freely-flowing nature of the writing spaces them farther apart.

As to the shape of the letters, there are two points of difference from my own. Capital H is made in four strokes without the pen leaving the paper, whereas I always form that letter in two separate operations—an up-and-down movement like a copperplate S and a downstroke to the right followed by a backward loop intersecting the former stroke. The

other difference is that every word written under control has a lead-in tail. This is something I do not often do when writing for myself.

Apart from full stops, punctuation is not included and has to be supplied afterwards. A full stop is usually made as a tiny circle which, if there is much ink on the pen-nib, shows itself as a large dot through the ink running inwards. The small letter T is never crossed and the small I is not dotted; I do not usually bother to fill these in afterwards if the meaning is clear.

I have been told that it is usual in automatic writing for the words to be run together with no lifting of the pen from the paper. This does not happen with me. I always know, or nearly always, what the word is to be when it is about to be written, so I lift the pen and shift it to make the next word.

Mental awareness at the time of writing. When I begin to write I invite my father to open the conversation, perhaps asking a question as well. Usually it is a matter of seconds, seldom as much as half a minute, before the first word comes, and as it comes I know what it is to be. I am usually aware of each word a split second before it is written, as long as this is happening the writing proceeds smoothly and rapidly. When a sentence comes to an end I am aware of blankness rather than a word, and the pen makes, the small circle which stands for a full stop.

This awareness does not have any audible accompaniment; I hear nothing with my ears, but the words, so to speak, suddenly drop into my mind. As I write they come in rapid sequence, presenting themselves for my attention. Often I have a vague idea of the general drift of what is to come, though never for more than a few seconds ahead. Occasionally the word will not come into my mind at all, and then the pen stops writing.

It may then begin slowly and hesitantly to shape letters, or make a series of rings which I have learned to interpret as: 'start again'. Alternatively, it may slowly produce a syllable; a word beginning with this syllable will then come into my mind, and if it is the right one the word is rapidly completed. The words as they are given can be quite unexpected. Sometimes the intended word is spelt as another word of similar sound - for example, I once wrote 'riot' when 'rite' was intended. Very occasionally I am corrected at the time if I make this sort of error, but I do not think my father always knows what I am writing; his own awareness, if I may so express it, resides in my mind, not in my eyes. The whole process suggests that I am hearing, perhaps sometimes mis-hearing, with a sort of inner ear.

The mechanism of the writing. This is quite mysterious; the pen moves with no apparent material cause. I am quite sure that my hand does not write in the usual way, through muscular action by my fingers and forearm; the way in which I sometimes hold the pen shows that this cannot be so. I contribute only the slight necessary downward pressure on the paper, and another slight but sufficient lateral pressure traces out the letters. Usually when I write in this manner I let my hand swivel from the wrist in the customary way, but I have found that if I place my left hand under my right forearm about three inches from the

elbow, taking the weight off the forearm and letting the base of the hand rise clear of the paper, the writing proceeds with equal ease and the style does not alter. More surprisingly, if I hold the pen by the upper end of the barrel, so long as there is enough pressure downwards upon the paper, the words continue to be produced, indistinguishably from how they appeared before.

The rate of the writing can vary; usually it is slightly faster than my normal writing. Once, during the early period, of its development, it speeded up to a very rapid rate, seemingly with the object of suggesting that coherent material could be given quicker than any I could think up for myself. When I was aware of what was happening I took timings from the second hand of my watch for each quarto sheet that was being filled in, and after four of these had been covered in ten minutes I stopped writing for a while, feeling mentally exhausted, and lay down for half an hour. Then I counted the number of words on the four sheets and found that I had been writing at the rate of about three thousand words an hour. What was written, though rather repetitive, was perfectly coherent.

Optimum conditions for the writing. Certain conditions make its production easier. There should be a firm base - say a table of comfortable height.

The paper must be firmly held. I date and number each page, making the sign of the Cross in the top centre. For the actual writing I used at first either a ball-point or a stylus pen, but of late I have kept a special fountain-pen to make a readable script which can be photocopied if necessary.

It is necessary to come to each session with a fresh and alert mind. Sometimes when I have not done this the writing has degenerated into nonsense; I suppose my subconscious mind on such occasions pours out sheer rubbish that pushes aside any material of genuinely discarnate origin. Perhaps there is always some seepage of this sort. I find that I write most clearly and lucidly if I do it early in the morning, after rising and saying my morning office. It does not seem to matter if I have to break off for a while; it re-starts without difficulty, taking up the previous theme.

Style and manner of writing. The literary style is certainly not my own. In general it is more expansive and prolix, and there is a tendency to use phrases that I do not customarily use myself, such as 'On this score ...' or 'Your best plan ...'. One trick my father uses occasionally is to produce a string of alliterative epithets, excessive to a nice literary palate; I fancy 'he only does it to annoy because he knows it teases'. He is teasing me to make me see that this is exactly the way I would not write myself. He once referred to a friend of mine, a College lecturer who fortunately has a good sense of humour, and for whom I have had evidential messages, as 'the one and only Onion observer'. The reference was to a private joke. I never write in this way myself.

He had a tendency, too, to spell things out at length and to make references allusively rather than directly. Sometimes he refers to my friend Alun as 'your friend in the country where the cider apples grow'. If he wants to give me a number, he often does so allusively; he may write 'the number of fingers on one hand' or 'sum of your age and my age at death'.

Perhaps this is a way of preventing my own mind from intervening - a sort of verbal stalking, proceeding circuitously to get there the more surely in the end.

It is a noticeable feature of his communications that he uses 'we', not 'I'; the latter word appears only rarely. He says he is one of a group, operating in the 'fourth sphere', that controls me collectively, with himself as the actual point of mental contact - a sort of committee of like-minded discarnates who operate in harmony but can act separately. The ready association of those who have mutual affinities is, he says, a feature of advanced levels in the life of the spirit, and this may well be so.

The writing forms itself into paragraphs, and eventually he decides when to end a session and brings the dialogue to an end with a conclusion that is almost invariable: 'We will now take our leave.

Good bye, Charles, and God bless you'. He then signs off with the sign of the Cross. When I know he is going to do the latter I sometimes put the pen into my left hand, as I once discovered that the strokes of the pen were made more firmly when held in the hand with which I cannot write. There is no rule about this; I do it when the fancy takes me. I did once let him try writing words with my left hand, and he did so successfully, but irregularly and very slowly.

There have been occasions when he has asked me if I will allow someone other than himself to hold the pen. Usually the consequence is a different style of writing, often with uncertain and irregular letters to begin with until the new controller gets the hang of the activity. Once he introduced somebody whom he called Alison, and for a while he tried to use her for part of every message written on one particular day of the week, because he thought she would be more skilful at getting evidential material over - which she sometimes did. However, Alison has not figured of late.

I ought finally to say that when I am writing under control I experience no unusual psychic, visual or auditory sensations at all. I feel perfectly ordinary the whole time, and as aware of all that is going on around me as before or after. As the writing appears I can react to it as to some external stimulus, such as a television programme; I can be surprised, amused, sceptical, astounded, sometimes rather bored. Whatever the degree of dissociation may be, to use the psychiatrist's term, it does not affect my everyday consciousness at all. The only thing out of the ordinary which I do sometimes feel is that my sense of the passage of time may be affected. I have sometimes found that a session which seemed rather short has in fact lasted for over two hours. However, there is nothing necessarily paranormal about that.

5. PIECES OF EVIDENCE

Extracts are set out in this chapter, taken from the writing my father has given me over the past three years, that appear to be attempts to provide evidence of mental activity expressed through my hand by a mind other than my own. It has to be admitted straight away that most of them did not produce satisfactory evidence. To transcribe failures scarcely seems necessary; I hope readers will be content with the admission. The few

successes - a small percentage of the whole - are interesting and even striking, and I imagine that their number is greater than could be accounted for by chance coincidence, but I am not a statistical expert and may be mistaken.

Evidence in this matter may be of two kinds. It can be a demonstration that a mind other than my conscious mind operates my hand as the latter passively holds the pen; it might also demonstrate that this mind was my father's. Of the first type of evidence I have had plenty; of the second type very little has been forthcoming, though something like it can be seen in the second of the book-tests included in this chapter, where the names of his birthplace and of my mother's birthplace are related to two numbers obtained by counting down columns in a gazetteer at which I had never before looked. My conviction that it really is my father who wrote on this and other occasions rests on the summation of many small things in the writing, and I am not now advancing these for consideration as they could scarcely have weight for anyone but myself.

The evidence that follows is of two kinds. First come descriptions of events of which I was not aware at the time of writing, but which could later be checked. Secondly, there are 'book tests', in which I am asked to inspect certain pages in selected books, usually to obtain mathematical data which, treated in an appropriate manner, combine to produce an unexpected and meaningful result. The test of evidentiality here would be to try to repeat this sort of thing by using numbers randomly obtained, instead of relying on instructions given paranormally. I have once or twice tried to do this, but without any meaningful result, and it is a great time waster! In the case of the few really successful book-tests, the chances against their having produced the results through chance or coincidence must be very great, though against the small minority of successes must be set, of course, the majority of failures.

My own reaction to all these attempts to give evidence is that, on balance, they convince me, but as demonstrations for others the verdict must be 'not proven'. Perhaps I am over-sceptical.

A failure may well be due to my inability to transmit a thought from the originating mind to the paper without any contamination from my own mind occurring. In any case, whether a test is successful or a failure; why does it ever get written at all? I never consciously initiate these things or ask for them to be given; they come unexpectedly, from elsewhere, wherever elsewhere may be. I find them curious and unusual, and I think they are worth setting down as raw material for others to inspect.

Of the first type of material I have given some examples on previous pages, and I now add some more, quoted verbatim, with appropriate annotation. The second kind, that of the book-tests, is, in the judgement of competent psychical researchers to whom I have shown it, not convincing enough to be taken as *prima facie* evidence meriting further investigation. I find it more convincing than they do, but they are the experts. I suppose, too, that if one can believe that the subconscious mind has powers of clairvoyance and precognition, then these tests could be explained without reference to any discarnate agency; I am supposedly talking to myself, clear-viewing to myself, prophesying to myself. I

will only say that if that is how these tests originated, I had more of them than I wanted in August 1972 when they were being given almost daily, and I often wished they were not attempted so often as they were expensive of time and usually erroneous and inconclusive.

The book tests at first were complicated and involved a good deal of arithmetical calculation or the drawing of graphs. Later on they became simpler, with attempts to indicate the page of a book and say correctly what was on it. None of these can really rate as a complete success, though I have included one that did correctly mention a topic that was found in a specified part of a book. It seems to be harder to give information directly than in a roundabout way.

CORRESPONDENCES BETWEEN WRITTEN STATEMENTS AND FACTS THEN UNKNOWN

A selection of these is given, spread out over about a year. Not all are of equal evidential value; there is sometimes some small incorrect detail. Only a few were really impressive. There have been many attempts to provide this sort of evidence; perhaps a quarter could be said to approach correctness of statement, and some others seemed flawed but remarkable. Here are half a dozen.

The forecast about Rosemary

My Vicar had been asked to give a weekly talk to sixth-formers in one of the Grammar Schools in our area, I asked for my father's comments on this opportunity.

A: We are sure he will be able to help them, and in particular there is a girl named Rosemary who will ply him with many questions, and indeed he will be rather perplexed at some of the questions she asks him. You should tell him to treat her with a good deal of sympathy as she is very much of a genuine seeker, but her mind is full of the sort of bran-tub rubbish which is so often served up these days as Religious Education, and she cannot distinguish the true from the false. She will appreciate the genuine article, and possibly come to his church after a while, but she should not be pushed as she will then immediately back-pedal.

When, a few days later, Neil went to see the Headmistress about his sixth-form sessions he was told about Rosemary. She did ask a lot of questions. Neither Neil nor I had ever heard of her before.

The advice to fill up my petrol tank.

One Tuesday morning while I was on holiday in Scotland, at the end of an unsuccessful book-test, just before the concluding valediction, this advice was given.

A: Our feeling is that you would do well to give your car tank a filling today, as you may have to use the car before the filling stations open to-morrow.

Ten minutes later the Rector of the Scottish Episcopal Church thirty miles from where I was then staying rang me up unexpectedly and asked if I would take a service of Holy

Communion at his church at ten the next morning, which was the Wednesday of Holy Week. My petrol tank was in fact nearly empty, and I had been meaning to fill it during the later part of that particular Wednesday morning. To have set off with a nearly empty tank to drive to his church the next morning, and *get* there in good time, would have meant taking a chance that the only garage I should be passing would be open before nine o'clock. It possibly would have been, but I could not be sure; better safe than sorry.

The forecast of the man with the fault in his manner of speech.

On the morning after this forecast was made I was due to meet a man in London, a Classics specialist in a College of Education, whom I wanted to consult about the planning of a new course in Classical Studies which I was hoping to introduce in my own college. I had not met him before and knew no one who had.

A: We can now tell you about your own involvement with the person you are soon to meet in London. You will be astonished to find that when he talks to you he has a slight fault in his manner of speech which, while it does not prevent him from giving lectures, would certainly unfit him for work in school. Your notice of this will also be accompanied by an awareness of his features, which are also rather unusual in that his mouth is twisted slightly.

When I went up to London the next day, and was shown to the study of the person in question, I had in fact forgotten about the previous day's forecast. Almost the first thing he did was to apologise for the swelling around his lower jaw, which was due to inflammation that needed dental treatment. He was sorry he could not give me more than an hour of his time, as he had an appointment fixed for this purpose. I said what was proper, and we began to converse, and it was not till we had been talking for a while that I suddenly recalled the forecast. His speech was a little slurred and his mouth was a little out of place because of the swelling.

The forecast about a coat of paint for a car door.

This came across as a message from John Allen, who, before his death, as mentioned in the previous chapter, had been a College lecturer and a personal friend of my Vicar.

A: We ... will give you a message to pass on to Neil from John. He wants to tell him that the best way to give the coat of paint to the door of his car is to get a spray gun and do it himself, as he can perfectly well do this, and there is no special skill needed to achieve a good result.

I saw Neil the next Sunday morning and asked him if he were thinking of spraying the car. He said the thought had crossed his mind, but he did not have any particular reason to do so, and I therefore assumed the message was some sort of freak of my own mind. Some weeks later Neil had a vivid dream in which he seemed to be in an accident, in which his car door was smashed in. The following morning, as he was backing out of his garage with the door slightly ajar, a gust of wind caught it and blew it open, smashing it against the gatepost and denting it badly. The evidential element here is the mention of a car door; nothing is said about any accident, but a renovated door would have needed spraying, and

Neil could no doubt have cut his losses if he had taken the advice given him and done the job himself. In fact he traded the car in as it was in part exchange, and took another.

The forecast about the new picture.

I was about to go and visit my cousin, the Graham spoken of in the message, and stay the night at his house.

A: When you are at Graham's house, see if the new picture in the room is not of the green woods, and has two male figures showing.

As soon as I got to Graham's house I asked him if he had a new picture. He said he had not, so I assumed the message was a freak. That evening, just before ten o'clock, he pointed out his new television set and suggested we watch it to see how good it was. I agreed, and we watched the news, and then a feature programme followed on the theme of 'horror stories'. The first scene was of a wood, with a hairy man who believed himself to be a wolf attacking a girl; another man came on the scene to rescue her, and they had a fight. I then recalled the forecast. It was, of course, a 'picture', but not the sort of picture I had imagined.

The forecast about another picture.

I was writing in Scotland, on New Year's Day.

A: We would like you to go and see your friend in Nottingham soon after you return, and she will have much to tell you. Your visits there were much appreciated by her husband, and he has a message for her - to take down the picture if she wishes to, as he will not mind at all.

The 'friend in Nottingham' was the Mrs. A, referred to in chapter three, who had lost her husband just before Christmas. When I returned to College I rang her up. There was a picture, which had been on the wall of her sitting-room downstairs, of her husband's first wife. I may well have seen it, but did not know, if so, whom it represented. She had been considering removing it to an upstairs room, but wondered if he were still aware of what she was doing, and did not want to hurt his feelings. The picture has now gone upstairs.

BOOK-TESTS

May 15th, 1972

This is the first test I had which possessed some evidential quality. A counting operation on a verse from a hymn produced a figure which, manipulated in an unforeseen manner, gave a striking reference to the hymn's subject matter.

A: We have prepared another test for you and you will need your English Hymnal as before. You should first look for a hymn which tells of the love of God in the language of a man who has no wish to exaggerate but cannot do otherwise.

Q: Would this be no. 459: 'O love, how deep, how broad, how high'?

A: No, it is not that one, but is nearer the end of the book.

Q: I have looked at the several hymns but cannot find one which really fits your description. Could you quote a line from it?

A: Yes. You should look for a hymn which contains a reference to the golden gates of heaven.

Q: Hymn 391: 'For ever with the Lord...'?

A: No, it is not that, but you must look farther on.

Q: Hymn 486: 'Ten thousand times ten thousand...'?

A: No, not that one; call another one which has no sort of expectations of life beyond.

Q: Hymn 584: 'There were ninety and nine...'?

A: Yes, that is the one. You should now count the number of times the word *and* appears in the second verse.

Q: Once only.

A: You should now count the number of letters in the third verse.

Q: 181 letters in all.

A: You should now take the middle figure and halve it and add one half to each of the figures on either side.

Q. Like this? [18199]

A: Yes, and the meaning is obvious to you now.

Q: It is indeed. Ninety-nine and one.

With regard to this test, I had no idea what he was getting at until writing the instruction about splitting the 8 and adding each half to each of the other two figures. This seems to me to be evidence that another mind devised the whole operation and then, told me to perform it. I suppose it could be argued that I was playing about subconsciously with numbers until I found one which accidentally suggested 99 and 1. But in that case why did I reject three hymns without even looking closely at them, and pick a fourth?

July 31st, 1972

This test was seemingly devised not merely to convince me that a personality other than my own was responsible for constructing it, but also to show that this person was my father, by a reference made within it. The book to be used had been agreed beforehand: Bartholomew's Road Atlas of Britain, the 197112 edition, on a scale of 1 to 300,000. I had used many of its map-sheets but had never looked at the gazetteer.

A: You should now take a sheet of graph paper and number it vertically from 0 to 100 and horizontally from 0 to 70.

Q: I have done so.

A: Now turn to the page on which your place of birth appears.

Q: Page 19.

A: Now look for a small town in which there are quite a number of letters and which is not far from *your* birthplace, and through which you sometimes used to ride on your cycle.

Q: Rickmansworth?

A: Yes, and you should see how many letters are in that name.

Q: Thirteen.

A: You should now turn to the page in which the cathedral city of Coventry appears.

Q: It is near the edge of two pages - which one?

A: You should look at the former of the two pages and find a place in which there are five letters of which two are not consonants.

Q: Is it a very small place or a fairly large one?

A: You were not to know this.

Q: I have found thirteen, of which five have other words added.

A: You should look for the one which is harder than the rest.

Q: Stone, evidently.

A: You should see how many miles it is from Coventry by the shortest possible distance.

Q: Between 36 and 37 miles in a straight line.

A: You should plot the lesser number [i.e. the 36, not the 37] upwards, and the other number you have obtained across.

Q: I have done this.

A: You should now turn to the page which shows the southwestern projection of England and look for a place which is named after a colour and a woman in the Bible.

Q: Redruth.

A: You should see how far that place is from Land's End, as you measured before.

Q: Just over 20 miles.

A: You should now turn to the page on which your own present dwelling is found.

Q: You mean, where I am now?

A: No, where your work lies.

Q: Page 44.

A: You should now see how far that town is from the place where your cousins live.

Q: Wingerworth?

A: Yes.

Q: I make it just about 19 miles.

A: You should now plot twenty across and nineteen upwards.

Q: I have done so.

A: You should now take the atlas and look in the gazetteer and see how many words down the list is the place where I was born [i.e. Runcorn in Cheshire].

Q: Runcorn is the 68th word down.

A: Now take the two points you have drawn in the graph and join them.

Q: I have done so.

A: Now look at page sixteen of the atlas and see how far it is between the two towns where your mother was born and where she married me [i.e. Barnstaple & Bristol].

Q: Between 57 and 58 miles.

A: You should now take the lower of these figures and add it to the number you obtained for Runcorn.

Q: 125.

A: You should now measure the length of the line you drew on the graph.

Q: Near enough 18.5 units—by calculation [i.e. by using the theorem of Pythagoras], 18.384 units.

A: You should take it to the lower figure. Now see what you make when you give to those digits an extra number which is your own age.

Q: 18.384 and 58.

A: You should arrange them in ascending order.

Q: 1345888.

A: Now take the first two numbers and add them to the other five.

Q: Like this: 45888 plus 13 equals 45901? Or: 4 plus 5 plus 8 plus 8 plus 8 plus 13 equals 46?

A: You should add them the first way not the second. Now look at the number you have obtained and see what you get when you reverse the order of the figures.

Q: I get 10954.

A: Now give the first two figures a separate place and write the others down.

Q: 10 and 954.

A: Now look at the graph again and see what happens when you produce the line towards the vertical axis.

Q: I get 67, but by my calculation it is nearer 68 than 67.

A: And there you have the number you associated with Runcorn on the list in the gazetteer.

Q: Splendid! I do not think I could have worked that out for myself in any way.

A: You can be sure of our real existence now and need not have any more doubts.

Q: However, what about those figures - 10 and 954?

A: You should give them the same treatment as before. We mean you to plot them on the graph. The ten goes across, and the other you should add up and plot upwards.

Q: 10 across and 18 upwards?

A: Yes.

Q: I have done so.

A: Now join the point to the origin and then produce the line to meet the other line.

Q: I have done so.

A: Now take the co-ordinates of the point of intersection.

Q: 16.5 and 28.75 [the graph which I drew at the time must have been on paper which had not been accurately squared]—I'd better calculate them ... X equals almost exactly 16, Y equals 28.8.

A: Now look at the place where Barnstaple [my mother's birthplace] figures in the gazetteer.

Q: It is 61 places down the list in the 4th column.

A: You should reverse the sixteen and that is what you get. You need not worry about the other co-ordinate.

Q: Again, this is quite astonishing! I do not think this could have happened by any sort of chance.

I cannot feel that my subconscious mind did the arithmetic here. The line was already drawn on the graph before I knew that the figure 68 was going to be adduced both from the graph and from the gazetteer. The second system of operations was not quite so convincing, as the number had to be reversed to give the desired correspondence, but I think it was meant as a sort of bonus.

August 25th, 1972

It had been previously agreed that a series of tests from books should all adduce the number 25 in a manner which precluded the suspicion that I was consciously doing the devising of the test as I went along. The book chosen this time was a one-inch Ordnance Survey map - the one covering Oban in the Western Scottish Highlands. I left the map open on a table overnight but refrained from studying it myself. It was newly bought and unfamiliar to me. I could not have given the grid reference of any place on it from memory.

A: Use the map you bought yesterday and see what the grid references of the following places are: first look at the place where the river meets the sea near a hill which is rather like the hill in your own contour map so far as its name goes. [He seemed to be referring to a hill near my house, Ben More.]

Q: Do you mean the river Euchar which reaches the sea a mile and a half from a hill named Beinn Mhor?

A: Yes, and you should give the grid reference of that hill.

Q: 798216

A: You should now look for a church in a valley where there is a small piece of woodland not far from the upper edge of the map, near the point where the road from Oban crosses the river.

Q: I think you must mean the one near the figure 89 beside a school a little over three miles south of Oban on the A816 road.

A: Yes, and you are to give its grid reference.

Q: 871258 - possibly 872258.

A: You are now to look at a very unusual thing to find in the west of Scotland, which is not so much a town as a large village and lying in a very secluded place near the sea, at a point near the island of Seil.

Q: I'm doubtful about this. Do you mean the bridge which crosses from the mainland to Seil, which is near Clachan - which means, I think, a village? [This is an unusual thing - it is a stone-arched bridge crossing a narrow sound of sea-water and known locally as the 'Bridge over the Atlantic'.]

A: Yes. Give its grid reference.

Q: 785197.

A: You are now to add up these grid references and take their average.

Q: As to the second one, referring to the church - which of my two alternatives is correct?

A: You should take the second of the two.

Q: 818557. [This is the average of three grid references.]

A: You should now take the square root of that number.

Q: 904.741

A: Now add up the digits.

Q: 25!!! Thank you very much. I cannot doubt that another mind operated to produce this, and I cannot think whose else it could be but yours.

The evidential nature of this test appears to lie in the way the final figure which was to be square-rooted was obtained, and in the unlikelihood that anyone except a mathematical genius could know what the square root of a six-figure number would be to three decimal places, unless he were to work it out. I am not a mathematical genius.

April 16th, 1973.

When I visited Cambridge the previous August to see some well-known members of the Society for Psychical Research, they said that the book-test scripts I was able to show them, though interesting and curious, lacked the evidential quality which would have disposed them to investigate my paranormal ability. They suggested that something much simpler than the mathematical acrobatics I had been experiencing would be more convincing. Could my father not give me, for example, the gist of what was on the page of a book I had never read? I asked him to try to do this. Evidently this is not as easy as one might suppose; I have not yet had a really convincing page-reading [true at the time of writing - I have had a few since then]. However, in what follows he appears to be trying to tell me something which was to be found on the page of a book, and I find the result remarkable, though I do not suppose it meets the exacting standards of the S.P.R. I had borrowed the book in question from a public library for no other reason than to study one of the appendices, of which there were four; I had not read the other three and had only skimmed through the main text.

A: We suggest that you give a glance at the row of books which are on the top of the chest on your left, and see if you can find a book which contains information about the older type of Christianity that your forefathers adhered to in the days of your ancestors, when the ruler of the country was the king who gave a country its wish and entered into a treaty with it in which there was a sharing of kingship.

Q: Are you referring to James VI of Scotland and I of England? Or to another?

A: We are referring to the king whose name is on the cover of the book which you are to look for.

Q: *The Life of King Edward the Confessor*, by Frank Barlow?

A: Yes, you have the book, although your description as it was written was not exactly what we meant to convey to you. Anyway, you can try a further experiment with it, and look inside at the place where there is an account of a miracle supposedly done by the king, in which the diseased body of a man was made whole, and the consequence was that a riot was averted.

I knew that Edward the Confessor was reputed to have worked miracles, and in my skimming through of the book's main chapters I had noticed an account of one, so as soon as my father had written the above I re-read that account, and then made the comment:

Q: Certainly there is an account of a diseased man being miraculously cured, but there does not seem to be anything about a riot being averted in consequence.

A: When you wrote 'riot' you should have written 'right', and when you wrote 'averted' you should have written 'amended'.

Q: 'A right was amended.' This does not seem to make sense!

A: We are having difficulty as you are less receptive now, but try again. You should have written that a rite was amended from what it had been to what it became later on.

I now read the whole book through again, rapidly but with enough care not to miss such an incident.

Q: In Appendix D there is an account of how Osbert of Clare, prior of Westminster, was cured of a quartan fever by praying at Edward's tomb, and thereafter promoted the cult of Edward. Is this the reference? If so it is in a part of the book I hadn't read.

A: We have not been able to give you a very good transmission, but the passage you have found is the one we meant you to find.

The interesting thing about this book-test is the way in which I twice obtained and wrote the wrong word because it sounded like the correct one. Is this a sign that the ability is a matter of inward hearing?

6. A POSTHUMOUS AUTOBIOGRAPHY

When I began to assemble into its final form the material in this book I had to consider what selections to make of the writing to show its nature and style. I had at first intended to transcribe excerpts from different periods in its development. However, much of the material is so deeply personal that I could not bring myself to present it, and had I excised the passages which I did not want to disclose there would have been no lengthy sequential writing. I did wish to include something like the latter, so that comparison and contrast might be made between what I have written of myself and what has come across paranormally.

It then occurred to me to ask my father for something in the nature of a posthumous autobiography, which could extend over a number of days and include whatever he wished to give. I do not doubt that this will be read with interest by those who take the disclosures of paranormally endowed persons seriously, and it would be interesting to know what correspondence might exist in matters of assertion between what others have spoken or written in this field, and what is in these pages.

One likely reaction is that the whole production is no more than the outpouring of my subconscious mind. I cannot demonstrate that it is not, and I have had to face the possibility. Subjective though they are, and impossible as they are to convey to others, I do feel I have grounds for believing that, at the very least, someone other than myself, and other than any possible independently-thinking fragment of myself, wrote them through my hand. It has no evidential passages; all that is there which is checkable I already knew; I knew, for example, the quotation from Dante, and it is interesting to see that the quotation tailed off at the point where my memory failed. However, two things seem unlikely to be compatible with self-production. In the first place, the whole series of disclosures was given fast, at about forty words a minute. In the second place, much of the material was quite unexpected — the piece about the monk in the south of France, for example, or the references to F.S. Smythe, whose books I had indeed read, but long ago, and who I am sure had not been in my thoughts for years.

I suppose that these disclosures could be regarded as a special case of the functioning of the creative imagination, the sort of uprush that produced Coleridge's 'Kubla Khan' before the untimely arrival of the man from Porlock brought his inspired composing to a sudden end. Well, if that is how literary creativity operates, it has never happened that way with me before. As I reread this material I simply cannot recognise myself as a possible author.

Here it is, anyway, for the consideration and judgement of others:

August 30th, 1973

You were not with me when I passed away in the hospital on January 26th, in London, and indeed no one noticed my passing, for it was both sudden and peaceful. We were lying in bed, side by side, in a large ward, and the nurses were beginning their morning duties, when one of them bent over me and I heard her say, 'He's gone!'

When we were in our beds in the morning they brought us bowls of water, but I was not allowed to wash myself. The nurse in question was rather upset and put her bowl down and called the Sister, who felt my pulse and confirmed that I was no longer alive. We all liked this particular nurse, and I was sorry she was upset, as we had been talking the previous morning about death and what lay beyond it, and she was a practising Christian, but even so found it hard to accept the continued life after the soul had parted from the body.

When I knew that I was no longer in the body I was still aware of myself as a presence in the ward, and I was rather puzzled for a while as I had supposed I should be transported elsewhere. You were in my thoughts as I wondered: 'What will Alice and the children think?', and then as a corollary, 'Why should you be worried if your faith is true and they are in the hands of God?' My next experience was of another presence in the ward that I could only sense at first, and then I knew it was my mother. She said: "Harry, you must come with me, and don't ask any questions for a little while, but let me take you away and you can then rest for a while". She took my hand and I was taken away, I scarcely know how, into a place where I could see quiet and subdued light, and knew that I was in an abode of the blessed, but could not discern more than the vague outlines of others as they quietly moved about many other apparently sleeping forms. I was given a place and lay down, and for a while I remembered nothing, but felt the peace of God around me and knew it was good to be there.

Some while later my mother awoke me and told me to prepare for a new sort of life, which would need to be learned by me if I was to be easy in it. We walked away from the place where I had been, and I began to ask her many things about what I was to expect. I now felt refreshed and even eager, but she was at first quiet, and we said little for a while until I could see she was anxious to tell me that when your mother and yourself and Eunice [my sister] were at my funeral I was to be there also, and after that she would tell me many things which you can imagine I was eager to ask about. So I went with her to the Hall which is in the cemetery grounds, and I heard Mr. Ashby's address, and we joined in the hymns, though you would not have heard us. We followed the coffin to the grave, and then after the

interment your mother was upset, and my mother told me to come away and let her tell me things that I wanted to know.

So we went back, I do not know how, from your life on earth to our own sphere, and we found ourselves in a place which had pleasant associations for us both, which was a replica in thought of the place we had known on earth. I then began to ask her what was the reason for her coming to me, for I had supposed that the blessed dead were asleep and that I would sleep too. She began to explain that the life of the spirit is a wakeful life, and that sleep is not necessary, though rest is needed, and she gave me an account of the people whom I would meet at first, and said I was not to be surprised if they were often people I would not have expected to see. 'You must remember that the love of God is very wide', she said, 'and that He has mercy on whom He wills to have mercy, as the Scriptures say.' So I was not as surprised as I might have been to see a number of old school friends and some of the masters whom I had learned from when at school in the place where she next took me to see those whom I had known as a boy in Runcorn and Liverpool.

August 31st, 1973

When my mother and myself were together and I was fully recovered from the shock of death, she began to tell me things I did not know about the life of the world to come, and to explain to me the real extent of the love of God, whose amplitude was so much more than I had ever thought before. We are now in a sphere in which this is more plain, and in which the narrow scope of my previous thinking is quite impossible to maintain, but at first my reaction was one of incredulity, and you can imagine I wondered where I really was, and if it were some sort of fevered dream. My mother was extremely patient, and told me all about her own moment of discovery, and how her own grandfather had been to guide her into the truth when she had been as perplexed as I was, and she told me that in time your grandfather would also see me, but that she had been the one chosen to meet me rather than he, as there was more affinity between us and we would be able to communicate better. So I listened and heard about the delights of Paradise, and was given something like a guide-book to it — you are not to understand me literally here, but I was given that sort of help — and we talked long and often about our future in the new life to which I had been called. We cannot be sure of the future when we pass here, but we do gain some appreciation of what our destiny is, and what we have to do when we are ready to begin to work for God in the life to which we have been called by Him.

When a few weeks of your time had passed by, and your mother and Eunice and yourself were becoming settled, your grandmother told me it was allowed for me to accompany you at all times, though you could not know I was there, and I would join you at all times, and would perhaps feel some sympathy with your mother as she struggled with the little school and tried to make ends meet. Your attempts to find work were also a part of my concern, and I could now see that your gift was one of teaching and that you should not have gone into the work you did, but I now knew enough of the future to know you would find your way eventually into the work for which you had a calling. We used to discuss with your grandfather what you might do, and he was less good humoured than my mother, and

would tell me to stop worrying as you were under the guidance of God, but my mother was more patient and would humour me by talking about the matter until I felt easier, for she understood my need to talk about it.

When a year or so had passed of your time we began to look together at the question of what I was to do. Until then I had been reading and thinking and had wondered what was my duty now. You can see my difficulty: I was not prepared for work or effort, and had incorrectly thought that eternity was a place of endless rest, but this is certainly not the case; there is work to be done in our life which is as important as what is done in yours, and we are given a choice as far as is possible. We do not get a job allotted to us, but are advised and shown what is best for us to do, and in my case I soon saw that I could help those who were unable to get to our sphere of Paradise by reason of their own shortcomings, but who needed the help of others, and this seemed a work I could well do. It involves meeting such people and giving them advice and encouragement, and above all giving them the sort of friendship they need in order to allay their fears and make them know that they were not lost but were on the way to their true home, where God is known as a refuge for the lonely and those who have strayed from Him. We were all agreed that this was what I should do, and I was given, as it were, a commission to do it.

September 1st, 1973

When we are in the life of the spirit we are not trammelled by the things that hamper you on earth, and our bodies are free to move as we will, so whenever there was need for me to go to a lower sphere to meet a man or woman who needed help I was able to go without delay. We are also gifted with a power of understanding speech other than our own, and in this regard I was glad that we had this ability, as when I was on earth I was never able to travel abroad and never met many people from other lands, so I was circumscribed in my experiences, and at first I supposed I should find this a handicap. But your own knowledge of the languages you have learned will tell you that the people who speak in different tongues are basically the same underneath, and we do not have to have any interpreters when we speak with souls who have come from other lands, as a sort of sympathetic bond enables them to give us their thoughts in a way we can grasp at once, and we are able to see what they want to tell us in a flash. You can also understand that the greatest need of such people as I was sent to help is almost always the assurance of their being loved by God, and the words do not matter so much as the look in the eyes or the pressure of a handclasp.

When I became a certain degree skilful in making these contacts I was given one very interesting person to visit; whom you would know by name if I were to give it, but I will not do so, as it would look rather an unlikely thing to have invented, and yet would seem strange to a reader [my father was presuming that these scripts would eventually achieve publication — he had asked me much earlier to write a book about our association], and perhaps deter him. Enough to say that he was counted a sinner on your side, and was never regarded as a good man, yet there was goodness in him and he is redeemable. He was wandering in utter despondency when I found him, and at first it was hard to effect a contact. Then we were able to come to terms with each other by means of a common

interest, and we talked of our love of nature, and his despair was of ever being able to enjoy the sight of trees or flowers again, for where I found him it was a desert of sand and had no sort of charm or natural sweetness. For a long while we conversed, until at last he asked me why I was there, and I told him I was sent to restore his faith in God, and that he would be able to come to more refreshing regions if he would only trust me. So he said he would take me at my word, and I took him to a part of the second sphere where the boundaries are like the beauty of your own earth, and told him that beyond them there was sweetness and light, and that he was not excluded from them, but he must try to let his frozen heart reach out, and I would help him. The sight of his efforts was something I cannot forget. You can yourself appreciate his difficulty, and for me it was a test of my own spiritual powers. This is where we have to pray with all our might and help the unbelief of the one who has never learned to pray. And after a while his ability to pray began to come back to him, and I could tell that he would be able to come with me beyond the boundaries. He was emotionally very much moved, and said he did not ever think he could have got to his present state if I had not helped him, but I replied that I was only doing my duty, and he realised that was so, as he in his earthly life had understood what duty meant from his service in the army. So he came with me and we crossed the boundary, and I was able to put him into the company of his wife who had died before him, and I left them believing in God's love and profusely grateful.

Things like this make the efforts we put out rewarding, and you will realise that we not only work here, but gain joy and fulfilment in doing so. We are God's servants, and in serving Him we find a freedom which we never knew on earth, when we followed our own desires and fancies and had the idea that this was freedom; but it is not. Freedom is the untrammelled ability to act as one's true self.

September 2nd, 1973

My time, as you can tell, was very much taken up for many years with the sort of rehabilitation work which I spoke about yesterday, and you will understand how satisfying it was to one who had always supposed no such chances of recovery of anyone who made a shipwreck of their life was [sic] possible. Your own beliefs have long been otherwise, but it was a surprise to me, and to many of my previous friends whom I was encountering again in Paradise, who were of my opinion while on earth. Your Uncle Arthur, when he came here, was one of them, and he was eager to do the work he was fitted for, so he was appointed as a sort of instructor for the souls who were out of their depth and needed to be given advice on how to comport themselves in life of the spirit. He had gifts of instruction and was also very good in matters of personal help for those who could not easily grasp his first accounts, but he was not so ready to spend long hours in preliminary help before he could come to the point, as I found myself able to do.

We do meet each other from time to time to pool our experiences and compare our procedures, and I often on such occasions come up against persons who are of very different origins from mine. You will perhaps recall a man who, when you were a boy, used to make a great deal of noise as a salesman, and who was not so much a salesman, in fact,

as almost a town-crier, so far as his ability to make public statements was concerned. You evidently do not remember him, and we will not try to give you his name, but he was the opposite to myself in his qualities, for I was rather diffident, but he was almost brazen in his mode of attack upon the, as we called them, unsaved, and he expected he could do that sort of thing here, and was very much surprised to see that such an approach was not required. He soon learned how to listen and is now a very skilful guide and preliminary helper to the souls he helps to recover their faith, but now and then he forgets and begins to raise his voice, and then, recollecting himself, grins ruefully and gives his soap-box a rest.

When we are able to find among our catch, as it were, a man with a very marked gift for the same sort of work, we give him the chance to join us, and one such man is now a very helpful guide and first encourager of the newly dead. He is not known to you and there seems no point in giving his name, but his gift is one of patient exposition, and especially he is good with those who are suicides. We often have these to meet, and in many cases their degree of estrangement is so great that we cannot deal with them ourselves, but need to ask for someone from a much higher level. Your old friend who died in the period when you were at St Martin's is such a man, and his natural tendency to scepticism and almost agnosticism at times is a great help, as he knows the way young men feel about the facts of the life to come.

You are not very receptive, and we suggest you should wait for a few minutes. [I did so.]

As to other friends whom you never did know, because they were never visitors at our house, I will mention one because her name has come up, not only when I have written through your hand, but also from the two other sensitives whom you know. Annie was a girl I met when I was a young man, and she was in the Brethren's meeting at a place whose name we cannot easily get over to you as it is not one you have ever heard of, but it is in the south of London, and I met her at a conference when I was in my late twenties. She was a very discreet and rather shy young woman, but she had a liking for going on cycle journeys in the lanes of Surrey and West Kent, which no cyclist could now venture to do except with great discomfort, and we used to talk about Nature and about the hills of the Downs. You know, of course, that cycling was an activity I could not indulge in, and she was sorry about this, and on several occasions we used to walk together. She was a most attractive girl to me, and I was in love for a time, until a certain other young man with a more possessive attitude and a certain rough charm came in and took her from me — not that she wished me to discontinue seeing her, but she thought I was not really anxious to marry her, and as the other certainly was she let him do the running. I was upset for a while and we did not meet again until I had married myself, and the encounter at the conference where we met had its times of awkwardness, for she had not married this man after all. She was sorry about my marriage, and we parted, and I have been told that she eventually left the Brethren and became a Churchwoman and came to live in a part of the county of Dorset which you have visited. She did not live to be more than fifty or so, and so she was among those whom I met when I came here. We are very much at one and do many things

together, and her love for me has increased, as has mine for her — but of these matters I will speak later. In the land of Paradise there is no marrying or giving in marriage, for we are all as the angels of God, but there are such things as close partnerships of the like-minded, and we are in this sort of bond.

September 3rd, 1973

When I was an expert at the work I had undertaken to do it was many years by your time, and you were already in your earlier twenties. Your long journeys by cycle and your long walks alone were often accompanied by me, and I was pleased to see your love of the English Lake District which, as you know, I was very fond of myself, though I was not able to climb the hills as you did. You were once in a small house in a valley in the south-western part of the Lake District [I think he is referring to Taw House Farm, then a Youth Hostel], and there were hills around which I had never seen [those enclosing upper Eskdale] but which you were very anxious to climb, and I was able to go with you, and for the first time I found what a very satisfying thing a climb could be, though your choice of a route was not one I would have favoured myself. [Probably he refers to a climb of Scafell Pike from the foot of Cam Spout.]

We are all, in this life, able to come on such excursions when we wish to, and the dead often accompany the living in this way. As you climbed and reached the top of the hill I was interested to see that other climbers were also accompanied in this way by spiritual counterparts, and in some cases the men were those who were obviously as used to the hills as their earthly companions. We saw some rock-climbers with friends from our side beside them climbing without ropes, but we were not very good at noticing how many there were.

Q: We? Were you alone with me, or were there others with you?

We were alone, and I should have said 'I', but I imagined you had seen them as well.

None of the people whom I was able to help in the way I described earlier was of the same persuasion as myself, and the many conversations which I had with them gave me a much broader outlook. I was gradually becoming broader in my thinking now, and when I had new viewpoints given to me I was able to accept them as what another had genuinely believed, and was able to begin from the place he had himself reached. Your own change of mind was therefore observed by me with sympathy, and when you became a Quaker I was quite happy, though I could also see you would not stay there for ever. Our view of the future is, as I have said before, a limited but real one, and can be compared to the view of a map before the real landscape is sighted. We can see the broad picture but not the details, and this is how we are able to issue warnings at times of specific possibilities which need not be undergone if a slight change of pattern is made.

We were on the best terms by now with those whose advice I had earlier doubted — I am referring to spiritual guides who advised us — and the changed picture of spiritual reality was accepted by me, although I still found it easy to use the words and phrases of an Evangelical past. So far I had been educated along the way of a more Catholic faith, and

saw how the spiritual lives of so many hundreds of thousands of men and women in the past had been shaped by an influence which on earth I could never appreciate.

When I found myself in the company of such persons I had to admit that the lives they lived on earth were as much spiritual and holy as any I had personally encountered in my own life, and that even if they thought differently from me their hearts were directed towards the same goal. When I met, for example, someone who had been an obscure monk in a monastery in the south of France, and whose ideas about the Atonement and the Coming of the Lord were utterly different from mine, the manifest beauty of his character so overcame me that I could only sit and listen to him, and never tried to expostulate. He was learning too, and had been for many years, though he is now in a much higher sphere than myself and has been given spiritual responsibilities that I shall probably not acquire for a very long while, if I ever do. Yet on earth he was a mere nobody, just an obscure man in a cloister who was overlooked by his superiors and had no special gifts or graces; only he had learned how to pray for his friends in a deep and more effective manner than they had learned. He died in his late fifties and is buried somewhere in Provence, and the grass on his grave is not ever given the tribute of a few flowers, for he is utterly forgotten on earth. You will not know his name so I will not try to give it, but his nature has left an aroma behind, and there is an atmosphere of peace in the place where he lies.

When the days of your pilgrimage are ended you will meet him, for I asked him to go with you on your own travels whenever you were away from home, and he has done so very often. Once you were aware of his presence, and you may be able to guess when this was.

We think the word Sand [the name of the village in the Black Forest where the experience spoken of on page 28 – not included - took place] may help here.

Q: Yes, I know where and when you mean.

When there is an opportunity to give him a prayer or two you should say: 'The monk in the place where the bells are in tune with the bells of heaven', and that will be enough, for that is how he felt about his place of abode.

September 4th, 1973

When the time came for me to be given a personal sight of the Saviour himself, I was told of this by one of those who from time to time come among us from a higher region to convey such messages, and I was told to go to a part of Paradise where the region was on what one might call a sort of march with higher regions. You are puzzled, as we can see, but do not think spatially but in terms of spiritual intensity such as you might expect to find in, for example, deep prayer. We have to use similes and metaphors; there is no other way of getting across what we wish to say. Your mother and I were much together at this time, and I suppose we thought we should go to this experience together, but I was told I had to go with those you may not have heard of, the 'like-minded ones', men and women of similar cast of mind to me and similar ways of thought, who were ready to see Our Lord and were able to experience his blessed glorified body without being overcome. We regretfully parted as Alice was not yet ready for this, as she had not been here for more than a year or so, and

since then we have been less with one another, as the work I do is work which she has no fitness for, and her own work with the very young children who are the products of human abortion is also work I am not fitted for. However, to return to the matter in hand.

You will be familiar with the passage in the Revelation where Our Lord is spoken of as being in white robes and with a voice like the sound of many waters, and such an experience was ours. I cannot pretend to describe it, but it was overwhelming and made all of us fall prostrate and hide our eyes, as happened also to St John. We were so overcome that some of us were weeping, but Our Lord's voice was not terrible, and the words he spoke, which I may not repeat to you, were those of assurance. Your memory of Revelation is good enough to recall the other features of his appearance, and these too we observed, but we were not given special instructions as John was, but only the assurance of welcome. We gave our own pledges of loyalty, and when the vision faded away we remained for a long time in silent prayer, and the effect was that of a transcendent experience such as the disciples knew on the mountain, for it was good to have been there and we felt ourselves refreshed and renewed. All the faithful are given this sight of Our Lord, but not all who see him are allowed to see him in his glorified body. Many cannot take in such a sight and need the human Jesus to be put before them, and to such souls he comes as the man of Nazareth and gives them the same assurances and the same comfort.

When we have been in Paradise for a sufficiently long period there comes to all of us a feeling of unfulfilment and a wish to go on in our spiritual development into a deeper experience of the grace of God. Your own knowledge of your own development will tell you that you grew in stages, and there is no finality about any one level of attainment, for the road to Eternity is an upward path. So with us we also have our stages, and by degrees we travel onwards into the distant future, which is not to be understood spatially again, but in a more metaphorical way. Before us lies a prospect which none of us can discern, except dimly. There is at the end of the road a vision of God and a moment of blessedness, but I cannot even now conceive what it will be like to reach that goal. However, we have to travel on in our way, and according to our own choice we make the decision to advance or to wait.

When I made my own decision to advance it was a long while after I had first come here, and why we had not been made to feel our need of advancement was perhaps because of the need to purify our minds and spirits by the work we were doing lower in the scale of the discarnate regions. When we have to travel about and get to know first one person and then another, the need for advancement is not acutely felt, and only when a time of relative freedom arrives is the pressure felt within. I must leave till tomorrow my account of the many reasons which urged me to go deeper into the spiritual life and the way by which it is achieved, and it will need a whole morning's writing to complete the account, so in conclusion I will just state that the call comes with a sort of quiet urgency and we cannot resist it for ever. God will call us in this way, and we shall respond, whenever a higher level is beckoning us on, and although we are free the constraint is one that is compatible with freedom and will not leave us till we respond and follow.

September 5th, 1973

I will now tell you how my transition to the fourth sphere was effected, and when I have finished this I shall give you an account of the third sphere and its activities and what can be found there in the way of opportunity for those who need training to go higher. When this is done I will bring my posthumous autobiography to a close and you can prepare the manuscript for submission to a publisher.

When my decision was eventually taken there was no further consideration to be made, but merely an application to be given the needful assistance in regard to spiritual help. We cannot rise to a higher sphere by any effort of our own, but only by the gift of help from others who are on a higher level, and it is necessary to ask for this, and be given what I suppose would on your earth correspond with an interview with delegates from above. I was led to a group of these and we conversed for some time, and they told me something of the life I was to expect to have to follow. Whereas on the third sphere we are still very individualised, and have much in common with the life we lived on earth, in the fourth sphere we enter a sort of common life with others, and share something like a common will and a common source of spiritual energy. You need not suppose my personality is suppressed, however, as it is not like that at all. Rather, there is a vivid intensification of those parts of the personal self which are attuned to the higher life, and a lessening of the parts that are attached to the earth and to lower spheres. You can perhaps imagine what it is like if you think again of a monk or a nun who enters a religious order, and whose attachment to family and friends becomes expressed no longer in familiar daily intercourse but in depths of prayer. Something like such an institution is the life of the fourth sphere, a matter of communities who are organised for the helping, in a very intense and powerful manner, of those who are lower down in the scale of spiritual achievement.

So I was told all these things, and given a group to belong to, and then followed the actual transition to what cannot be described in any human language at all, but by the language of negatives. It is not what anyone could imagine, but it is something which, once experienced, no one would wish to leave for a moment. Can you imagine this — an animal such as a horse or a dog, attached to man but not human, given the chance to be a man and taking it? Such a choice lies before the discarnate souls on the third sphere, and the eventual giving way to the spiritual pressure means a transformation as complete and as impossible to imagine or envisage, as the rather impossible one I have suggested to you. We are human still, and memory and human qualities are all intensified, but we are at the same time partaking of an angelic nature, though not to the extent that others do still higher. We can see more clearly, feel more intensely, love more entirely, and see more of the truth and reality of the God who is calling us onwards to deeper communions still in the years to come.

I shall not try to outline, even, the process of transition, which is in some respects like an utterly painless death, and in others like the awakening from a dream when the morning light falls upon a sleeping man and calls him back to his daily life. We are given a new body, but it is like the one we have now discarded, and this ceases to exist, and so there is no trace of the former man or woman. Eventually this will happen again when we go even

higher, but of that I know nothing, for no one knows the further secrets of heaven but those who are admitted to the higher realms. Suffice it to say that my entry to the new life was as sudden as my entry to Paradise, and the same provision was made for me by a friend, whom I had long before known, being given the duty of meeting me and introducing me to all that was new.

As to the new companions I was given, these were a group who also had recently come, and who were of both sexes and were all from the same affinity-group as myself. They are continually with me, and in sessions of prayer and spiritual thought we gather together, but we are free to separate ourselves as we wish, for the work we did before continues to be the work we still do. While there may be changes of activity there are never any changes in the sort of work we do, as once we have found what gives us the greatest joy and others the greatest help, why should we change? So I continue to help the unlucky and the sinful, and my companions have each his or her own task, and when we meet we often talk about our various activities, and there is much merriment at times, for we are not gloomy here, and laughter is the rule when someone tells us something that is incongruous or funny. But it is always good-humored laughter, never bitterness or acerbity. You have no record of Our Lord laughing in the Gospels, but that is not to say he never did so. When the time eventually comes for you to come to our region you will be given every opportunity to laugh. 'Blessed are ye that weep now, for ye shall laugh', said Our Lord.

Q: I don't do much weeping!

No, but you will not then even have cause to be serious or gloomy as you now sometimes are. You need not suppose there is no joy in heaven, and there are all kinds of joy — not only the spiritual exaltations, but the more surprising ones for you, the experience of what in your present life are seen as sensual pleasures, multiplied and intensified many times. Try to imagine the smell of a heavenly rose or the sound of a heavenly string quartet. You cannot ever suppose we are without a multiplicity of joys which give our life variety, and even though sorrow is absent there is a sort of chiaroscuro of the feelings that resembles the chequering of light and shade on your own earth when you are in a forest and look upwards and around you. There is no darkness, for even the shade is light, but the light through the leaves can dazzle, and so it is here.

September 6th, 1973.

When you use the term Paradise you understand it to mean a place of refreshment and peace, and this is true, though it is also a place of very intense activity and much coming and going. The great ones who govern its activities and from time to time appear there are often with us in our sphere, and we talk with them about the new arrivals and those who are going to pass on. As to Paradise itself, it is not a place in the usual sense of the word since it has no spatial boundaries but is co-extensive with the spread of human thought, and if we speak of here or there we do not mean you to think of places separated by so many miles in distance. We cannot convey exactly what we mean, and you will understand this and not expect a delineation of the region in the manner of a map-maker, but it is not out of place to use a map as a simile. Suppose then that a map of Paradise existed; it would

have its contours and its coastlines and its hills and its valleys, its small and large houses, its roads and rivers, and you would feel if you were there much as you do on your own earth. Places known on earth have counterparts here, so that those who come may quickly feel at home, and their reactions are often those of extreme surprise at the familiarity of the sights they see around them. We do not believe that this sort of correspondence is likely to be understood very well on your side, but the actual experience of Paradise is what brings conviction of its reality, for when we are here it is the earth we have quitted that seems unreal in comparison.

Now we are not going to say that there is no difference between your earth and Paradise, for differences there certainly are. One main difference is expressed in the Revelation of St John when he says that there never comes into the place where God brings His people 'anything that defileth'. Paradise is free from pollution of any sort. Rivers and streams are clear and free from foul effluents, and there are no smoky chimneys to belch smoke and grime into the air. There is no sort of prohibitive notice to be seen anywhere, either, for there is no private property here; all belongs to everyone and none are shut out from the enjoyment of the pleasures of this land. What we do find is, that those who came here first cannot get accustomed to this for a long while, and ask permission to go here or there, and it may take months for this diffidence to wear off. However, in time they become used to the freedom, and no one who has been with us would ever wish to call any patch of land his own, for the hankering after possession leaves them, and they become free in a way they had never imagined before.

Now as to those who come here, these are the ones whom Christ has chosen, and they come, as you have yourself realised, for no other reason than this. The prevenient grace of God is absolute. He calls and we answer, and however long the wait must be those he calls do answer in time. Your understanding of baptism is true; it is God doing the choosing at a place localised in time and space for the observation of men who cannot see into God's mind but can see the outward sign. God chooses, and so they eventually respond, and in some life or other they are made His own in sacrament as they always were in His heart. **You, were a man once** [these words, on the face of it, do not make sense — unless they refer to a possible previous incarnation: my comments on this are on pp 107-110 – not included] **who did not understand this, and you were given a child which died unbaptised, and you grieved bitterly for it until, coming here, you found it waiting to greet you. God can give entry into the kingdom of God, and He is not limited by the sacraments He ordains, but, as you know, we are because we must obey. So you can see how the land of Paradise is peopled.**

Now as to those whose lives are not such as to fit them for coming here when they pass from earth, you will understand that they cannot come at once. Many do not come for long periods, and only the prayers of others and the power of grace can bring them into a state of mind when they can see what they have to do. You know, of course, that the supply of God's grace is inexhaustible, and He has no wish to exclude any from His Kingdom. He wills all men to be saved because He made them, and it was out of the overflow of His love that they were made. A very few cannot reach this understanding, and He destroys them

without pain or torment because that is all that love can do when it cannot find its return. You have said this in your book [i.e. in this book: Ch. 8], and we reiterate this. The other countless millions of humans whom God has created do in time turn to Him, and they may be in various stages of fitness for His nearer presence. Some have not the power to come to Paradise unless they are helped, and it is such whom I have the privilege of giving help to. Some can come here, but need a long time here to develop into the sort of men and women who of their own will can go higher. Some do not want to remain because their hearts are still on the earth with friends or children or wife or mother or father, and they may be given the opportunity to return. Some are so enchanted with Paradise that they remain here for centuries, and there is no obligation to go further, but even they do in time feel the pressure, and ask to go on. Some are given the chance to go to other worlds, for the love of God in Christ has to be shown to them also, and they become missionaries, as it were. Some are asked to incarnate in order to do a special work for God and return when it is done. But whoever comes here is happy, and knows that he is in God's hands, and in time he becomes God's faithful servant for doing his will in higher spheres.

We also want to tell you about the regions of darkness, which are dark because those who come there cannot yet bear the light. The men and women who go there are not always wicked as your world counts wickedness, but they are blinded and cannot see what God desires them to see. They remain in a sphere of darkness and we have to wait for them to call for help. This they do in time, but it may need the prayers of many before they can summon up the will to do so. You need not ever fear to pray for anyone who has died, that he might be granted the refreshment of Paradise, for that is what he will one day be given, and your prayers and those of others will be the things that bring him here. But it may be a long while before he can come. You are asked to pray for the souls in darkness, that they may be moved to ask God to give them light, and you can be sure that such prayers avail.

September 7th, 1973

Now to return to the subject of Paradise and those who are dwelling there. We will first say what sort of unions can be made there and with what consequences they are made. When a man or woman is brought here who has been happily and fulfillingly united to a partner on your side, the general thing is for him or her to await the call hither of the partner and to meet him or her, and be the one who introduces the newcomer into the life of Paradise. So many people, however, were not married in a fulfilling way, and they do not wish for reunion except on terms of friendship, so these people are met by others. As to bachelors and spinsters, they have parents or brothers or sisters in most cases, but there are always a few who have become so estranged from their fellows that nobody is sufficiently close to be able to meet them, and for such special persons are appointed who can introduce them to their new life and to their old friends. Your Uncle Walter, who lost his previous wives, was never close enough to anyone to have someone related to him whom he could meet, so he needed this sort of help. When your aunt comes here it will not be he who meets her but her father, for her marriage was not one of mutual love but was for convenience only. As to those who are not in any way attached to a person, but were quite self-centred, they cannot

come here at once since they need first to have their hearts unlocked, and this happens on a lower sphere — not the lowest but the one below ours.

We understand better in our realms the meaning of human love, for it is quite free and unconditioned, and old ties are only effective in so far as they were love-ties. No person is forced to reunite with a partner who no longer loved him or her, but all is free in choice, as if they were able to begin again. On your earth so many marriages are wrongly made from insufficient mutual understanding before they are contracted, and if they break up and new unions are made on earth when the partners are not separated by death, this does not mean that any earthly irregularity is held against such couples in our region. The insistence of your churches on refusing to marry those who are trying again is a very mistaken one and causes much needless sorrow. We feel that the words of Christ have been wrongly applied, for he was speaking not of a man's or woman's duties but of the rights of the woman in a society when such rights were not freely allowed. However, whether marriages or other kinds of unions, if there was union of hearts the hearts are re-united here, and the joy of those who meet one another again is most touching to see.

Mutual love in our regions has its proper means of physical expression but this is so different from human sexual intercourse that I hesitate to say much about it. We feel our mutual loves with varying degrees of intensity and the greatest degree is accompanied by a sort of temporary merging of one with another. It is done always in complete privacy and is preceded by actions which bring the desire about, but I will spare you any account of these. We will only say that it is something very sacred and entirely lawful with a chosen partner who is of full affinity, and it leaves afterwards a sense of happiness which no words can express. Such unions are not meant to increase the population of Paradise but are purely private expressions of love. I will not say more about this now.

When the time comes for a soul in Paradise to choose its work, as I did, there are innumerable duties to be selected and it is a free choice, but advice is at hand. The advice is given by those whose expertise at assessing character is fitted to give the best work to the most apt recipients, and they form panels of advisors who are always available. Why there should be so much work to do can be understood, if you think of the vast amount of spiritual need in your world which cannot be met except God sends someone to help. We are many in number but those who need us are many more, and we are kept busy enough when it is a time of war or restlessness, and people come to ask God's help in larger numbers. We have no work which is not urgent, and we enjoy it, but periods of rest are necessary all the same, and these allow us to talk with others and enjoy a social life with them. We can move freely from one person's home to another, and we can ask them to our homes, but we do not of course intrude when we can see that we are not wanted, and this can be known from the person's aura. We do have these strange emanations that reflect the state of the spirit within, and they are respected, and the privacy of their owners duly respected too.

We will say a little about the sort of levels which are found here. The analogy of 'boundaries' must not be pressed too closely, but there are regions here which are adjacent

to those which are lower and higher, and to these border areas we have sometimes to go when we visit those who come here, or when we ourselves wish to reach those who are on the higher levels. I do not want to suggest that these regions are, as it were, midway in character between the one above or below and Paradise itself, but there is a sort of expectant nature at these boundaries, a sort of glow in the one and a dullness in the other, which tells the traveller what he is approaching. When the journeys are made we do not usually go alone, but go in company, as we need mutual support in the unwonted situation we are entering.

As for the journeys, we make them usually by the rapid mode of our own thoughts, and the time taken is infinitesimal, but on the approaches the need is for more caution and we move at a more sedate speed. Generally we can move fast or slow as the mood takes us; there is no muscular exertion and no perspiring effort even when there are hills to be surmounted, and the hindrances presented by the need for food and lodging are not with us as they are with you. Have you ever thought of the possibilities of such travel, which are so attractive to some of our number that they enjoy for a while a sort of vagrant's life and go wherever they can, until they realise at last that there are better things to do than roam around. We could say a good deal on this subject, but more important matters have to be touched on.

When we were telling you once about your mother being engaged in the care of children who had been aborted we expressed our horror, and I do so again. If only on your side the pain and incoherent moaning of these children could be heard there would be more restraint and less licence. We do not know how to describe how heartrending it is for a foetus which has been given a degree of conscious life to be suddenly snatched from the womb and then thrown away into an incinerator. We can only ask those who look on this as a necessary evil to imagine themselves being so treated. The souls which come here are shocked, and need long and patient care before they can re-enter another body and resume the life they were meant to have [a reference to re-incarnation? See my own comments on pp 107-110]. Here are the really unfortunate ones, and how to give them the skilled care they need is as near to a problem as any situation we have. Their numbers increase yearly, and more and more of us have to spend time in the rehabilitation centres, to use a word you will understand, until the children can go once more into human life. We wish to make our point here most urgently, for we believe our words will be put into print and widely read.

Now we must not go on too long, as your discernment is not such that you can write indefinitely without making errors or becoming incoherent, so finally here is a piece of special news about Paradise. You do not have to be a geographer to know what a relief map is, and in such a map there are high points where Alpine summits reach to great altitudes. Paradise has its eternal snows and its Himalayan peaks, and these are the places where we can go for spiritual regeneration when we have worked long and hard on lower levels. We have our Matterhorns and our Everests, and to scale these is to have our spirits lifted up higher than the peaks of earth can raise the spirits of man on earth, for whereas altitude

dulls their faculties it gives ours sparkle and zest. We are going to give you the words of a great mountaineer, F.S. Smythe, who came here many years ago and whose love of the hills is still as strong as ever. His words are these: 'High on these eternal summits there are snows of dazzling whiteness where no foot has ever trodden nor ever will, but here the soul may come and reach the places where the angels foregather, and talk with those whom God has sent from the greater heights to cheer and exalt the mountaineer.' [F.S. Smythe was a celebrated mountaineer of the twenties and thirties, who made the first climb of Kamet in the Himalayas. Are these words in any of his published books? The implication seems to be that he wrote them after his death.] You will perhaps recall Smythe, who once had an experience on a mountain which left him convinced that death would come to him as a friend, and with such as he to guide travellers in our high hills there are no accidents or falls but only the scaling of heights and the enjoyment of vistas wider than you will imagine.

We will conclude our account tomorrow and say something about the ultimate vision of God that lies at the end of the long pilgrimage into Eternity. No words will be enough, and there is little enough we know, but we will try not to be unworthy of our theme.

September 8th, 1973

We come now to the last passage of this autobiography, which has given us more trouble than what went before, since it deals with what is strictly speaking impossible to describe — the Lord of the Universe Himself and the final goal of all those who even in small measure loved Him on earth. We shall do our best not to say what is misleading, and can only pray that there will be no such matter in what is actually written down.

We give first this assurance, that the faith of us all is the Christian faith on which our hearts were nourished when we were on earth. We are not theosophists or practitioners of any occult crafts, and we have no intention of trying to convey any hidden or esoteric truths, for we know of none. We are Christians now as then, but we have been permitted to see rather further into the life of the spirit than was ever possible on earth. We love the same Lord Jesus Christ the more for having come nearer to Him, and the same Spirit which is found in His Church on earth is operative here, and gives us the blessing of His peace and indwells our hearts. This much by way of introduction, but we have much now to say which will fill out the outlines of the short text which says: 'Christ is all and in all'.

We are going first to say that in the regions to which the human soul comes after the death of the earthly body there is no longer any doubt felt about the reality of God. No atheist can remain long here until the facts are borne in upon his mind and he begins to believe. We do not mean that we have no problems or that the certainty of the Christian faith is at once known to all, but the evidence is there before his eyes, of purposeful survival, and he cannot deny it. Atheists and agnostics are not excluded from the regions beyond death, only those who have never learned how to love their fellows, as Our Lord's story of the Great Assize shows plainly. The mere absence of intellectual conviction is not in itself a bar to further development, and some of those who on your side were counted as anti-Christian are among God's servants now. However, some time is needed before the truth is brought

home to them, and the period of delay is not wasted, for it does not matter here what a man's intellect denies — if his heart is open he can be helped and trained to work for the God in whom he will later trust.

We wish first to explain that the way God is known to us when we first come here depends on our ability to grasp the truth, and we may at first need pictures and images as you do. We come with perhaps an erroneous set of notions, and these have to be corrected and the truer ones implanted, and this takes time; it took me many years before I had the scales removed from my eye completely. The ability to see is followed by the desire to know more, and the many levels of blessedness which we speak of as spheres — and the word is not to be understood literally or geometrically — are levels of deeper understanding and accordingly of greater powers and more thorough influence.

Beyond the spheres into which the progressing soul can pass there lies the reality of God, and the language of description fails utterly here, and no simile or metaphor can serve to speak of Him as He is. Therefore we are confined to poets and to the works of artists and, one may add, especially of musicians, to say what has meaning and can be meaningfully applied. When we speak of God in words we at once limit Him to what words can do, but without words the mind cannot be given concepts of any sort, so words, however feeble, we must use now.

God is Spirit, said Our Lord, and this at least typifies invisible power. The omnipotence of God is nowhere seen better than in the image of the wind, which can come as a zephyr or a gusty breeze or as a storm which destroys all it meets. As we have said, we cannot press the words we use too far, but this image helps, and we wish to use it in relation to His all-pervasive influence. We also use the image of fire, which is the aspect that Dante saw at the end of his poem, the Divine Comedy. 'Within its depths I saw ingathered, bound by love in one volume, all the scattered leaves of life, substance and accident and all that was customary ...', and this vision of a blazing sun he called 'The Primal love, which moves the sun and all the stars'. Your own poets can come near to this truth, that the nature of God is a fire of unspeakable intensity, which can warm and enliven and refresh, and if necessary, but rarely, destroy. And this fire is Love itself, which is the greatest force known, which in its lesser aspects binds the atoms together, and on the human levels binds the hearts of men together, and on the heavenly level is the very source of all that is good.

We assert, then, that God is love, and Love has light as well as heat. The light is such that no imperfection can survive exposure to it, and that is why, out of mercy, the imperfect are kept at a distance for many years until they can shed some of their faults and approach nearer. We cannot ourselves bear the full light of God, and only one who became man can do this, for he is fully divine himself, our blessed Lord and Saviour, to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

No words are adequate, but this must be said in conclusion, that some words are necessary, and if these words, faulty and feeble as they are, can bring assurance to a few, they will have been well written. The life you live in these days is inimical to faith, and we know this, and know you cannot easily believe. But if you can believe this much, all will be well, that

God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, and not imputing sins but redeeming sinners. We cannot write more for the mind of the writer is tiring, and in this matter above all we wish no untruth to appear. God is our witness, who cannot lie, that the things we have written are true, and the life we live is real, and the goal we look to is the goal to which he calls us and all men. For with the Church on earth and the whole company of heaven we rejoice in one communion, and look for one consummation of all things, when Christ shall be all and in all. We with you look for the restitution of all things, the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. May God bless you all. Amen and Amen.

7. BEYOND PARADISE

During the Christmas vacation of 1974, when I was free from the mental distractions of College lecturing duties, my father indicated that he and the group in which he worked wished to give me some information about the 'fourth sphere', in which they operate and whose life they share. In the previous chapter he has told how he was brought into that sphere, and what follows is perhaps best seen as a postscript to that chapter, containing much interesting detail. It came across in six short deliverances, and I give them as I received them, excising one or two personal asides. The fifth was given a little later than the others, as a kind of afterthought, but I was told to place it at this point in the sequence.

I do not feel able to comment on the material, none of which is evidential. It came across quite rapidly and I am quite sure that my conscious mind had no part in devising it. In the manner of Herodotus, all I can say is: this is what was told me, make of it what you please. I happen to find it convincing, but what I think is irrelevant since my reasons are wholly subjective.

December 21st, 1974

We shall give you first a survey of our position in the whole scheme of things as God's servants in the fourth sphere of blessedness. We are not at the end of the ladder of perfection here, but there are stages beyond this which no human mind can easily understand, so more than to record this fact, and to insist that the Divine Lord is at the summit of all our striving, we will not say, but you can accept, we hope, our word for this, and be content with the knowledge that there are spheres beyond this one, and degrees of glorification.

When I first came into this sphere I was told that there were no spheres beyond this which one could choose to enter if one asked, but only those to which one was called by God, and whom He calls is His affair entirely. So it may be that I shall remain here for a very long while, and not achieve full glorification until the appointed time, which may be hundreds of years ahead of me, and we all feel this is right, for we have no wish to force our way to higher regions, which would not in any event be a possibility unless one were to stultify all the conditions which obtain in the life of the Spirit. Your own arrival here, when that comes about, will show you how the idea of ambition is quite foreign to our thinking. You cannot

be ambitious when there is no more scope for it — not even if it is an ambition to serve God more fully. The fourth sphere marks the end of all that, and is a place where one can only wait, not impatiently but in confidence that God will do what is best.

When I regard the people who are with me, I see a sight that would perhaps give the ambitious earthbound folks a cause to stop and think what they were after. We were nearly all humble in our spheres of life, and no great statesman or great person of consequence is seen here, but these have all either remained in the third sphere or God has called them to be workers for Him at a higher level. We do not know whether He is rather more given to choosing the humble, but it looks like it, and His choice is not to be questioned. He has of course His purposes to fulfil with the high and mighty, but these, conditionally upon their becoming humble first, have to wait for Him to place them where He can use them.

When a group is formed of persons who are to work together, their natures are considered, and those who are mutually congenial are given the group that suits them best. We are all very like myself in our thought habits, and in our ways of reacting, so we never disagree but work harmoniously together in a way you cannot imagine in committees on earth. We are not so much alike, as in mutual affinity, and there is a joy and freedom that comes from such an association as ours, which cannot be imagined on your level of life. Our own fulfilment comes from our harmonious co-operation, and there are no ways of reaching conclusions except in complete harmony. We think you will realise what we mean if you consider the Quaker business meeting and how it functions, and change the surroundings from a meeting house to the heavenly fields, so to speak.

We have four principles which we each observe in our deliberations. One is that we speak in turn, and our recorder puts down what we say. Another is that we never voice a disagreement, but if we do not entirely agree we avoid saying so directly and add our own views as a sort of qualifying appendix. The third is that we never let our own views have too much prominence in our argument, but put what we say in a sort of mosaic of ideas which make a pattern when they are all together. The fourth is that we begin and end with prayer, which is much easier for us as we do not have the hindrances you have to contend with on earth in an embodied form.

We are now in a quite different mode of existence from that which we held on earth, and have complete freedom from hampering mental or physical restrictions, so we do not have to wait long before the result of a decision can be carried out. You are wondering what sort of decisions we make, and you have to realise that the remarks of Our Lord about judging the Twelve Tribes of Israel are to be interpreted in a spiritual manner. There are fields of existence over which each of our groups exercises control and judgement, but only under the control of Christ, the judge of all, who delegates to us these rights and is constantly with us to look on what we do. Our work lies in the field of spiritual influence over temporal affairs, and the prayers of men and women, if sincerely made, facilitate our help and influence the carrying out of the ideal fact which the praying persons are really wanting, so that the answering of prayer is dependent for its rapidity and fullness upon the way it is done on earth. We are agents who give help to men, and it was natural that we should give

help to you, and you are in fact making our work easier by your prayers, Charles, though the power from which your writing comes is from our sphere, not yours.

December 22nd, 1974

We shall give you three pieces of special information now as to the sphere in which we live and work, and these are to be seen in conjunction with the things we said earlier about Our Lord's continual presence in the sphere, even if he is not visible to us so far as sight goes, and only felt to be there.

The first thing is, that he is our Leader, just as he was of the twelve apostles on earth, whose activities after his resurrection resembled in some ways our own activities now. He has the place of leader in all the deliberations we make, as if he were, so to speak, Chairman, and we are conscious of his presence and effective influence even when he is not in sight. Sometimes there is a sort of appearing in which he is known to us by a kind of whitening of the atmosphere in the place reserved for him, and we are then very much in awe, and usually we say nothing for a long while, but such visions are not very frequent and we do not count upon their happening.

When your uncle came here to join us he was quite astonished to see this sight, and we had to explain afterwards how important it was to remain serene and silent in the presence of the vision, for we are otherwise very much affected, and to break out into speech, as for example Peter did on the mountain when the Lord was transfigured, would only result in the removal of the sign. So our attempts to tell him were very earnestly made, and the next time it appeared he was able to restrain his speech, and the vision remained for a while and we all profited by its being there.

When the work we do is discussed, we are all together, and as I said before, we speak in turn and add our thoughts to the common pool; but at work among those we go to help we go together in ones or twos in a manner that you cannot very well realise, but it is similar to the transition of the mind in thought from place to place. You have another way of going from place to place, and so have we, but we seldom use it, for it is not necessary to use our limbs except for a few minutes, to make our use of them known to us. We do not, unlike yourself, require exercise, and we do not flex our muscles, but the operations of the mind are much more nimble and swift, and these we use when we have to travel.

Our second thing which we have to speak of is our greater use of thought as a means of speech, and our way of conducting, as it were, in total silence a conversation which is a real exchange of ideas. We look like a group of silent meditators when in fact each is aware of what one or the other is thinking in turn. You do not have this facility, except insofar as some may be able to have telepathic contact with others, but it is usual with us to do this when we are trying to reach a common mind. We speak aloud at times when we feel we need to, but more for expression of fellowship than for necessary passing on of thoughts.

The third thing is the fact that we have freedom to enter all spheres below our own, and to speak and converse with their inhabitants whenever the time is suitable. They are not able to come to us unless we first go to them, but they do have the ability to ask for us in a sort

of prayer which they can put out. We may not be able to come at once, and our inability to do so may be due to the fact that we are deliberating, or to the fact that the most useful person in a group is occupied with helping someone else. So we may have to delay for a short time before going where we are prayed for. We see from many signs around us that one or another of us is needed, and the usual thing is for a quick meeting to be held, and a decision made as to who shall go.

December 23rd, 1974

We will now tell you about the extent of our work in this region, so that you may have some notion of how we go about the work of doing God's will as angelic visitants, for that is what in fact we are.

No further training is needed on the side of giving us knowledge to enable us to go about this work, but we do require help in regard to technique, and during the first few weeks of our residence here we are told how to use the new bodies we have received, and how to go from place to place at the most rapid and expedient way. Your own experience of learning to ride a bicycle or to swim is the nearest analogy we can provide, for the same sort of skill has to be learned in the same sort of way, by practice and trial and error, but it need not take very long. We have a few weeks in training, and then we are assigned to the group with which we are to remain henceforward, until it pleases God to bring us further in the spiritual life, and this we do not expect for many years yet. We have full confidence in one another and each is aware of the other's thoughts at any time he wishes, so we do make up what could be regarded as a collective personality, and in some respects we might be thought of as a personal entity, twelve or more in one personal union. We are not monsters, however, or like hydras, or any sort of unnatural growth, for each of us is a man or woman, as once we were in the third sphere, but there is this mutual compatibility and self-knowledge each of the selves of the others, and we do not ever clash or disagree or come into conflict with one another.

When we work together we work, in your words, as a team, though the mutual effort is for a more serious reason than the playing of games. We do relax, but when working we go about our required efforts with single-minded seriousness, and those whom we help are always ready to see one or other of us, for they are told that more than one of us may appear. We are not, however, so mutually united as to make up a blend of persons, as one might blend coffee or tea, but each of us has his full quota of idiosyncrasies, and even a peculiarity or two if he does not wish to shed it. So, working in a group, we help people singly, and bring those who have gone astray back to the fold of the Good Shepherd.

Why we work in groups rather than singly appears to be that the help needed by those who need us is almost always something that no single person can provide. We may be given as a task the re-introduction of a thoroughly disintegrated personality into the third sphere, and the many broken pieces have to be reassembled. You can imagine our work to be like that of a number of folks round a table doing a difficult jig-saw puzzle. One sees a piece and inserts it, and another sees another piece and puts that into position, but the one who sees one thing might not see another, and the puzzle would never be finished if it were not for

the work of them all. So we work as a co-operative group in this way, and our friends in other groups likewise, and if there are times when we need anyone from another group there is a means by which this can be done, just as you in your life can obtain books through the co-operative work of more than one library.

December 26th, 1974

We shall say more today in regard to the life of the spheres in which we are living, and you will believe us more readily, we think, if you consider the analogy of a large outer container which has a number of others inside it — we do not mean this literally but you have to translate space into powers and degrees of awareness. We are at a higher level of awareness than those on the lower spheres, and our easy awareness of one another's thoughts is an example of this, and shows how the heightened awareness operates. We are also gifted with abilities that many people on earth would find it difficult to credit, such as the ability to see beforehand what can be as well as what will be, and so to be able to select people whom we can help, whether in your life or in Paradise.

We have never been given omniscience, however, for this is given to none but to those to whom God wills to give it, and they are very few indeed, and far higher in the heavenly realms than we are ourselves. You will therefore find that we express ourselves in a doubtful way sometimes, or speak of something as probable when we think it will occur but are not a hundred per cent sure. We have very little doubt about some things, but we do have grades of mental assurance.

We shall give you two or three examples now of our ability to estimate probable occurrences, and you can judge for yourself whether the probability is such that no special foresight was needed. [Three examples followed; at the time of writing one has occurred in a way consistent with the rather vague terms of the forecast, February 1st, 1975.]

When we are doing the will of God as His messengers we have now and then to go to regions where we do not like to be. You will know what we mean, and this does happen at times, though rarely, as these regions are far removed from our own, and have not many persons there. These are the persons who are being rewarded according to their works, and more than this we do not say. We have never been sent there more than once every two years or so, and we do not go alone. You would not wish to go alone if you were in our sphere, for although those who are there cannot hurt us they can grieve us, and the sights are sometimes terrible to look at. We once saw a man whose life was so wicked on earth that he was compelled, not by divine decree but by the operation of his own depraved will, to turn himself into a snake — but we will not go further into that. We do not know whether he will ever be able to recover his manhood, for only God knows that, but such beings are beyond our aid, and special creatures of God are needed to rehabilitate such persons, if this is possible.

We were ourselves going in search of a suicide, whom we believed able to respond to us, and it was a matter for our whole group. We found him, and in time persuaded him to accept the fact that he was not going to be able to destroy himself, but had to accept

conscious life and try to start again. We were successful, and it gave us very much pleasure to be able to do this work, but we were glad to go back to our own sphere nevertheless, as the lower sphere was affecting our spirits very much.

January 19th, 1975

We can now give you a fairly long account of one aspect which we left out when you were at Crianlarich [where the other four scripts were written in December 1974 — this one was inserted later: see the introduction to this chapter], and that is the way in which those who are here are helped by those who are higher and more able to give assistance when the hard cases are met. We are not referring to angelic beings, so much as to those who were once where we are now but are now in a higher state, corresponding to their development which took place here and which may have covered hundreds of years. These are among the ministering spirits sent forth by God. There are angels who were never on earth at all, but we are not angels, except in the sense of the Greek *angelos* [Greek for ‘messenger’].

We further have to tell you that when the angels, properly speaking, are called for help to mortals, this happens rarely, and happens in particular when there are, so to speak, key moments in human history. We can instance the occasion of the annunciation to Mary, and of the angel with the chalice in the story of Jesus in the garden, but only now and then does this happen.

We are linked by our thoughts with those higher creatures whom we can reach if we want their aid, and in regard to this we have a sort of device in our mental apparatus which acts like the pressing of a Morse key in wireless telegraphy — this is an analogy, but we cannot think how to describe the reality. We are able to call for help, but not to particular persons whose names we give, since we are not allowed to call for named helpers, but elsewhere it is determined who is to be sent.

Our own experience is that we need such help about once every few months of your time, and in my own experience this has occurred perhaps half a dozen times. We have to see that the incomer is briefed, and he is then left to himself, or she to herself, with the person whom we are trying to rehabilitate, and if further help is needed we give it. So it resembles the earthly practice of calling in a consultant when a doctor is unsure. When the higher creature has completed his investigation he probably gives advice and spiritual counsel, and then returns where he came from. We have then the ability to continue our help to the one whose care puzzled us before.

We do not know who the one is whom God sends out, for he never gives his name, but sometimes we can make a guess, and in one instance we were very surprised to see who was sent to us. He was known to us by a name other than the one he was known by on earth, and we called him [here my hand wrote haltingly what appears to be SANGELS].

Q: I don't suppose I have written that correctly.

Well, it is of no consequence, but the sound is near enough, and the man was recognized by the scar on the left side of the arm which he extended to us — his right arm. You will not yourself be able to recognise that scar, but it was the special sign of one who had been

initiated into a human brotherhood which was not a well-thought-of one in its time, but by now all the errors of former times had been expelled and the mark was for our recognition only. The mark was on the inner side of the forearm when the palm of the hand is turned inwards, and indicated a special status. You may be able to make out what the mark meant from enquiry and research. [Would any reader of these lines like to identify this 'mark'? I have deliberately refrained from making the attempt myself]

When this interaction takes place we are very much aware of the higher state of the one sent to us, and he is himself able to show us, simply through his appearance, that he is one of the chosen ones of God.

When you finally include this script with the others, place it between the fourth and the fifth.

December 27th, 1974

We give you today the last of the series which describe the sphere in which we serve God, and the length of it will be about as much as you can get on these four sides of paper, so we will try not to write in a sprawl but keep it neat and in small letters.

We have rather less to say of ourselves today, and more of the other groups who are with us, and of their activities and operations. We shall first deal with the question of what is the scope of the work we do, and then go on to consider who the sort of persons are who choose to come here, and finally tell you where the bounds of our sphere lie, and where the point comes when anyone leaves us to go higher into the heavenly regions, to serve God even more completely than is possible here.

We have first to give an estimate of how many there may be in our sphere, and this is not easy, but we can say that it is a minority of the whole number of those who have entered the life of the spirit, and if you think in terms of about a thirtieth of the whole of the inhabitants of the life to come you will not be far astray. We operate in small groups, and have some acquaintance with the groups whom we sometimes co-operate with, but we do not of course know all who are here, and our knowledge is limited to a few thousand of the whole. Your own circle of acquaintances is less extensive than this, so you will not feel we are over-exclusive in our associations, and in fact we do know one another in greater depth than you can ever do on earth, so we can claim to be more, not less social than you are.

When certain writers about the worlds we live in have attempted to write about our sphere, they do not usually give much detail, and this is because details are hard to supply. In the third sphere we can speak of a world familiar to your own, and we can plot out such things as maps and itineraries, but here such things would be very misleading. We think your own concept of a world in which a writer sets his characters much as he wills to, and gives them a reality which is the product of his own thought, is rather nearer the truth. We are in the hands of God much more than ever before, and we are made and modelled as He chooses, with the exception that He takes our characters as He finds them, and does not alter us completely at a stroke. We are imperceptibly changed, as St Paul said, 'from glory to glory by the Spirit who is the Lord', and after some years in this sphere we bear no resemblance

to what we were on earth, except that some recognizable traits may persist, such as a tendency in speech, or a strong sense of purpose, or a special fondness for children. We are still individuals, but we are other than we used to be, and this is right, for we have to be very much other than we were if God is to call us higher, as we believe He will with us all in time.

We have seen in the short while we have been here the changes that have occurred to some whom we have met. One woman, not in our group, but one whom I often meet, was very much of a precise and fussy person on earth, and even in Paradise she kept this trait of character, and used to tell people where she thought they were going astray in this or that respect. She came here, and found that by degrees her fussiness left her, and she is easy-going now, and laughs at her former rigidity of attitude, and tells us what a silly thing it was to be so strict and meticulous, as if she knew better than her Maker how the world should be arranged.

We will mention now the sorts of duties that are assigned to us as we go our ways here. We are not all provided with rehabilitation activities or given assignments of help for newcomers. This is a side of the work of the fourth sphere, but a lesser one which we share with our friends in the third sphere. We have also groups who are assigned to influencing the general operations of men and nations, and who help invisibly in the workings of what you call nature. Those engaged in this work need to be combative, for there are evil influences to be withstood, and there are battles of will before a particular assignment is successfully carried out. The mystery of evil, why it is there at all, is not given to us to understand. There is a Satanic adversary, elusive yet real, and he is fighting a losing battle with his Creator, but the war will be a long one, we think, before, to use familiar imagery, St Michael conquers the dragon.

We have others here who specially watch over the creative spheres of human life, and act as the Greeks imagined the Muses to operate, in inspiring the making of poems and works of literature and high imagination. We have among us those who on earth were specially skilled in this way, and some of the names we could give you would be familiar. We also have men who offer guidance to magistrates and judges, and those who are responsible for ordering your society on earth. These and many other spheres of activity are comprised in the whole work of all who are here in our region which lies above Paradise but below the higher levels of spiritual life.

Of these we can say little, for only one who has been there knows, and none of us has done this. Beyond the fourth sphere are those choice spirits who serve God in more refined ways than ever we can, and whose skills and excellences could not be conveyed in any sort of written account. Every so often there is, as it were, a time of general silence in our sphere, and everywhere a hush falls, and we all know that some of us are being chosen to go higher, so we pray for their further life and offer thanks to God for our own. We have no way of knowing who has gone, but there may be a familiar face missing from a group with which we once had dealings. None has yet gone from my own group, but we wonder often

whether Philip [the leader of my father's own group] will be called away soon, and this seems to be likely as he is by far the most spiritual of us all.

Beyond the boundaries, therefore, we will not try to pry, but end our account, as is right, with the most earnest assertion we can make, that we know that 'all things work together for good to them that love God and are called according to His purpose' [St Paul's letter to the Romans: Ch. 8 v. 28]. He has brought us this far, and in so doing He has made us partners with Him in His work of doing His will in the upholding and replenishing of the marvellous universe He has created and daily renews. We can only feel joy and a sense of privilege at what we have been called to do. Above us lie the realms where Christ himself is seen and known continually, and there may He bring us when He chooses to, and may His grace be with you all in this life and in the life to come.

8. REACTIONS AND REFLECTIONS

In this concluding chapter I shall endeavour to make as impartial an assessment as I can of the dialogue in which my hand has been engaged over the last six years. The earlier autobiographical parts were completed four years ago, so this final section will reflect some modification of views held then.

I begin by affirming straight away that I do believe my father to be really there in this dialogue, for reasons which follow. Firstly, there have been passages in the scripts which appear to me to have evidential value. Experts will disagree over what actually does constitute supporting evidence for a mind other than one's own being operative in such a dialogue, but I do know that my hand has written things which at the time I did not know, and could not have guessed to be true, but which in fact were true, and that these were often not vague remarks but specific statements. The most obvious way of accounting for them is to suppose that an intelligent mind was responsible - one not my own but linked to my mental apparatus.

If my father, Charles Henry Fryer, who died in 1931, has in fact become enmeshed in the processes of my own mind, and is able to express himself through my hand, there are none the less difficulties which cause distortion, and in regard to things which cannot be checked for accuracy there seems no way of disentangling the genuine from the misleading. As with salt in sea-water, so with my thoughts among his; there is likely to be something of myself in nearly all that is written, and no instrument or technique can estimate the extent of the dissolved matter. I have to exercise patience, accept the misses with equanimity and be duly thankful for the shots that hit the target, whether (rarely) on the bull's-eye, or (more often) on the rings around it. I have come to feel sympathy with other sensitives when they, too, go wrong, and no longer expect all they say to be correct, or think they are charlatans when they make mistakes.

Out of a mass of raw material I have selected a number of specimen passages. One consequence of their being published will be, I hope, that someone with the necessary literary tact and skill will compare them with my ordinary everyday style and make a

judgement on whether one is so different from the other as to suggest that two personalities are at work.

I think a note of caution needs to be sounded in regard to the assertions made in the writing. However convincingly they may seem to indicate that a particular person, once alive on this earth, now survives in a discarnate existence, this does not guarantee that what he purports to say is bound to be true. Quite apart from possible distortions in transmission and reception, the discarnate, too, may be mistaken in what they say. My father freely admits this. More than once he has corrected a statement he has made - and sometimes corrected the correction. He has sometimes mentioned records - archives of some sort - to which he can have access but which are hard to interpret. I offer no opinion about this, for I may have unconsciously imposed such references myself; I have heard of the famous 'Akashic records' that feature in psychic literature. The point is that he can look things up, as I can in a dictionary or an encyclopaedia, and with the best will in the discarnate world he can still get them wrong.

In assessing my controlled writing, therefore, I have tried to tread delicately, like the biblical king Agag, to lessen the likelihood of being hewn in pieces by unfriendly critics - though he did not avoid that fate, and perhaps I shall not. The scripts do seem to have features which did not arise from my own wishes, expectations or presuppositions. In the first place, there is the *unexpectedness* of so much that is given - and this is a feature which it seems to me, is more marked than it used to be. When I begin to write, the material that I find myself setting down is, more often than not, something which my mind has not been dwelling on. True, once a theme has made its appearance my conscious mind *is* aware of it and involved in it, so that the possibility of distortion comes in, but it is not usual for a theme to be developed at length; more often he moves on to another topic after a few sentences - and that, too, is often unexpected.

In the second place, what is written is frequently what I would not wish to see. Some while ago I developed a bad migraine headache during a long car journey, and made for a friend's house to rest and recover. A day later I felt better, and intended to drive on to my ultimate destination, a part of South Wales rich in historical remains some of which I meant to investigate and photograph. My writing firmly forbade me to use my car; I was to go by train. This was possible, but more expensive and nothing like so convenient, so the following day I took the matter up again and received the same reply. I do not regard myself as bound to take advice which comes to me in this way; I use my common sense like anyone else. But using the car was only a matter of convenience and economy, and the advice might be good advice, so I took it. Now, *who* was disagreeing with me? To me, prohibitions of that sort smack of the evidential.

At the moment of writing a good while has elapsed since I described how the operation of controlled writing appeared to myself as I practised it, so perhaps another look at it would be a good idea. Three questions occur to me which I will answer in turn. First, has the writing changed, in manner or matter, over the last six years? Second, has the practice of it

had any effect upon the writer which he or others can discern? Third, have his views and opinions been modified because of it, in any important respects?

The first question can soon be answered. There has been no change. All that was written in chapter four still holds good. The same sort of material is produced: personal advice, the occasional forecast or attempt to give me something evidential, and from time to time lengthy passages about my father's present life. The only thing that needs to be added is that the amount written is far less in quantity. A large fibre suitcase holds the scripts produced over the first two years; a two-hundred-leaf exercise book of A4 paper is enough to contain each subsequent year's production. I do not now write every day, and when I do write it is not for longer than half an hour. Three times a week, in twenty-minute sessions, is usual. If I feel tired or out of sorts, or if I cannot find the leisure at the proper time, immediately before or after breakfast, I let the opportunity go. My father seems content that this should be so. He limits to the requisite brief period what he has to say, and often he will stop in the course of a session, say that I do not seem to be receptive enough that morning, and then take his leave in the usual manner.

The second question I can answer for myself, though of course I cannot see myself as others see me - and one cannot very well go round asking one's friends if one is any different from before. No one has volunteered such information, at any rate. As far as I can tell, the practice of controlled writing has not had any spin-off in regard to my physical or mental life. Migraine headaches, to which I am subject, have not increased in severity or frequency. I have not found customary mental activities - the preparation of lectures, for example, or the writing of notes for student consumption - either harder or easier. Perhaps my mental life continues much as before because I limit the amount of paranormal writing that I do. If I were to over-indulge and spend hours a day at it I daresay my nervous apparatus would soon show signs of strain. However, I have no wish to do this, and I doubt if my father would co-operate in such a case.

I should perhaps mention one possible side-effect that the writing has caused indirectly. Quite early on, my father suggested that I ought to try my hand at composing imaginative literature, as it seemed to him that I had abilities in this direction. Now, this may very well have been an intrusion of my own, passing itself off as parental advice and trying, as it were, to get psychically validated. The fact remains that until that time I had never done more than write one or two short stories and work up into written form some animal stories which I had been accustomed to tell my daughter when she was a small child. None of these had ever achieved publication. Since then I have written four novels. These, likewise, have not found a publisher. I have enjoyed writing them and shall probably go on doing so, whether or not they find their way into print. At least, if I *do* have any gift for romantic invention, it will then have a channel through which to issue, and not be so likely to get tangled up in paranormal productions.

If the experience of controlled writing has not affected me physically or mentally, as I think it has not, it may none the less be supposed that my feelings cannot have remained unaltered. What does it feel like, suddenly to become psychically sensitive in an unusual

manner? Well, I do not *feel* as if anything astonishing or portentous had happened to me. The activity has become as ordinary, if not as frequent, as shaving before breakfast. This may occasion surprise in the reader, and when I reflect upon it I am rather surprised myself. If this ability is really what it purports to be, making all allowances for possible intrusions of myself into the transmission, then I am apparently in touch whenever I wish to be with a very advanced spirit, Christian still in his convictions, who gives me the benefit of his advice and opinion, and his companionship whenever I want it. Had anyone asked me before the event what value I would set upon such a link, if it were possible and permissible, I think I should have set a high price on it. Now, so I am persuaded, it *has* happened. Why am I not filled with enthusiasm, proclaiming it from the house-tops, putting up a brass-plate outside my residence: CHARLES FRYER, CERTIFIED SENSITIVE, CONSULTATIONS BY APPOINTMENT? Well, I have no wish to be certified in another sense. But it is probably as well that I do not feel an urge to over-enthuse. If I tried to popularize the phenomenon in return for the pleasure of publicity, the ability might very well dry up or go bad on me. And so far as publicity is concerned, this book provides the measure of it which my father asked me to obtain.

Being temperamentally, too, a doubting Thomas, I cannot help insisting that a 'spirit of discernment' (to use a New Testament term - and if that is what it is) is not necessarily 100 per cent proof spirit. There is a tendency, in regard to information I am given that is supposed to be evidential, for it to be half right. Of what help should I be to an inquirer if I had to say to him: 'About half of what I tell you is true, but I don't know which half? I feel I am operating in the shallows in this respect. My father has more than once told me that there are things he cannot say because I cannot grasp them, and other things which he can only convey by analogies or allegories. He speaks, for example, of the environment in which the departed find themselves, as being a spiritual universe which he likens to the child's toy that consists of an egg which, being taken apart, holds another egg within it, or another within that, and so on - but he insists that this is not to be understood literally and spatially.

A degree of humility seems to be desirable in anyone who has experienced a paranormal visitation. The sort of talk which I have heard from some mediums seems out of place. 'I told the man this, and then it happened; wasn't that marvellous? I said this, and they wouldn't believe me, but of course it turned out to be true after all.' It doesn't do to take a paranormal ability too seriously. Genuine it may be; flawed it almost certainly also is. I once had a sitting with a well-known medium, a charming woman who certainly 'had the gift', and a good deal of what she told me was highly evidential. But not all. She said emphatically, in regard to my father, that a certain thing had been the case with him. I knew it hadn't and, diffidently, said so. She became quite annoyed. I felt like a back-seat driver being rebuked.

It is instructive, in this respect, to study the sayings of those undoubted sensitives, the Old Testament prophets. They were not always proved right in the event. Jeremiah forecast that Jehoiakim, king of Judah, would die ignominiously and be buried 'with the burial of

an ass,' being 'dragged and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem' (Jeremiah xxii 18-19). The chronicler of his reign, who was not friendly to him, simply says that he 'slept with his fathers' (II Kings xxiv 1-6). That is, he was buried in the usual manner along with his ancestors. Jeremiah knew very well that his prophecies sometimes went wrong; God, he supposed, was deceiving him, though he could not make out why (Jeremiah xx 7). He did not think himself to be infallible, but that did not prevent his oracles from being written down and preserved as inspired scripture.

Being psychically sensitive is not necessarily a matter for self-congratulation. (It was a cause of misery for Jeremiah throughout his prophetic life.) A sensitive is like a piece of delicate apparatus - like the typewriter that I am now using, only much more imperfect in operation and not naturally adapted to the reception and transmission of paranormally originated messages. In the celebrated 'Cross-Correspondence' scripts (*Evidence of Personal Survival from Cross-Correspondences*: H.F. Saltmarsh, 1938), the supposedly-surviving spirit of a well known Victorian psychical researcher, F.W.H. Myers, wrote that trying to transmit messages through the medium of 'Mrs. Willett' (the pseudonym for a very talented woman automatic writer) was like trying to dictate through an opaque glass screen to a reluctant and slow-witted secretary. Granted that discarnate communication is a possibility; nevertheless the communications have to be effected through a human being who is still enfleshed, and who cannot divest himself or herself of all his or her preconceptions and ingrained attitudes. These are there; they distort; no one can ever know how much they *do* distort. Perhaps sometimes a message gets through unaffected, like an accused man in the Middle Ages made to submit to trial by ordeal, who successfully negotiates a floor covered with red-hot ploughshares. Often what *do* get through are incidental, trivial details - which can nevertheless carry considerable conviction to the hearer if they happen to be spot-on. But if a communicator, such as Myers, wished to say anything really significant and important, then he would be lucky indeed to find a sensitive who had no views or opinions at all which might affect his message.

So, with respect to the genuineness or otherwise of the material my hand writes under paranormal influence, all I can confidently *assert* is that it really does come out on to the paper without my *trying* to write it, and that it does from time to time produce the sort of correspondence with present or future events which chance coincidence could scarcely explain. I am quite sure that I do not write through conscious determination. My hand is passive, and I observe that it moves the point of the pen across the paper, as if from within but not through the agency of the muscles of my hand or arm. This is something it would be hard to demonstrate to a determined sceptic who was prepared to believe that I was faking the whole operation, though I think he might find it hard to account for the fact that if, when the writing is in progress, I hold the barrel of the pen half way up from the point, or even further, the writing continues unchanged in form or rapidity. I am quite sure, too, that the thoughts which (so to speak) drop into my mind at the moment when they are about to be written are very often thoughts which I have never consciously had before, or have utterly forgotten having.

I do feel personal assurance, after six years' experience that the writing is, to the extent that I do not unwittingly distort it, from my father. This assurance is compounded of many elements incommunicable to others. I feel the identity of my communicator more strongly now than when I wrote the autobiographical parts of this book in 1973. It is all so *like* what a father would say to his grown-up son - so like such a human relationship in its humorous tolerance, its occasional jests, its reaction to my moods, its rare but courteous rebukes. I cannot offer this feel of the thing as evidence because it is intimate and incapable of demonstration. No investigator can enter my mind and experience what I feel - but I am investigating myself, and it is evidence to *me*.

The third question was whether the writing I have done has caused me to modify views and opinions I held before. Generally, I think it has not. I do not think I have been told anything which goes completely counter to previous suppositions I had had about the nature of discarnate life. Such modification as there has been is of a strengthening kind. A sceptic will naturally see this as an indication that I am writing out my own inner beliefs; I cannot prove that he is wrong.

My own feeling is, that over a much longer period than six years my father has been mentally influencing me. For what it is worth, I give the remark of a sensitive with whom, seven and a half years ago, I had a sitting, and who produced some quite evidential statements: 'He says, "You know, I'm very closely interwoven into the fabric of your thinking and your mind."'

Perhaps this is the point at which one rather controversial opinion needs to be mentioned - one which is rather a 'hot potato' in theological circles. In the scripts written under my father's control there are some allusions to human reincarnation. Christian theologians in general have felt that this is a notion inconsistent with the revealed pattern of God's dealings with men. I confess to being of the minority party here; I believe that it is an option open to a Christian, to believe in this way. With some hesitation I put forward some personal views and comments. They are my own views, not those of the Church; they may be wrong. I am not trying to argue for their truth, only for their tenability.

It has always seemed to me that human re-incarnation cannot be proved. If the possibility of precognition in human beings is allowed - and card-guessing experiments suggest that some persons have this faculty in some degree - then an awareness of a supposed event in a previous life can conceivably be explained as a premonition of the later event which might appear to serve as proof. To take a completely imaginary example: suppose I have strong hunch that I have been to a particular place before, which I associate with something tragic having happened to me. Perhaps I have a vision of myself being led to execution there. Later investigation shows that someone was once executed there, in circumstances which match those of my vision. But, however close the correspondence may be between the previous vision and the ascertained facts, this is not proof, or anything like it, of the event having happened to *me*. I may have been precognisant of the later discovery, as the subject of a card-guessing experiment may have precognized that the next card to show when the pack was cut would be the ace of spades. An explanation

depending upon a faculty whose existence has been established is preferable to one that depends upon an unproved notion.

However, if something is unprovable, that does not mean that it is not true or cannot happen. The philosopher Plato, perhaps the greatest intellect which the ancient world produced, accepted reincarnation as part of the pattern of the life of the human soul. Eastern sages, highly developed spiritually though not in the Hebrew or Christian traditions, have made similar assumptions. The founder of Buddhism claimed to be able to remember his former lives. For both Plato and the Buddha re-incarnation was seen as a cycle into which souls, both human and animal, were drawn again and again, to be re-born at one point or another up or down the scale of sentient life. For Plato it was part of a system of rewards and punishments, by which a soul was given a tenfold recompense, one way or the other, for virtues or vices displayed during an earthly life. (See the 'Myth of Er' with which he ends his treatise on justice, the *Republic*.) For the Buddha, the continual succession of human existences was a fundamental evil, from which the only possible salvation was the 'going out of the flame,' the annihilation of the cluster of desires and cravings which, for him, constituted the human soul. This extinction could only come about when, by hard self-discipline, the craving, not only to *enjoy*, but even to *exist*, was obliterated. Whatever was left of the one whose personality had been so rigorously pruned back entered Nirvana, the only blessed state, about which the Buddha would say nothing at all because it would not be understood. Neither of these views seems to be compatible with the Christian belief in a God of Love, though the Buddhist one is not without a certain grim nobility.

Another way of looking at the matter, one which I find more credible, is of re-incarnation as part of a scheme for the training of the human spirit. Suppose that, instead of being pitchforked into a cycle of births and deaths, one is able while discarnate to make a free choice, according to the wisdom one has attained - or, perhaps, the rashness one has not yet learned to avoid - whether or not to enter incarnate life again at a particular time and into a particular situation, in order to learn from experience. This is to suggest something similar to Plato's pattern in the 'Myth of Er'; Plato, too, emphasizes the importance of a moment of choice. But he seems to view the process as an unending sequence. Any theory of re-incarnation which a Christian might feel inclined to adopt could not involve *that*; it would have to be part of a pattern by which the soul was brought nearer to God.

One of the difficulties facing anyone who inclines to a religious view of life is the enormous amount of apparent injustice in the world. Not all men have the same chance to live life well, and live it through to its natural end in old age. Some die young, some live crippled, some have the dice loaded against them through inherited or environmental influences towards evil. If God is good, how can these things be explained? One possible answer is that there are further opportunities beyond death in some discarnate sphere - and if the possibility of coming back to this earth is to be ruled out, I think myself that one *must* postulate this. But why rule out that possibility?

Those Christians who feel that completely reliable answers to such questions can be obtained from, Biblical assertions, or inferences drawn from such assertions, will probably wish to point to such a text as: 'It is appointed unto man once to die, and after death the judgement' (Hebrews ix 27-8). For them, that settles the matter: the Bible appears to say that we have only one human life. But other Biblical passages appear to point in another direction. St Mark's Gospel records a belief held by Our Lord's contemporaries that before the advent of the Messiah the prophet Elijah would come back to earth. Our Lord's comment was, that Elijah had already come in the person of John the Baptist - one clear case of re-incarnation, if the plain sense of a Biblical statement (Mark ix 11-13) is to be taken as deciding the matter! In St John's Gospel, also, Jesus is asked whether a particular blind man was blind because of some sin that he had committed. As he had been blind from birth, any such sin would have had to be committed in a previous life. Jesus denied that previous sin had caused the blindness, but did not correct the inference that the man might have lived before (John ix 2-3).

But one can scarcely deduce the reality or otherwise of reincarnation from isolated texts. Our only guide - not indeed as to belief but as to acceptance of a possibility - is our own sense of what is just. (And we are admittedly not precision-instruments in such a matter!) The view that seems to me most plausible, and (to my way of thinking) not inconsistent with Christian belief, is that a sequence of earthly lives may be the lot of each human soul, either for the purpose of self-training, or (as in the Bodhisattva-ideal of the Mahayana Buddhists) as a dedicated descent to help the still-incarnate. In such a case, even though each earthly life were (so to speak) 'memory-tight', with no recollection of what had gone before, yet it would be the same person throughout, the same man or woman, made by God and loved by Him. If each time a return to earth were made the one returning had opportunity to make of his or her earthly life something spiritually advantageous, for himself or herself or for others, that might well be sufficient reason for coming back.

I put forward tentatively, therefore, what I think is a tenable belief for a Christian, which I myself incline to hold. For each human spirit which God brings into existence there is a chosen destiny whose accomplishment human free-will may hasten or hinder, but not frustrate. God's will is for the salvation of all souls, not for their relegation, for the most part, to some sphere of final deprivation. Coming back to earth more than once is consistent with such a destiny. In a sequence of human lives on this earth each person can find God and be found by Him again and again - not interminably, for all training must eventually have an end, but sufficiently. There will be advance; there may be retrogression; there may even be a few (so my father thinks) who are so far gone in self-estrangement that the only thing God can do is to obliterate them, as the potter crushes the clay of the malformed pot. But for mankind in general the end is not obliteration but transformation.

I think this is a tenable view for a Christian to hold. It would be going too far to say that I firmly believe it to be true. I would like to think that it is true - but that very admission perhaps makes it suspect! My father, in what he writes, appears to confirm it. However, I cannot be sure that I have not fathered it upon my father, for I have to allow for the

possibility of my own thoughts coming out in the scripts as his opinions. And (I must be emphatic here; it is my duty to be) I am making no pronouncement on behalf of my Church; I am speculating, and my suppositions may be mistaken.

Eight years' practice of controlled writing has not changed my firm adherence to the Christian faith. Some of my relatives and acquaintances have supposed that I have wandered off into some occult religion. I have not; I remain a believing and practising Anglican churchman, a member, as I believe, of the universal Catholic Church of Christ. I have not had to un-learn any of its foundation doctrines. I believe that the correspondence between the latter and the disclosures my hand has written is near enough to make me feel easy about these disclosures. I am not of course going to go bail for the literal veracity of everything in them. I do not regard my scripts as a blueprint for a true theology, or anything like that. I think they are an adumbration of how things appear to someone who is closer to the source of all truth than I am, and whose insights are correspondingly clearer. I myself, because of difficulties of communication, am still 'seeing through a glass, darkly.'

My father, when he died, was a Protestant fundamentalist; now he seems to have become, in a broad sense, a Catholic in his outlook. Even before I began to write there were hints of this in the scripts which Janet wrote - his approval of formal ritual, for example, and of the sign of the Cross. Since he has begun to write through me he has dwelt on Catholic insights, but he does not condemn the convictions of other Christians. He has mentioned the Quakers with approval, and wishes I would sometimes join with them again at their meetings for worship. On one occasion, when I asked him for a statement of his present faith, he wrote out the Nicene creed in its entirety and declared his *ex animo* belief in it. What he has to say about Our Lord, whom he says he has seen, has always been consistent with orthodox Christian belief. I do not think there is anything, in the quantities of script which I have accumulated, that is incompatible with the Christian revelation.

Christianity has its characteristic ethics as well as its doctrines. . The ethical standpoint point of my father is more or less what a liberal-minded Christian on this earth would hold. During his lifetime he was something of a puritan; there is a larger charity in his outlook now. He regards sexual irregularities more kindly, perhaps, than is customary among church people; chastity is a virtue and, for some, a spiritual necessity, but he has specifically said that some unions between men and women, which the law does not recognize and the 'unco guid' (to use a phrase of Robert Burns) frown upon, are approved on his side. He showed himself unexpectedly sympathetic towards homosexuals, mentioning on one occasion a man who had lived near us in Tonbridge, who had received a prison sentence for a fault he had committed; why, he asked, do people judge this fault so severely? There are worse things done in the name of virtue.

As to the practice of prayer: in his lifetime here he was painstakingly devout in private petitionary and intercessory prayer, and in reading and meditating on the Bible. His attitude is now not less devout, but wider. By prayer, he says, we help one another; this is the ordering of God; living and departed interact in prayer in the communion of saints. No

distinction should be made between the living and the dead, for those who die are not sealed in a casket of slumber, to wake only at a Last Day. It is we who see death as a sleep; the blessed dead are alive and active. Prayer brings the power of God's love to bear upon those who need it. He tells me to pray for particular departed persons - for a cousin who died in middle age, found herself puzzled and wanted to return but ought not to; for an uncle who, careless of spiritual things during his lifetime, could not accept the fact of his death; for a man I knew long ago (Mr. Hawksworth - mentioned in chapter one) whose special concern had been for the unity of the divided sections of the religious community to which he then belonged, and who was now concerned to promote the unity of all Christians by prayer and spiritual influence directed from beyond the grave. He urges upon me the need for the systematic practice of personal prayer, and if I now have any sort of method in this matter, it is due to him, for I did not have it before.

Regarding sacramental life, he approves my own practice of regular communions, and seems to think (which I had been inclined *not* to think) that prayers made in the presence of the consecrated sacrament are of special value. He often asks me to remember a particular person when I am myself consecrating the sacrament, or at a time when someone else is doing so. He wished me for a while to make a daily prayer in the presence of the reserved sacrament; this did not prove practicable and he accepted the fact.

He does not dwell much on the past, only very occasionally recalling his own earthly life and people he or I had then known. Once he asked me if I remembered Mrs. Schafer. This was an elderly woman who used to come and oblige with house-cleaning from time to time; she lived not far from us in Tonbridge, and was ill-treated by her husband; bruises were sometimes in evidence. She often used to bring a paper bag with her: 'Sweets for the young master'. My parents did not like her doing this for me, especially as she was so poor. She was now, my father said, one of the most exalted spirits in the sphere to which he had himself come, and had earned her present state through the patient endurance of suffering. His disclosure astonished me; she was not in my mind at the time and I doubt if I had thought about her for years. 'Many that are last shall be first.'

If one is interested in paranormal phenomena one can scarcely avoid meeting Spiritualists. I number one such person among my friends. I have not become one. I mean no disrespect to Spiritualists; I think they are probably better for holding the views that they do than if they had no religious convictions at all. Spiritualists have their shades of belief and their different standpoints, and those I know would call themselves Christians also. One can well understand, too, why sensitives who are religiously-minded, and who get no encouragement or understanding from other churches but instead are given to understand that there is something wrong or unhealthy about the faculties they have been endowed with, should turn to the only church which does recognize their abilities and can give them a place and a ministry.

Spiritualists, however, seem to me to have made the mistake of fastening upon one aspect of the whole Christian gospel and concentrating attention, emotion and devotion upon it, ignoring the whole and overlooking the importance of the central Figure. They look

forward rather to happy survival than to the presence of God. The facts of contact with the departed, if they are facts, are not enough upon which to build a satisfactory personal faith which can reach deeper than the regions of discarnate contact. Christianity centres on a Man in whom men found God, and on communion with Him, partly through knowledge of and meditation upon the tradition handed down in words, by which intellect and will are nourished and strengthened, and partly through the sacramental means which have held the Church together through centuries, of water, bread and wine in Baptism and the Eucharist, through which the divine life reaches men invisibly, imperceptibly and continually. Insofar as the Church is the instrument through which imperfect human beings are regenerated and gradually fitted for that life of the Spirit into which they have, it may be, been permitted glimpses, it is through these general means of grace that we have the hope of glory. The whole Creed is the sufficient statement of faith, not one part of it taken alone and embroidered by psychic comment, even if the embroidery be truthful.

One does not *need* psychical contacts and paranormal experiences to provide a saving and satisfying religion. Most Christians do without it, and those who feel that such things are against conscience ought to do without it. But, as St Paul recognized, the consciences of Christians are not all of the same sort; there are regions of conduct in which one person will allow himself or herself what another would not, and each should allow the other a measure of liberty (the whole of Romans, chapter xiv, seems relevant here). If one man feels it is allowable to investigate and take account of the facts established by psychical researches, or to practise a psychical ability that appears to be healthy, his more scrupulous neighbour should not condemn him on that account alone. Our Lord gave us a criterion by which to judge any disputed practice: 'the tree is known by its fruits' (Matthew xii 33). My own experience with the controlled writing which (as I believe) I was invited to practise six years ago suggests to me that it is a good tree. Nothing which my hand has written has subverted my religious faith. If anything, the whole phenomenon has helped to fortify it.

I cannot, I know, expect this avowal to convince everybody. I know at least one person who will not be convinced; she believes that every psychic contact is necessarily demonic in origin, and she will think I am in the clutches of the Evil One. To use the metaphor I employed in a previous chapter, she will suppose that the Devil, like a skilful angler, is paying out a very long line in order to catch his fish eventually. To her, all I can say is: 'Withhold your judgement until you are quite sure the line is being hauled in; remember that to attribute to the powers of darkness an activity which may be nothing of the kind was said on the highest authority to be a very grave fault (Matthew iii 2830), and if you can do so, admit to yourself that you may be mistaken'.

The more I have thought about my experiences over the last six years, the more sorry I have been not to have had the help and understanding support of people in my own situation who happen to be similarly influenced. I know I am not the only practising Anglican churchman to have developed a paranormal ability, and I do not believe I can be the only priest to have it either. Certainly I number among non-psychical clerical friends

one or two sympathizers, but others are uneasy and wish it had not happened to me. There is no recognized body of practising Anglican sensitives, associated for mutual advice and discussion with the similarly gifted. Secular associations exist where such discussion can take place, and I do not wish to belittle their value, but they do not meet the needs of a committed Christian who wishes to use his gift in the context of prayer and appropriate religious practice.

The Church looks askance at paranormality. Once open *these* floodgates and where will she be? How many heresies, how much sheer nonsense will pour through? One can sympathize with its leaders and understand their caution. However, it is not the business of bishops to initiate new movements in the Church, which commonly begin on the fringes and work their way inwards. What I would personally like to see is the formation, by lay and ordained Anglicans who have developed paranormal abilities, of an Order within the Church that can responsibly represent such people, which can impose upon those who join it a rule of life appropriate to their special needs, which can convoke them for regular meetings, which can offer guidance and control. An Order of Christian Sensitives could not only encourage its members and build up their spiritual lives by a common discipline of prayer, meditation and (perhaps) ascetic practice, but could be an organ of information within the Church, publishing its own Journal, supplying speakers for meetings and conferences, publicising its own agreed findings and deliberations, inviting the visitation of bishops and theologians, and doing all this as part of the Body of Christ. I am not sure what part of a body it might represent: a sort of kidney, perhaps, to filter out the nitrogenous waste of sheer psychic nonsense or unpleasantness, and to retain what seems good nutriment - not as new doctrine, indeed, but as material for consideration and study through which, perhaps, the 'faith once delivered to the saints' could be better understood in some specific respects.

Let paranormal abilities, then, be taken seriously. A warning note, however, must be added. This is a field in which mere dabbling is dangerous. When so many young men and young women are prepared to experiment with drugs, risking the health of their bodies in the search for exciting sensations, it is not surprising if they are equally ready to experiment with the occult, and risk their mental health by messing around with Ouija boards and glass-pushing, behaving like schoolboys trying to work a low-voltage electric motor by connecting it directly to the mains supply and then wondering why all the lights fuse. However sceptical the experimenters may be, that will not guarantee them immunity from unpleasantness; the thing may very well work, and work nastily. I have known a group of students who spent a whole Sunday doing this sort of thing, becoming first mildly interested, then fascinated, then scared as the influence pushing the glass on the polished table-top began to spell out unpleasant matter. They came to me in the evening, and we made a bonfire of the paper letters which they had arranged in a circle and the notes they had taken during their amateurish séance. The boy who began it had a bad night. It is a safe rule that paranormal practices should never be attempted for kicks; those who find this an interesting field had better confine their researches to observing those who already have psychic gifts, and not try to develop abilities which they may suppose are dormant in

them. If the thing comes in the context of a healthy religious life, the case is no doubt different, but even then one should be wary, do it in the context of Christian prayer, and be ready to discard it if it shows signs of turning unpleasant. In this matter, as in others, do not keep bad company.

This book has been dedicated to the memory of a former school pupil, a talented girl who died in tragic circumstances in her twentieth year. For the comfort of her parents I quoted some lines from William Penn's *Fruits of Solitude*, and they seem worth setting down to end this book:

They that love beyond the world cannot be separated by it. Death cannot kill what never dies, nor can spirits ever be divided that love and live in the same Divine principle.

Death is but crossing the world, as Friends do the seas; they live in one another still.

APPENDIX

The preceding chapters of this book contain, apart from paranormally written material, one person's views - my own. It seemed a good idea to include as well the reactions of others. I asked three of my friends if they would be willing to do so, and they agreed, and sent me the following statements. The first is written by a colleague in the College where I worked, the second is by a friend who has known me since I was a boy, and the third is by a lady who got into touch with me after reading an article I had published on the subject of paranormal writing; I have not known her for very long, and her reactions are not so much to myself as a writer, as to the book itself, which she read in typescript. All three are practising Church members.

REACTIONS: I

I am a colleague and friend of Mr. Charles Fryer, trained in psychology and have a Regular Army and academic background. I hold degrees in both arts and science of the University of London and am, I believe, sceptical both by disposition and academic profession.

Although I have undertaken no research into paranormal phenomena, I have read a fair number of research reports of parapsychological investigations. My reading has done little to diminish my scepticism in this field. All that I am able to do here is to report, as well as my memory serves, the transactions which I have had with Mr. Fryer in the area of controlled writing.

On two occasions Charles Fryer asked me to accompany him in an observational role, to 'séances' conducted by a medium of some reputation. Later he suggested that I might be interested in the 'controlled writing' phenomenon. At that time, the term meant little to me. My regard for him kept me listening when he explained his own involvement.

It must be confessed that I listened with concern when I had dismissed the notion that Charles was 'pulling my leg' in a mild kind of way. It soon became apparent that he was

quite serious and I became concerned both for his sanity and for his Christian priesthood. I was brought up in the Roman Church and assumed that the Anglican episcopate would take no more kindly to an eccentricity of this kind than would the Roman hierarchy. Charles had foreseen my reactions and put my mind into as easy a state as it could manage after the 'bombshell' which this unassuming scholar and cleric had dropped.

It was some time after that curiosity took over from concern and I began to ask questions about my friend's unusual activity. My questions were not untainted with malice - I wanted to catch Charles out. All my probing was met in the same gentle, objective way and I reached the stage when I wanted to see 'controlled writing' in action.

By this time, Charles Fryer had reported, in reply to my questions, a number of 'paranormal' communications which seemed quite inconsequential. They appeared to be concerned largely with number exercises in which, for example, data taken from the number scheme in the Bible was linked with data from other sources such as the pagination of 'the brown book on the bottom shelf of your study bookcase' and would come to a certain total. Accurate conclusions were reached.

I considered the possibility that Charles's long term memory had engrains which were being unconsciously retrieved in some way. I was able to convince myself that what psychoanalytical scholars have postulated regarding unconscious processes stops short of complex arithmetical processes. Nor could the phenomena described to me by Charles Fryer be explained by any mental disorder with which I am familiar. Deliberate faking I ruled out because of the circumstances in which these events arose.

I began to ask myself if some reality external to Charles Fryer could conceivably be the originator of these seemingly inconsequential signals. It also occurred to me, somewhat fancifully, that given the possibility of such a reality or being, the nature of the communications appeared to be some kind of attempt at authentication - the establishment of *bona fides*.

So I sat with Charles Fryer in his study to observe 'controlled writing'. Charles began with the recitation of a prayer. Then I asked him questions: some about the past, others the future. Charles wrote replies very quickly in a script which I can only describe as seemingly quite different from his usual handwriting. Some answers to what had been personal questions concerning the past were apparently evasive: others were precise. Charles Fryer the conscious, rational man could have no prior knowledge of the circumstances to which I had referred. Could there have been some form of telepathic communication or 'unconscious speaking' in this situation?

The answers concerning the future could not have been subsumed under any kind of telepathy. Some years later I can only report an astonishing correspondence between what was written that day and subsequently and deeply personal events which have since transpired.

I can only conclude that, if some force external to Charles Fryer does not control this writing, then what does?

R. J. Massey.

REACTIONS: II

I have been friendly with the Reverend Charles Fryer for many years. I am a medical practitioner specializing in psychological medicine and paranormal phenomena have interested me for a long time. Consequently I am indebted to the author for keeping me informed about his automatic writing ever since he became a practitioner of this unusual skill. I must add that I consider the author to be a man of outstanding honesty.

I have seen the author in action and can affirm that the writing is involuntary. It is extremely fast, barely legible and quite unlike his normal hand-writing.

Having had the opportunity of studying the content of the author's automatic writing *ab initio*, I have been able to form some conclusions. I am of the opinion that many of the messages that the author receives emanate from his unconscious mind; this is particularly the case, I think, of answers to questions posed by persons like myself of whose circumstances he is well aware. These answers are nearly always wish-fulfilling or explicable by telepathy.

There are other messages, however, which I am sure are from another source. Having given all the alternatives due consideration. I am very nearly persuaded that this source is the author's deceased father.

The difficulty with which these other messages are received correctly seems to me what would be expected in the event of a father forced to make use of his son's complex mind and brain in order to express himself.

For this reason I am unsure of the authenticity of Chapter 6. Why does that great wealth of material emerge so easily? All the author can say is that this is what his hand wrote on that occasion.

In his wise and discerning Foreword the Venerable Archdeacon of Durham refers to the late Bishop Pike's book *The Other Side*. I, myself, became an unbeliever in the Christian religion at the age of eight. Later, scientific integrity imposed an agnostic stance. In my experience, apart from Roman Catholicism and Orthodoxy, Christian psychiatrists are very rare birds. Years ago, I discovered *The Other Side* on a shelf in a public library. Here was a man after my own heart - a bishop who had been a lawyer and an Intelligence officer in the U.S. Navy, who disbelieved survival after death until some strange happenings followed his son's death! During the next two years I read his other books and a variety of theological works. Then I had some truly remarkable experiences which were quite convincing to my very sceptical mind and I have been a practising Christian ever since. So perhaps this book can do for others what *The Other Side* did for me.

Regrettably, I am unable to sign this note, for professional reasons.

REACTIONS: III

There will be those, no doubt, who will find it hard not to make their own experience the measure by which they will judge the content of this book. For there are some kinds of knowledge to which experience is the only key. But it will be obvious to the reader that Charles Fryer seeks neither rejection nor acceptance of his writing, feeling himself to be merely the channel through which the testimony of his dead father points to reality of survival after death. This testimony will surely give comfort and reassurance to many.

Evidence of the survival of the personality, expressing itself and developing in the life beyond, is no new revelation, as Charles Fryer freely admits. For me, the value of this book lies firstly in the fact that it is written by an Anglican priest who himself practises automatic writing. Secondly his book calls the Church to acknowledge that some of its members, including priests, develop in the course of their Christian lives, paranormal ability. Thirdly it draws attention to the need for such people to find understanding, advice and constructive criticism within the family of the Church.

During my own spiritual growth over a period of ten years 'automatic writing' was *one* of the means by which God led me along the path of psychological and spiritual integration. This phenomenon came unasked for through letters written to my Spiritual Director, and consisted of sentences and passages frequently of a symbolic and parabolic nature, out of context with and quite alien to my usual method of writing. These interpolations were sometimes not detected until I re-read what had been written. Following this an intuitive interpretation was often immediate, though not fully understood if it referred to some future event as yet unknown to me.

This, along with acute sensitivity, caused much inner conflict. On the one hand it all smacked of Spiritualism and the Occult, and on the other there was a growing awareness of a constant Presence in whose company was a great sense of joy and peace.

As the author himself has pointed out, in spiritual matters 'the proof of the pudding is in the eating'. Since then, these experiences have led me to a deepening love and commitment born out of gratitude to God through Christ and the Anglican Church, I can only feel it all to have been from a good source. But it has to be said that I was more than blessed in the guidance I received from my Director. Others are not so fortunate and do not find the advice and reassurance which they need, and, as a result, turn to mediums and spiritualists for understanding, or make their closest spiritual contacts with those on the fringes of the Church.

What is needed is that the Church should make provision - *and be known to do so* - for those of its family who are psychically gifted and who wish to develop that gift within the fellowship of the Church. From this same source guidance could be given to Christians, where the development of the psychic faculty does become an incidental stage of their total spiritual growth, by those who should best be able to help. Such a road can be fraught with danger but for some it will be the path that they must follow. Even more, then is there a need for wise counselling. For one can decide whether or not to continue and develop a

paranormal ability, but what one cannot do is to deny what one has already experienced, for such insights bring about a fundamental change of perspective. In sharing his own personal need for support and understanding Charles Fryer will prove to be of valuable service to the ordinary practising Christian who happens upon psychic phenomena as part of his or her Christian journey and who has in the past felt isolated and unable to ask his or her fellow Christians for help for fear of being ostracized.

Finally, as the Biblical injunction to 'ask' to 'seek' and to 'knock' is given a positive correlative - so that one is assured that in asking one will be 'given', in seeking one will 'find' and in knocking the door will be 'opened'; so may the Church be moved to meet this very real need among members of its own family. Charles Fryer's book clearly illustrates the need and points to the way in which it can be met. What he has to say needed to be said.

M. Greater

[Inner dust jacket text]

A Hand in Dialogue by Charles Fryer

Is this a record of a genuine communication between this world and the next? That is the question posed by this remarkable book. A man of sceptical nature, Charles Fryer responded to his experiences under paranormal influence with Christian honesty and intellectual integrity. His book is a record of the development of his paranormal faculty - the ability to receive, through the medium of 'automatic writing', communications from his dead father. These communications include a detailed record of the experience of death and the afterlife - in fact, a 'posthumous autobiography'.

'I am investigating myself': this is Charles Fryer's approach.

An honest and unsensational account by an Anglican priest of his experience of automatic writing, *A Hand in Dialogue* raises serious questions about attitudes to paranormal phenomena.

'I can wholeheartedly commend the reading of this book to the serious and questioning reader.' Michael Perry, Archdeacon of Durham.

Charles Fryer is a retired schoolmaster and college lecturer who was ordained in 1963 when he was forty-nine, but, apart from a three-year curacy in Coventry, remained in full-time education as a lecturer in History until his retirement.

He is now priest-in-charge to two small Episcopal congregations in the Scottish Highlands, and also a part-time tutor in Liturgical Studies for the Geneva Theological College.

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