

The Life and Work of James H. Hyslop

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INTRODUCTION

At 7:00 o'clock in the morning of June 17, 1920, as Dr. James Hyslop lay dying in a coma, a woman dreamed she met the famed psychical investigator in the other world. "It is all so satisfactory," she remembered him saying. Celestine Sanders, a medium with whom Hyslop sometimes worked, received messages purportedly from him shortly after his death and some hours before the world at large was informed of the event. Through another medium the ostensible Hyslop claimed to have stopped his daughter's watch at the moment of his death, a fact about which the sitter knew nothing at the time but which she subsequently verified. Some years later the same sitter, Gertrude Ogden Tubby, travelled abroad incognito for a series of anonymous sittings with European psychics in order, if possible, to allow the communicator to manifest through different mediums in foreign countries. The results she judged to be highly pertinent and evidential (Tubby, 1929). Like a number of other leaders in psychical research who seemed as active after death as before, it appeared to many that Hyslop was still pursuing his investigations with nearly the same degree of vigor and determination he had exhibited while alive.

If there was one person who, surviving death, might be expected to bring us news of the event, that person was James Hervey Hyslop. From the late 1880s until his death some thirty years later, Hyslop exceeded all other American investigators in his efforts to resolve the question of life after death by applying the established procedures of scientific inquiry to the data of psychical research. Nor have many people been better qualified for the task. Possessed of a tireless capacity for work, an unusual integrity in both his personal and professional life, and a critical caution toward the

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All reference citations in parentheses under the name "Hyslop" are to works by J. H. Hyslop. Reference citations to works by his son, G. H. Hyslop, are under the name "G. H. Hyslop."—Ed.

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subject that made him one of the few investigators upon whom no fraud was successfully imposed,¹ Hyslop became for many the exemplar of what a psychical researcher should be. His detractors, of which there were not a few, may have privately felt that psychical research had done to him what Morton Prince claimed it had done for Richard Hodgson, namely, "wrecked . . . one of the most beautiful minds I ever knew" (Hale, 1971, pp. 324-325), but never were they able to adduce aught against the man other than his peculiar interest itself. To his honest critics, no less than to his friends, Hyslop appeared a man of uncommon intellectual rectitude and personal probity (e.g., Hudson, 1904).

EARLY LIFE

Like so many others before and after him, Hyslop first turned to the study of psychical research as a way of satisfying his dual interests in religion and science. Born August 18, 1854, on a small farm near Xenia, Ohio, Hyslop seemed by both nature and nurture to be destined for the ministry. His parents, Robert and Martha Bogle Hyslop, were devout members of the Associate Presbyterian Church, a small, rigidly orthodox denomination of perhaps a thousand members. More interested in theological dialectics than farming, Hyslop was singled out early by his father to be educated for the ministry. Scarcely, however, had the young man resolved to dedicate himself to the work of justifying the ways of God to men than he was beset with misgivings. Doubts about the proper interpretation of certain Biblical texts, combined with much reading in the natural sciences and an abiding need to prove a thing before accepting it, worked upon Hyslop over a period of years to produce a crisis of faith that ended in a deconversion experience as startling and dramatic in its way as its religious opposite. Graduating from Wooster University in 1877, Hyslop discovered he no longer knew what to believe about religion. Additional study of theology, philosophy, psychology, and such natural sciences as geology only augmented his doubts until he found himself in a torment that climaxed some five years later during a sojourn abroad. Should he renounce the faith of his fathers and the promptings of his own heart or should he sacrifice his doubts for a life of hypocrisy and cowardice? While Hyslop vacillated, the rock-bound honesty that was a fruit of the very faith he was in

¹ The closest Hyslop came to being "taken in" was in his study of the Keeler-Lee case of psychic photography (Hyslop, 1914b), though he announced no firm conclusion, save that the case merited further investigation. A later examination by Prince (1919), evidently sanctioned by Hyslop, exposed the case as fraudulent.

danger of renouncing made the decision for him. "Well," he exclaimed, "I cannot believe it. I shall give up and take the consequences. I shall surrender every position in life and all my friends, rather than give up my conscience in this matter. I will take whatever consequences come" (Anderson, in press-a). With this decision he experienced instantaneous relief and a feeling of exhilaration that made the very streets appear transfigured.

With this experience Hyslop became a materialist, not, as he later explained, "because it was a desirable philosophy, but because the evidence of fact was on its side" (Hyslop, 1908c, p. 407). Still intact, however, were those fundamental ethical ideals and religious aspirations which had gone to make up Hyslop's character. After his disaffection he felt no antagonism toward religion, but rather, "a new and profounder interest" in the life and teachings of Jesus retained their power and significance though now seen in a "new light"; and the integrity of his ethical life, which he feared might be compromised without religious sanction, was left quite undisturbed by his doubts about God and immortality. Like Carlyle, of whom he was especially fond, Hyslop had discovered in his own experience that mortality can sustain itself apart from a transcendental authority "if we felt it in us" (Anderson, in press-a).

Leaving London, where he then resided, Hyslop travelled to Germany to study philosophy under Wundt at the University of Leipzig. Returning home after some seventeen months, he taught Latin and philosophy at Lake Forest University, transferring after about a year to Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts, where he served for a time as instructor in psychology and ethics. Winning a competition for a fellowship at Johns Hopkins University, Hyslop completed a Ph.D. under G. Stanley Hall at that institution in 1887. After teaching for a brief period at Bucknell University, he joined the faculty at Columbia, where he rose during the next half decade to the rank of professor of logic and ethics.

As a philosopher, Hyslop was considered competent but not inspired. His numerous books and articles on ethics, logic, and psychology made for what Josiah Royce called a "fairly solid" reputation (Clendenning, 1970, p. 480), but however voluminous his output, Hyslop's work was never regarded by his peers as either particularly original or important.² Given time, he may have risen to a more commanding position on the American philosoph-

² The above appraisal of Hyslop as a philosopher is based upon two considerations: the critical notices his books received at the time (e.g., Albee, 1895), and his almost complete disappearance from the subsequent literature. Indeed, except for a few brief allusions to his work in psychical research, Hyslop's name seems to have entirely passed from the annals of philosophy in America.

ical scene, but events soon conspired to turn his considerable energies in a new direction. His wife, Mary Fry Hall of Philadelphia, whom he had met while studying in Germany and married in 1891, died suddenly on October 5, 1900, leaving him a widower with three small children. A year later, Hyslop broke down with what he described as "nervous prostration and tuberculosis, with stomach complications" (Hyslop, 1905b, p. 237). Hearing of the breakdown, William James wrote to Theodore Flournoy regarding Hyslop: "He is now in the country taking an open air cure in an almost arctic cold and leading otherwise the life of a vegetable. . . . He is a very manly fellow, who has had a very hard life,³ and I am afraid that this is the end of him for worldly purposes" (LeClair, 1966, pp. 114-115).

Time proved James wrong. Recovering his health to some extent, Hyslop attempted to resume teaching at Columbia, but found the strain too much for his already weakened constitution. In 1902, he tendered his resignation on the advice of his physician, who suggested that he find another, less demanding occupation. After an abortive attempt at gold mining in Vermont, Hyslop seemed to find the solution to his physical and intellectual needs in the life of a litterateur, dividing his time between writing and such outdoor activities as walking and wood chopping. During this period, he wrote several papers for learned periodicals (e.g., Hyslop, 1903), plus a substantial book, *Problems of Philosophy* (1905a), certainly the largest and perhaps the best of his many books on the subject. It was not, however, primarily as a philosopher that Hyslop was then employing his time.

INITIAL INTEREST IN PSYCHICAL RESEARCH

Hyslop's first introduction to psychical research occurred in 1886, when he read an article in the *Nation* entitled "Telepathy Again." The story concerned a young boy who supposedly saw an apparition of his father in a wagon plunge over a bank into a stream at the same time the event actually happened. Hyslop, though at the time knowing nothing of psychical research, initially suspected

³ This and other references to Hyslop's "hard life" may seem somewhat incongruous, in view of his family's economic situation, which, while not affluent, was, by the standards of the time, certainly not impoverished. The references, however, are probably not to economic hardships Hyslop suffered but to his provincial intellectual background, his lack of educational opportunities, and the many difficulties and disappointments he encountered in pursuing his chosen career. These last were especially distressing to Hyslop, who devoted much of his 1904 autobiography to recording the frustrations he experienced in seeking a responsible teaching position (Anderson, in press-a).

some illusion of memory or error of judgment on the part of the narrator, so he wrote the author, asking for further particulars. The answer Hyslop received convinced him that the incident might really have occurred as reported. Talking the matter over with a friend, Hyslop realized for the first time the tremendous potential value of such reports, but the whole subject of the supernormal was so tabooed by his instructors that he decided to let the matter drop. The brief exposure had been sufficient, however, to persuade Hyslop "that the existence of such phenomena on a large scale would mark a decided change in psychological speculations" (Anderson, in press-a).

It was not until 1889, when he attended a lecture by Hodgson on the Ansel Bourne case,⁴ that Hyslop's initial interest became fully aroused. Hodgson's stressing of facts and minimizing of theories strongly appealed to Hyslop, who promptly decided to join the Society for Psychical Research. Shortly thereafter he became an officer of the American branch, conducting meetings, reading the Society's publications, and freely discussing the subject with his students at Columbia, an action which somewhat disturbed the equanimity of certain influential colleagues. He was consequently relieved of classes in psychology and ethics and advanced to epistemology and metaphysics, where he would presumably have less opportunity to talk about the subject (Anderson, in press-a).⁵

Despite his growing involvement in the work of the SPR, Hyslop might never have made psychical research his life's work, were it not for the medium Leonore Piper. Since 1890 he had read the reports of her mediumship with growing interest, not on account of their spiritistic flavor, but for the apparent evidence they offered of secondary personality combined with telepathy. It was not until some years later, when Hodgson's (1898) epochal second report appeared, that Hyslop began to doubt the possible applicability of the theory in her case. The more he read the paper, the more credible became the theory that Mrs. Piper was in truth what her communicators claimed she was, namely, a bridge of communication between the world of the living and that of the dead, but Hyslop's long-held skepticism regarding the possibility of an after-life was not to be relinquished on the basis of a single report, however impressive. It still appeared to him that the multiple confu-

⁴ This is an interesting example of what would now be called a fugue reaction, then "double consciousness" or alternate personality (Hodgson, 1891). It is a classic case often cited in the older psychological literature.

⁵ This, it should be noted, was Hyslop's perception of the situation, which may not fully accord with the facts. Certainly N. M. Butler, whom Hyslop obliquely accused of instigating the move, was not intransigently opposed to psychical research (Hyslop, 1907c, p. 40).

sions, obscurities, and irrelevancies in the record told against any hypothesis of spirit agency, but so persuasive and skillful was Hodgson's presentation of the case for disembodied existence that Hyslop felt it necessary to conduct some experiments of his own. Accordingly, he arranged late in 1898 for a series of sittings with the medium in which he would be allowed to control the conditions of the experiment. Despite the most elaborate precautions, however, including the wearing of a mask for the first few sessions, it soon became evident to Hyslop that something quite extraordinary was going on that could not be accounted for on any theory of guessing, muscle-reading, or even telepathy, at least insofar as this last had been experimentally observed at the time. Yet there still remained the problem of why the communications were so disjointed and confused, resembling nothing so much as "the wandering memories of a mind not sufficiently in command of its action to direct the rational drift of consciousness" (Hyslop, 1906b, p. 390). The peculiar "groping" quality of the communications was, for Hyslop, the main difficulty standing in the way of the spiritistic view, but matters stood otherwise with Hodgson. "There now, take that remark for example!" Hyslop once exclaimed while he and Hodgson were examining communications ostensibly received from Hyslop's father. "It is not at all typical of my father; the last thing in the world he would say in fact!"

"Certainly," Hodgson replied, "your father never said that at all. That was one of Rector's side-remarks, which slipped through, and was registered on 'this side' as an automatism" (Carrington, 1930/1931, p. 67).⁶

Hyslop, who until that moment had never really considered what problems a discarnate agent might have in communicating by means of an organism not its own, was intrigued by the suggestion. Reviewing the records with Hodgson's idea in mind, he saw that much of what had appeared unintelligible on the spiritistic hypothesis now made a strange kind of sense, presuming of course that "spirits" were involved in the matter at all. Already sympathetic to survival by reason of the very audacity of the theories needed to oppose it, Hyslop now found himself without any substantial objection to the theory of survival. "I appreciate materialism," he wrote,

as one who once saw no way out of it and who had no personal interest in getting out of it. . . . But when it comes to giving the brain

⁶ This is Carrington's rendering of the conversation, which he evidently got from Hyslop. It is quoted because it is consistent with—but somewhat less abbreviated than—Hyslop's own account (Anderson, in press-a).

the power to spontaneously acquire, and intelligently select, from any confused mass of memories at any point of time and space in the whole universe of conscious and unconscious mentation, and to do this instantly, reproducing perfectly all the complex facts necessary to establish personal identity, I much prefer to go outside that brain for my cause, as I am not accustomed in the use of scientific method to apply the predicates of infinity and omniscience to that organ. . . . My preference for the spiritistic theory after facing the problems just indicated rests on a very simple basis, and it is that I am not prepared to build any altars to Mrs. Piper's brain. (Hyslop, 1901, p. 294)

For Hyslop, to be convinced was to act. As soon as his state of health allowed, he completed his voluminous report on Mrs. Piper, the finished work appearing late in 1901 as a volume of the *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*. After his recovery, he also began to study mediums other than Mrs. Piper, desiring in his words "to see if I could find facts which might weaken the hypothesis" he had defended in his published report (Hyslop, 1918b, p. 6). In 1902, he arranged a series of sittings with a certain nonprofessional medium, known variously in the records as "Miss X" or "Miss W," receiving a number of striking communications from his deceased wife. Some months earlier, he had discovered a still more remarkable subject in "Mrs. Smead" (Mrs. Willis M. Cleaveland), a trance medium who fancied herself in contact with the inhabitants of Mars (Hyslop, 1907b, 1918b). This case was especially important for Hyslop, not only on account of the difficulties it offered the spiritist view, but also because it led him still further into a consideration of the psychological machinery of mediumship. Later, under Hyslop's tutelage, the case developed in a more conventional and evidential direction, which led him to conclude that secondary personality was the "vehicle for interrelation between the normal and the transcendental, instead of being a rival and alternative explanation of spiritistic phenomena" (Hyslop, 1918b, p. 670).

While it was these early experiments with Mrs. Piper and others that perhaps did most to solidify Hyslop's commitment to psychical research, other factors also contributed to his decision. One was Hyslop's overwhelming consciousness of death. Although, as a materialist, he had long since abandoned any positive hope of immortality, his interest in the subject of death and what, if anything, follows dated back to his tenth year, when he had lost a brother and sister to scarlet fever. That experience, combined with fears for his own life, resulted in a two-year period of intense, almost pathological, preoccupation with death, which so affected the boy

that, some forty years later, Hyslop could still discern in his own character the results of the experience. In high school, Hyslop's appetite for what he called "the pathetic side of life" had been fed by Young's melancholy *Night Thoughts* and Hervey's mournful *Meditations*, books which, in Hyslop's estimation, "kept me perpetually in an intellectual atmosphere of sad thoughts, and gave me a false interest in immortality, as associated with the fear of death" (Anderson, in press-a). This is not to say, however, that Hyslop's later conviction of survival can be trivialized as the product of an incontinent will-to-believe derived from boyhood experiences. As a man, he was on all accounts among the most dispassionate and impartial of persons, having imbibed to the full the scientific ideal of objectivity, even when it came to the emotionally loaded question of life after death. "Science is disinterested and accepts the truth whether it hurts or heals," he wrote.

Philosophy and poetry may indulge their empyrean flights, the one of reason and the other of imagination, and religion may utter its passionate cry for a happy meeting in the Elysian fields, but science with its stern unbending will, even if it has to leave Hecuba mourning for her children, must weigh the truth in the scales of justice without a tear and without any wincing at the bitterness of fate. (Hyslop, 1905b, p. 341)

That Hyslop in the above passage was not just paying lip-service to an empty ideal is proved by the entire course of his life. He abandoned religion and its consolations because he could not match its claims with any commensurate amount of proof, not because he found it personally uncongenial. Materialism he rejected in turn, because it failed to sustain itself critically within an enlarged experience, but this did not mean for Hyslop "a return to the sentimental methods against which science is a protest" (Hyslop, 1906b, p. 391). For nearly a decade, he stoutly defended telepathy as a more economical interpretation of the mediumistic data than survival, only abandoning that theory when it proved in his estimation a greater marvel than spirits (Dawson, 1920). Nor did Hyslop's conversion to spiritism entail any softening of his critical standards when it came to particular cases. The case of Patience Worth, for example, was in his view only a particularly dramatic example of subliminal personation (Hyslop, 1916); the incident of the "Widow's Mite," which elicited a number of favorable reactions from diverse investigators, rather prompted Hyslop "to suspend judgment and pronounce no positive opinion one way or the other" (Funk, 1904, p. 507); and the remarkable trance utterances collected by Alphonse Cahagnet, which were acknowledged as probably telepathic even by the skeptical Podmore, were

in Hyslop's mind more likely due to secondary personality (Hyslop, 1905b, pp. 13-14).⁷ Whether Hyslop be deemed right or wrong in these and other negative assessments, they are significant in showing that he was not one of those apt to spy ghosts when others see only posts.

Another reason for Hyslop's interest in psychical research was that he regarded the subject as vitally important for arriving at a proper understanding of human nature and destiny. Philosophical materialism, increasingly dominant in the Western world since the time of Hobbes, had in his view fostered a truncated view of human capacity, not because the facts adduced in its defense were wrong, but because they were incomplete. From the standpoint of normal experience, the materialist's view of consciousness as an epiphenomenon of physical states may be the only legitimate hypothesis; it is convincing, however, only insofar as it neglects those exceptional occurrences which seem to suggest a broader view of the mind-brain relationship. Apparitions, mediumistic phenomena, telepathy, and deathbed visions, if veridical, do not reduce easily to familiar brain states or other forms of physical causation. Yet Hyslop realized that materialism could never be jolted from its complacency by being presented with a set of untidy irregularities in the otherwise smooth course of routine experience. Consciousness may still be a product of present brain states even if it can, on occasion, stray beyond the boundaries of the body, but to demonstrate the isolation of an identifiable consciousness from its original organism explodes materialism as a scientifically inexcusable dogmatism "which selects what it likes and lays more stress on the uniformities of nature than does nature herself" (Hyslop, 1919b, p. 53). With materialism as a comprehensive theory of the nature of things out of the way, science was now free to formulate a larger, more adequate view of the world that would preserve all that was of value in the old while allowing greater room for the meaning of the spiritual in human existence.

Besides providing a needed corrective to the mechanistic thesis that the world "is made of atoms and ether, and there is no room in it for ghosts" (Clifford, 1879, Vol. 2, pp. 66-67), the data of psychical research also gave Hyslop an opportunity to finally apply the test of fact to some of the perennial questions of speculative metaphysics. Initially, philosophy had satisfied his desire to know the why and wherefore of things, but it appeared to him increasingly evident that philosophy had become bankrupt for

⁷ For a review of the Patience Worth case and Hyslop's part in it, see Litvag (1972). Very little modern commentary exists on the other two cases, but I have reviewed Cahagnet's work (Anderson, in press-b).

lack of determinant content. What was needed, he thought, was a solid body of phenomenal data from which a general hypothesis might be derived, not another deductive account of the universe or a priori proof of things inaccessible to the senses. His first attempt to assign a meaning to existence by way of crucial facts landed him in materialism, but in his experiments with Mrs. Piper and others, he "found the dawn of another day for an idealism that will last as long as scientific method can claim respect" (Hyslop, 1908c, p. 408). In addition to supplying a fairly strong presumption in favor of survival, itself a matter of no small metaphysical import, the facts aroused all sorts of far-reaching speculations about the ultimate constitution and meaning of the cosmos. Yet Hyslop generally exercised a commendable caution in refusing to speculate on matters that would take him far beyond what was legitimately inferable from the facts. The time, he knew, was not yet propitious for examining at length such questions as the mode of life after death or the nature of the spiritual world, when the facts suggesting survival were themselves at issue in so many quarters, nor did he regard such questions as especially profitable at a state in the inquiry when even our best guess is "only possible along with much else that might be possible" (Hyslop, 1914a, p. 163). Understanding the data already collected would provide Hyslop with more than adequate provender for his speculative appetite.

FORMATION OF THE ASPR

Around 1900, Hyslop began to consider seriously the advisability of forming an American Society for Psychical Research that was independent of the parent body in England. When the first American Society had died from inactivity and the suspicion on the part of some of its members "that after all there might be real spooks in Spiritualism" (Bayley, 1920, p. 435), responsible research in America had come to a virtual standstill. No longer financially able to maintain an independent existence, the ASPR was formally dissolved and reconstituted as a branch of the British SPR under the local direction of Richard Hodgson. There were still those, however, who favored an autonomous society free to pursue research projects of its own. Hyslop and Hodgson, though initially not warm to the idea, had each come to favor an independent organization, provided that sufficient funds could be secured and the permission of the parent body obtained. As a possibly contributing factor to their decision, both men had had unfortunate experiences with the publishing policies of the SPR. In Hodgson's case, one of the reports he sent to England had been edited without his consent, "tampered with," in his words, which so exasperated

the sometimes waspish investigator that he vowed to never write again (Bayley, 1917, p. 422; 1920, p. 435). Hyslop, on his part, thought the Council's publishing policy too restrictive to fully meet the demands of the subject. It had, for example, initially demurred publishing his Piper report because of Hyslop's insistence that every word spoken between the medium and her sitters be included in the record.⁸ Later, the Council had declined to publish his study of Mrs. Smead on the ground that it contained too little evidence of the paranormal, "not realizing," Hyslop later wrote, "that science is not interested in the supernatural any more than it is in explanations that may eliminate the supernatural" (Hyslop, 1918b, p. 6).

The task of securing the necessary funds fell mainly upon Hyslop, who embarked upon a series of lectures and articles to acquaint the public with his aims. William James, who had some experience as a fund raiser for psychical research himself, saw little hope for Hyslop's success (LeClair, 1966, p. 161), but he did not reckon with the sheer tenaciousness of the man. Though often rebuked, and at times forced to "play the tactful part of Mephistopheles in order to secure any favors at all" (Hyslop, 1908c, p. 6), Hyslop had, by the time of Hodgson's death in 1905, collected \$25,000 as a fund to secure preliminary organization. With this as a nucleus, he organized, in May, 1906, the new American SPR as Section B of the American Institute for Scientific Research, which Hyslop, in collaboration with some friends, had incorporated two years before (Hyslop, 1907a; 1919b, pp. 34-35). Section A, which was to devote itself to psychopathology, never became operative in Hyslop's lifetime.

Although Hyslop received letters of support for his proposed Institute from a host of distinguished savants, including William James, Pierre Janet, and James J. Putnam, his plan for a cooperative venture between psychology and psychical research was not destined for success. Perhaps it was the very comprehensiveness of Hyslop's proposal that assured its failure, merging as it did the diverse interests of psychopathology and psychical research into a vast enterprise with both scientific and therapeutic applications, but Hyslop soon found himself with little time to worry over the fate of his larger Institute if Section B was to survive. Two of his chief causes for concern were lack of funds and professional cooperation. The monies Hyslop had collected, and over the years continued to collect, were barely adequate to meet the cost of publications and the running expenses of the Society's office,

⁸ As Nicol (1972) has pointed out, the cost of publishing Hyslop's massive report was thought prohibitive by the Council, amounting to some £514. More than \$1,000 of this (about £200) was provided by Hyslop himself (Hyslop, 1909c, pp. 664-665).

leaving nothing for experimental purposes, and precious little for investigating mediumship and spontaneous phenomena. More galling to Hyslop than lack of funds, however, was the paucity of academic and professional interest. With a few notable exceptions, such as Professor John E. Coover of Stanford, Hyslop failed to interest the learned community in the work of the Society. "They are too cowardly to help," was his complaint following one unsuccessful effort in 1906 (Bayley, 1920, p. 437). At other times, his overtures were rebuffed because of the "unscientific" nature of Hyslop's own work. "So far as I can see," he wrote, "science in this procedure is simply any large unverified assertion which is not in any way associated with the possibility of a discarnate human consciousness" (Hyslop, 1908c, p. 18). On other occasions, he was met with indifference or outright hostility, such as when one leading psychiatrist suggested that his time would be better employed raising cattle (Bayley, 1920, p. 437). Knowing, however, that psychical research as a science could not flourish except in a community of scholars where differences of opinion were arbitrated by certain controlling standards and independent checks, Hyslop persisted in his efforts to win the attention of the scientific world. Fortunately he was in some few instances successful, but overall the effort expended was well out of proportion to the results obtained. Despite heroic efforts, Hyslop managed to create no more than a faint ripple on the otherwise placid pool of academic indifference.

Hyslop's plans were frustrated for other reasons besides the timidity and prejudice of the scientific community, however. At least a part of the responsibility must be placed on Hyslop himself, who was determined that the Society he fathered should not depart from the path he had decided it should go. Psychical research, as he saw it, was not only an attempt to bring certain anomalous and unruly phenomena under some kind of scientific control; it also filled a necessary social function as a bulwark against the threatening flood of popular superstition, on the one side, and the rising tide of supercilious incredulity on the other. Since the latter issued mainly from the educated elite—the same class Hyslop hoped to entice into endorsing his organization—he found himself with something of a problem when inviting their cooperation. If he admitted such persons into positions of real leadership, they might do the Society irreparable harm, perhaps threatening its very *raison d'être*. If, however, he invited their participation in some other capacity, perhaps as advisors or corresponding members, then they would be prevented from doing any real mischief, while at the same time lending the luster of their names to the work. The latter Hyslop decided was the best course to take in the matter, but he

apparently failed to realize that it made his overtures of genuine cooperation appear somewhat less than ingenuous. What Hyslop was in effect asking was that these persons place their scientific and professional reputations in his hands with very little control over the results. Seeking endorsements on such terms, especially from people wary of the subject in the first place, was hardly calculated to awaken an enthusiastic response (Moore, 1977, p. 162).

Hyslop's concern for the ASPR and its welfare took a number of other forms besides his efforts to maintain a certain quality of leadership. Personally his sacrifices were many. Inactively tubercular and never very robust, Hyslop was constantly in danger of physically breaking down from overwork, it being a wonder to many friends that he lasted as long as he did. His bold stand for psychical research had also made him something of an outcast from his profession and an unwelcome visitor at meetings of the American Philosophical Association, which he continued to attend even though treated as *persona non grata* (Newbold, 1920, p. 493). His lifestyle, never lavish, became positively austere as the duties of his office increased, forcing him at times to stint at meals in order to save a few extra pennies for research (Tubby, 1929, p. 261). Nor for many years would Hyslop accept any monetary reward for his labors. Though he insisted that his full-time associates be compensated for their efforts, Hyslop himself did not receive any remuneration until 1916, when he accepted the offer of a small salary from the Society's Board of Trustees. For a decade he had been able to work without pay, due to a modest financial independence, supplemented by earnings from lectures and writing. As he wrote to his son in 1913, "My work is missionary, not mercenary" (G. H. Hyslop, 1950, p. 137).

Hyslop's use of the word "missionary" to describe his work was singularly apposite. There is more than a little of what one acquaintance called "the stark righteousness of the plain folk" in Hyslop's character (French, 1920, p. 468), however transmuted or sublimated into love of scientific truth. Intransigently direct, with sublime confidence in the rightness of his convictions and utterly consecrated to his work, Hyslop appeared to more than one contemporary as something of an evangelist when it came to publishing and defending the truth with which he had been entrusted. That truth was not the prospect of survival, important though it was, nor even the acknowledgment of such "residual phenomena of life" as telepathy. The truth for which Hyslop contended was simply the recognition of psychical research as a legitimate area of scientific study that would yield enduring and far-reaching results, if only pursued in a manner as rigorous and scrupulous as humanly

possible. The latter was absolutely essential if psychical research was ever to escape the fraud and delirium so often associated with its progenitor, spiritualism; and woe betide anyone who failed to live up to Hyslop's punctilious standards! One who early fell into impious ways was Hereward Carrington, a bright, enterprising young man who believed that psychical research owed him a living if he was to devote himself to it as a full-time occupation. Hyslop had no objection to such an ambition, provided it could be pursued without reflecting unfavorably upon psychical research as a science, but Carrington's increasingly commercial activities early led to a falling-out between the two men. The climax came when Carrington, fresh from his triumphant Naples sittings with Eusapia Palladino, arranged a US tour for the medium at the rate of \$125.00 a sitting, with himself to share in the proceeds. Hyslop was outraged at this breach of scientific decorum, especially since some were now whispering that Carrington had become Palladino's confederate in fraud. William James tried to pour oil on the situation by reminding Hyslop that Carrington had no salaried appointment and therefore had to make money where and when he could (Carrington, 1957, p. 43), but Hyslop was not to be placated by gentle reminders that not all investigators enjoyed an independent sinecure. Whether economically excusable or not, by making money off Palladino Carrington had, in Hyslop's mind, compromised himself as an objective and impartial observer. Hyslop's ideal of the impersonal detached scientist simply did not allow for any less censorious judgment.

With few friends in the academic community, and barred by his own scrupulous and exacting standards from gaining the popular recognition that might command the attention of the learned world, Hyslop found his influence confined to a small coterie of like-minded persons. Occasionally an outside critic would fire a fusillade in his direction, but Hyslop's replies were ignored and no fruitful exchange ensued. This increasing isolation from the mainstream worked hard upon Hyslop, causing him more than once to proclaim against all and sundry critics, indifferent scientists, credulous spiritualists, and a public whose interest in such matters could only be described as profoundly superficial. Usually Hyslop delivered himself of these outbursts safe from public hearing, but occasionally his frustration spilled over into print. The critic who

⁹ The full details of this episode are not known to me, but it should be noted that at least one of those privy to the facts thought Carrington more sinned against than sinning, for his part in the affair (Dingwall, 1975, p. 8). Evidently, most of Hyslop's associates did not share this view, for Dingwall notes that even after Hyslop's death, Carrington was still an unwelcome visitor at the offices of the ASPR.

still thought everything explicable by fraud Hyslop roundly dismissed as "either too ignorant or too indolent for us any longer to attach any value to his convictions" (Hyslop, 1925, p. 2); those who ridiculed the subject on account of the triviality of the messages received he dismissed as fools and knaves, "who neither read carefully nor think" (Hyslop, 1917c, p. 113); and those who were still disposed to doubt survival on the basis of some outlandish "cosmic reservoir" theory he regarded as having abnegated any right to speak on the subject. "Any man who does not accept the existence of discarnate spirits and the proof of it is either ignorant or a moral coward," he wrote on one occasion. "I give him short shrift, and do not propose any longer to argue with him on the supposition that he knows anything about the subject" (Hyslop, 1918a, p. 306). Such caustic comments may have reflected more a passing mood than a sober and considered judgment, but for Hyslop the situation seemed "calculated to provoke one's risibilities" (Hyslop, 1908c, p. 18). For many years he had been repeating almost ad nauseam the reasons why no combination of normal or paranormal factors could accommodate the phenomena half so well as spirits, but no one troubled to examine his arguments before evoking again the old bugaboos of charlatanry, chance, subconscious fabrication, or telepathy. If no one was willing to address his arguments in the rational spirit in which they were offered, then he would assume the victory by default, and treat the hostile critic "as so far behind the times that he can safely be ignored" (Hyslop, 1918a, p. 234).

Despite his high resolve to ignore the fulminations of the uninformed, Hyslop was not one to keep silent in the face of adverse criticism. An attack on psychical research by Hugo Münsterberg of Harvard University resulted in a scorching reply by Hyslop, in which he methodically eviscerated the professor's arguments, and suggested, not without reason, that Münsterberg, who had invented an early type of polygraph, should try the contraption himself (Hyslop, 1908b). When Amy Tanner's hostile *Studies in Spiritism* (1910) appeared, Hyslop leapt to the defense by subjecting the book to a scathing review that convincingly exposed it as a tissue of inaccuracy and misrepresentation (Hyslop, 1911b). In his criticisms of other investigators, he was sometimes less successful in driving home his own point of view, such as in his long and somewhat querulous review of E. M. Sidgwick's (1915) study of the psychology of the Piper trance (Hyslop, 1917c), but generally Hyslop accounted himself well in the controversies of the day. He did indeed, as time went on, tire of endlessly reiterating the same points, which somewhat accounts for the increasing dogmatism of his later writings, but he quite rightly felt it pointless to go back and

start all over again, simply because some arm-chair savant shouted fraud or self-delusion. Let them state specifically what element of his evidence was fraudulent or wherein he had been deceived; otherwise, let them keep silent, so that he could get on with the task at hand. "As long as we can keep piling up facts and cases," he wrote, "the victory is with us and not with those who merely have the 'will to disbelieve'" (Hyslop, 1917c, p. 113).

While regarded as something of a crank by the academic community in America, Hyslop generally commanded respect among those active in the field, even if some few found him temperamentally uncongenial. In William James' estimation, Hyslop had "all the heroic qualities of human nature and none of the indispensable ones" (LeClair, 1966, p. 161), though to more than one correspondent, James paid high tribute to Hyslop's abilities as an apologist for survival (e.g., James, 1920, Vol. 2, p. 287). The leaders of the SPR in England thought well enough of Hyslop to elect him a vice-president in 1899, a position he retained until his death, but again, there were those who tempered their admiration for Hyslop with considerable reserve. Everyone, indeed, seemed to admire his immense industry and dedication, but many also found an "inverse ratio" between the quantity and quality of Hyslop's work (Schiller, 1919, p. 130). His friend Barrett (1920), for example, often urged Hyslop to be less authoritarian and combative in his writings, and recommended that he restrict his output in order to give greater attention to the presentation of his views and investigations. Sir Oliver Lodge, similarly, considered Hyslop's reports important but intolerably ill-written, which he thought was due to the fact that they had been dictated and printed without correction. Informed by Hyslop that he wrote his papers and spared no trouble in their composition, Lodge remarked, "Their involved and at times barely readable character thus becomes in itself a psychic phenomenon, to the elucidation of which the present writer has no clue" (Lodge, 1920, p. 241). On matters of more substance, opinion was again roughly divided between those who regarded Hyslop as a scientific worker of the first order and those who thought him little better than a propagandist for spiritualism. M. Sage (1903/1904), for example, in a book published under the auspices of the SPR, lauded Hyslop's first report on Mrs. Piper as a powerful scientific testament to the strength of the survival hypothesis, but Podmore (1903) blasted the report as scarcely more than a windy exercise in presumption, remarking that he had been sympathetic to survival until he read Hyslop's account, and then realized just how bad the evidence really was. At first, Hyslop responded to such animadversions with gentlemanly reserve, but as time wore on, he became increasingly impatient with those who found a "great gulf fixed"

between his evidence and his convictions. It was no longer enough for him to demonstrate that critics like Podmore were wrong or misinformed; in addition, he sought to show that they were suffering from "incorrigible stupidity" and "perversity of intellect" (Hyslop, 1919a). The cold and aloof "man of science" that was Hyslop's ideal was also capable of passionate advocacy.

As is evident from the above, Hyslop could appear on occasion somewhat dogmatic and disputatious. Even friends like H. Ad-dington Bruce (1956) were sometimes put off by what they perceived as Hyslop's "outright acerbity" in reacting to views other than his own, but most, including Bruce, came to realize that Hyslop's attacks were not the personal vendettas they sometimes appeared to be. "It was all academic," Walter Franklin Prince explained; "the man's name was only the tag to a certain type of logic, or the want of it, which was the real object attacked" (Prince, 1920b, p. 432). In making this claim, Prince may have erred somewhat on the side of discretion, but generally his apology can be accepted at face value. Though at times irascible and lacking in tact, Hyslop was much too enamored of scientific method to let feelings of personal advocacy or antagonism sway his judgment of another's work. What Bruce and others perceived as "outright acerbity" was for Hyslop simply the justifiable reaction of the scientist concerned with defending his discipline against those who would exalt assertion over evidence. When Hyslop negatively reviewed a work, as he not infrequently did, it was usually because the book failed to meet even the minimum requirements of a scientific document, not because he harbored some animus against either the subject matter or the author. As a responsible enterprise of reasonable persons, psychical research required any claimant of scientific knowledge in the field to meet certain independent criteria, to satisfy factual requirements beyond mere asseveration. Failure to meet those controlling conditions meant failure as knowledge, irrespective of how Hyslop personally felt about the matter. Thus, a book that by its spiritistic flavor might have especially appealed to Hyslop, was roundly condemned by him because it came with no convincing credentials ([Hyslop], 1919c), whereas another that advocated astral projection, psychometry, and a number of other phenomena that Hyslop found questionable on other grounds was welcomed as a signal contribution to psychical research, again on the basis of the book's supporting credentials (Hyslop, 1912c). In both instances, the ground of Hyslop's assessment was not whether he found the material congenial, but whether the authors were controlled in their assertions by data that could in some measure be independently checked.

If there is little cause for supposing Hyslop to be unduly biased

in his evaluations of the works of others, neither is there much reason for regarding him as the dour despot that some have imagined, allowing no expression of opinion that did not receive his personal imprimatur. Other than being a man who was so thoroughly imbued with the scientific spirit "that he could hardly pardon any other point of view, or any defect in scientific method" (Prince, 1927, p. 423), Hyslop impressed those who knew him best as eminently open to intelligent criticism. "I do not ask that you agree with me," he wrote, when inviting Prince to become his assistant, "it may be even better that we do sometimes disagree. And you will be free to carry out your investigations and discussions in your own way." During three years of intimate association, Prince recalled, "his promise was kept to the letter" (Prince, 1920a, p. 1). Even H. N. Gardiner (1920) and William Romaine Newbold (1920), both of whom had at one point opposed Hyslop's domination of the Society, praised his tolerant nature, his love of fair play, and his admirable freedom from bias. What did provoke his "risibilities," however, were negative and wholesale dismissals that either did not take account of the evidence collected, or manipulated that evidence in the service of some preconceived conclusion. Whatever the academic credentials of such critics, they were, in Hyslop's view, simply cheats and sharps who refused to play the game according to the rules.

Though at times bitter about the lack of academic recognition accorded psychical research, Hyslop persisted in his efforts to place the work on a secure scientific foundation. Lacking the resources in finance and personnel of the English Society, Hyslop could ill afford anything on the scale of that group's "Census of Hallucinations," or extensive investigations of thought-transference and hypnosis. Instead he concentrated almost exclusively upon mediumship, its genesis, limits, and psychology. Of special interest to him was the relationship between mediumship and abnormal psychology. As already mentioned, Hyslop had initially envisaged his Institute for Scientific Research as consisting of two parts: a medical section devoted to the study of morbid mental states, and a section that would carry out related, but quite independent, work in what he termed "supernormal psychology." His reason for so arranging the Institute was not only to placate public and scholarly prejudice by joining the psychic with the more respectable study of psychopathology; it was also because he realized that the study of normal and abnormal mental states was a necessary prolegomenon to the even more recondite problems of psychical research. It demonstrated, on the one hand, why it was necessary to be cautious before admitting into the purview of psychical research phenomena that may be more readily com-

prehended in terms of some mental aberration; on the other, it provided a possible means of discriminating between the facts of abnormal and supernormal psychology, by paying particular attention to the phenomenological configurations assumed by each. Conjoining the two studies was also necessary, Hyslop believed, because psychical research, of all disciplines, could least afford to be conducted in a corner. In order to win a hearing at all in the scientific world, it was necessary to show how these "residues of science" were related to the less disputable truths of traditional knowledge. If there were no points of connection or hope of assimilation, then psychical research was in danger of going rudderless on its voyage of discovery, floundering about in a foggy sea of mystery without any means of guidance or control.

Though the medical section of the Institute never existed during Hyslop's lifetime, save on paper, the fact did not prevent his incorporating at least part of its original purpose in his own work. In his book, *Borderland of Psychical Research* (1906a), for example, he reviewed the entire subject of normal and abnormal psychology as a needful preparation for the consideration of paranormal phenomena. In his investigations, he exhibited a keen interest in the psychological dynamics of each case, whether the phenomena reported were fraudulent or genuine, and always he proved eager to investigate occurrences that only simulated the paranormal in order to learn whether the same mental capacities that fostered such phenomena as secondary personality also favored authentic spirit communication. Even in cases of this type, however, Hyslop often uncovered evidence of genuine psychic functioning that would have escaped the notice of a less astute observer. Mrs. Smead, for example, initially displayed in her trance only the vagaries of secondary personality, together with an occasional hint of telepathy; under Hyslop's guidance, the paranormal incidents proliferated until the case became, in his estimation, "provably spiritistic" (Hyslop, 1918b, p. 669). In the Doris case, Hyslop found numerous evidences of incipient mediumship, obscured by dissociation and multiple personality, which, in the development of the case, proved a remarkably accurate assessment (Prince, 1926). Like Doris, Frederic J. Thompson, of the so-called Thompson-Gifford case (Hyslop, 1909a, 1909b), was also initially diagnosed as suffering from a personality disorder, but continued probing on Hyslop's part uncovered a number of evidences that make the case, in the opinion of many, the most substantial account of "possession" on record. These and a number of similar incidents convinced Hyslop that successful mediumship and such mental disorders as hysteria were not only closely allied, but at bottom were expressions of the same psychological state, the only real

difference being whether the subject was in rapport with the heteropsychic or autopsychic spheres. Hysteria and dissociation were, therefore, for Hyslop not alternative explanations of mediumship, but conditions of its very existence, indistinguishable except for the production of certain results.

While Hyslop never achieved the rapprochement he sought for abnormal and paranormal psychology, his persistent efforts to effect a union between the two disciplines would not go entirely unrewarded. After Hyslop's death, a number of eminent psychologists would actively involve themselves in the work of the Society, being convinced with him that no study held greater potential for uncovering the deeper levels of the human mind. Besides creating a climate of thought that would eventually do much to fulfill his original ambition of making psychical research and psychology mutually complementary studies, Hyslop also succeeded almost single-handedly in creating an organization for the rational study of unusual phenomena that embodied the best traditions of reflective and empirical science. Though it seemed for a time that the standards he established would not survive the ill-fated Margery investigation, it was due in no small part to the continuing power of his example and influence that the Society regained its former prestige some two decades after Hyslop's passing, the whole episode proving the wisdom of his maxim that, in psychical matters especially, "the duty of caution and skepticism is quite as imperative as faith or hope" (Hyslop, 1906a, p. 402). In addition to inculcating a spirit in the Society that would do much to keep it off the shoals of either resolute credulity or incredulity, Hyslop had also established an organization capable of surviving its founder. Knowing that his days of active service were numbered, he had found in Walter Franklin Prince a worthy successor whose gifts and qualifications were to prove the equal of Hyslop's own. The endowment fund he had secured in 1905, by the time of his death had risen to about \$185,000 (Dawson, 1920, p. 455), most of it collected by an unworldly man who, on all accounts, had no aptitude for making money. Under his leadership the membership of the Society had also quadrupled, despite occasional setbacks like the Palladino exposure, which cost the Society some 300 members ([Hyslop], 1912b).¹⁰ In all of this and more, Hyslop proved himself to be a capable leader in an area he judged, with Gladstone, to be

¹⁰ Though he opened the pages of the *Journal* to an account of the exposure by W. S. Davis (1910), Hyslop seems to have felt that Palladino should have been treated as an hysteric who sometimes cheated unconsciously, not as a pretender who knowingly practiced deception (Hyslop, 1911a). For a criticism of this view by one of the American sitters, see Kellogg (1910).

"the most important work which is being done in the world—by far the most important" (Myers, 1898, p. 260).

HYSLOP AS PSYCHICAL RESEARCHER

As an investigator, Hyslop's chief and almost exclusive area of concern was with survival. Though unable to pursue the subject as he wished due to lack of funds, the records of his investigations in this area still stand as among the most careful and comprehensive ever printed. For all of their importance, however, his reports were then, even as now, neglected by all but a handful of dedicated scholars. Their often imposing length, the result of printing the complete transcript of every sitting held, the tedium occasioned in reading reams of material that other investigators deleted as just so much "dingy twaddle," and Hyslop's sometimes diffuse discussions proved a heavy tax upon the patience of most readers. Yet Hyslop was convinced that only by such means could his work be deemed truly scientific. Provided with only edited records, it was always possible for the reader to discount the positive results achieved as due to inadvertent hints dropped by the sitter, "fishing" on the part of the medium, or sheer chance, but not so when the reader was provided with the detailed transcript of everything said, including misses, irrelevancies, and even those occasions when the medium coughed. Besides this, Hyslop believed that, by presenting the complete record, he was doing service for future investigators, who might some day find in the mass of nonevidential material valuable clues to the nature of mediumship and the conditions affecting communication.¹¹ The cost of publishing such massive reports was always a heavy burden upon the fledgling Society, but Hyslop thought the expenditure was justified, if by such means he could gain a respectful hearing among intelligent and educated people who knew the value of comprehensive reports.

And Hyslop's reports were nothing if not comprehensive. In the aggregate, his published work amounts to something like 10,000 printed pages, consisting for the most part of verbatim records of seances, copiously annotated, together with reports of spontaneous cases, theoretical discussions, critical notices, and some experimental work. Besides this staggering literary output, including

¹¹ A good example of how useful his reports could be when studied in retrospect was provided by Hyslop himself (1917d). I have also found in Hyslop's detailed records of sittings a rich mine of useful information, from suggestive remarks about the *modus operandi* of spirit communication to provocative hints about possible alternatives to survival (Anderson, 1982, 1984a, 1984b).

seven books on various aspects of psychical research, Hyslop also edited the publications of the Society, conducted its business affairs, and kept up a voluminous correspondence on psychic matters that made some of the recipients, in one's words, "aghast at the thought of replying to his numerous and beautifully-typed sheets" (Barrett, 1920, p. 441). In addition to these and other labors, Hyslop also directed or personally conducted a great number of field investigations that took him over half the continent. When not travelling in the prosecution of his investigations, Hyslop divided his time between his offices in New York and a hotel in Boston, where he spent half of each week in sessions with "Mrs. Chenoweth" (Minnie Meserve Soule), a trance medium who produced much of his finest evidential work.¹²

The grueling pace Hyslop set himself allowed no time for conviviality without purpose, sports, the theater, or other popular entertainments, but these he had always eschewed and so did not miss. His productivity was not without a price, though. To his philosophical colleagues he appeared increasingly out of date, showing little awareness of recent developments in the field, unless they touched directly upon his chief area of concern. His manner of writing, always somewhat inclined toward prolixity, became increasingly rugged as other duties clamored for his attention, making his reports appear at times considerably less than perspicuous. His indefatigable industry also allowed small room for the intimacies of family life. Excepting an occasional camping trip in the Adirondacks, Hyslop spent very little time with his family, though he was fond of children and seemed to enjoy their company. When a grandson came along in 1917, Hyslop would sometimes take time out to "rough house" with the boy, but more often, the child would sit on his grandfather's lap "watching the typewriter go." "As a son, I can regret that he had a mission in the world," George Hyslop later wrote, "but as a man, I would not have it otherwise" (G. H. Hyslop, 1920, p. 481).

The quality of Hyslop's effort, however, cannot be determined by its quantity, and even less by the personal sacrifices that his productivity required him to make. That question can only be answered after a careful and searching examination of his reports themselves, and Hyslop's reports by and large will repay such scrutiny. One example of Hyslop at his best is his first report on the Piper case. Initially he made secret plans for the sittings, only his wife and Hodgson being privy to the fact. Hodgson then arranged for the sittings with the medium's "controls," not with

¹² There unfortunately exists no comprehensive study of Mrs. Soule's mediumship. A good brief account is Tubby (1941).

Mrs. Piper in her normal state, the prospective sitter being referred to under a pseudonym. Hyslop travelled to his first sessions in a closed coach, which he ordered to stop some distance from the medium's residence. A mask that concealed the entire face was donned while still in the coach and worn throughout the first two sittings, being discarded only after it became evident that Mrs. Piper, or her communicators, knew who Hyslop was.¹³ During the sessions, he stood behind Mrs. Piper to prevent her receiving any visual cues, and touched her only on those few occasions when it was necessary to keep her hand on the writing-pad. In speaking, his diction was kept purposely monotonous and his replies limited, so as to provide no gratuitous information. At the conclusion of the sittings, Hyslop compiled a laborious statistical summary to measure the proportion of truth to error in the record, later redoing the work on a more elaborate scale to test the contention of certain critics that his results could be explained by chance coincidence, together with shrewd guessing and inference (Hyslop, 1919a).¹⁴ The results, Hyslop discovered, made any such theory utterly untenable.

Another illustration of the unusual precautions Hyslop usually took is his study of the Doris Fischer case of multiple personality (Hyslop, 1917a). In many respects, the conditions for psychic experiments in the case were ideal. The subject, Theodosia Prince, known as "Doris" in the report, had lived an obscure life, far from the medium and her circle of acquaintances; the case had received absolutely no publicity, not a word or line having been printed before the conclusion of the sittings; and Doris had to be brought to Boston from San Bernardino, California, where she had lived for several years as the adopted daughter of Dr. and Mrs. Walter Franklin Prince. Nor were any opportunities afforded her in Boston for contact with the medium. During the course of the experiments, she stayed either with Hyslop in New York or with an aunt who lived some twenty miles outside of Boston. Arriving in the city for sittings with Mrs. Soule, Doris approached the medium's residence by a devious path, not visible from the seance room, where Hyslop

¹³ It has been stated, though not on what authority, that Mrs. Piper saw Hyslop from a window and recognized him before he entered the house (Nicol, 1977, p. 152). This may well be true, if Mrs. Piper identified Hyslop by his manner of walk, the shape of his hands, or some other physical peculiarity, but from Hyslop's report, it appears evident that she could not have recognized him by seeing his face (Hyslop, 1901, pp. 303, 323).

¹⁴ While the sittings were in progress, Hyslop also conducted an independent experiment in the identification of personality, to study the sources of misunderstanding that might arise between living people under conditions of imperfect communication (Hyslop, 1901, pp. 537-623; cf. Anspacher, 1947, p. 82). The results he found very similar to the communications received through Mrs. Piper.

sat waiting with the sensitive. He arranged for Doris to enter the room only after Mrs. Soule was entranced and seated with her back toward the door, through which the sitter silently entered and assumed a seat directly behind the medium. At the conclusion of each sitting, she left without having once come within the visual field of Mrs. Soule, either while the medium was awake or entranced. Furthermore, she was not allowed to speak during the experiments. Hyslop himself taking the part of the sitter, so that nothing would be given away accidentally. Under these conditions, the medium achieved results that, on the basis of chance, were later estimated by Prince (1923, p. 216) to be about one in a sum of thirty-four figures.

Though unusually cautious in arranging and conducting his investigations, Hyslop did not always succeed in meeting the skeptic's every demand. In the Doris sittings described above, for example, he did not think to question the sitter's confirmations, which in view of Doris' eagerness to please Prince, her foster-father, might conceivably have been less than completely truthful. This, however, appears a slight possibility, in view of the mass of evidence that did not depend upon Doris' word for verification, such as the giving of her and Dr. Prince's names or the remarks of the communicators about her previous history as a multiple personality. As Prince (1923, p. 8) also noted, he was more or less familiar with many of the matters about which statements were made in the messages, either from his previous knowledge of Doris' past or from personal observation. Having been assured of Doris' honesty, Hyslop did not imagine that her answers might be based upon what she thought Prince wanted to hear, but, fortunately, the oversight is not one that seriously impairs the evidential value of the record.

While potential sources of trouble like the above sometimes escaped Hyslop's notice, he was usually more than aware of any weaknesses in his reports. In his voluminous work on the Thompson-Gifford case, for example, he recognized a number of lacunae into which the determined skeptic could drive a number of doubts. Without entering into the complexities of the case, one can construct various "normal" scenarios for nearly all of the spontaneous incidents that occurred, most being based on the supposition that Thompson knowingly or unknowingly concealed the extent of his prior acquaintance with Gifford. Other questions concern what Thompson might have learned or done during one of his involuntary trances, when he wandered around in a semi-conscious state, without later remembering what he had been about. Hyslop fully recognized how damaging were these and other considerations to a paranormal interpretation of the case, but his confidence

remained unshaken because his explanation was not based upon the spontaneous incidents alone. Early in the investigation it had occurred to him that taking Thompson to a medium might produce some interesting results, if only to confirm his initial assessment of the man's story as evidence of paranoid delusion. Accordingly, he arranged for a series of anonymous sittings with several mediums, all of whom confirmed Thompson's interpretation of his personal experiences. This, to Hyslop, put a new complexion on the case, causing him to reevaluate the whole series of occurrences as perhaps spiritistically induced. He was still aware that the skeptic could make out a case for alternating personality eked out by cryptomnesia, but the mediumistic communications gave the various facts a dramatic unity and plausibility entirely lacking on any theory of somnambulism and amnesia. It may be objected, quite rightly, that Hyslop's use of mediums to ascertain how much weight should be assigned to spontaneous experiences was not the safe shortcut he believed it to be, but few will deny that, in this instance, the ploy uncovered what indeed appears a consistent plan or purpose running throughout the entire affair. As a number of competent scholars have discovered, the work constitutes such a perfectly intelligible whole on the spiritistic theory that it is almost impossible to negotiate without supposing something very much like the real survival of an identifiable discarnate agent (e.g., Gauld, 1982, pp. 149-156).¹⁵

Besides accumulating a large number of well-attested—if not always faultless—cases, Hyslop also devoted much time to unraveling the psychodynamics of psi phenomena. As mentioned above, an accumulation of instances like the Thompson-Gifford and Doris cases convinced Hyslop that the only essential distinction between genuine mediumship and secondary personality was the production of certain results. Phenomenologically and psychologically, it was evident to him that mediumship and unconscious mental action only simulative of other agencies than the normal consciousness were broadly of the same class; the problem lay in understanding how the one could be a conduit for the paranormal transmission of information, whereas the other was not. The question was further complicated by occurrences like the Smead case, wherein the subject had exhibited little if any psychic ability until encouraged to do so by the investigator. The only significant difference, as Hyslop saw it, lay in the orientation of the subject's

¹⁵ It has sometimes been rumored that Hyslop's report on this case is seriously flawed. A preliminary reexamination of the evidence for this contention has thus far failed to uncover anything that Hyslop himself did not consider in the published report.

unconscious mind, whether turned inward upon itself or outward toward distant and perhaps discarnate minds. A subconscious in thrall to its own creations was bound to produce all sorts of strange effects, such as Mrs. Smead's Martian communicators, but Hyslop discovered that, with training, the individual's subliminal could be opened to receive influences and stimuli of a foreign origin. The development of paranormal capacities in cases of secondary personality thus depended upon establishing rapport with the transpersonal world, instead of confining it to the world of the individual's own psyche. The degree of rapport with the transpersonal realm might vary considerably among individuals, being sufficient in some instances to convey almost the whole of another personality, in others barely adequate to quicken relevant memories long dormant in the sensitive's mind, but the significant factor, for Hyslop, was that successful communication rather clearly involved mental capacities that, under other conditions, might issue in secondary personality, hysteria in its protean forms, and various other psychological disorders. Recognizing the subliminal as the vehicle of paranormal transmission in cases of mediumship, it was but a short step to the view that some of those ostensibly abnormal conditions might also be due to unregulated transmission from the transcendental world. Certain people may be, in a word, "possessed."

Hyslop's advocacy of possession as a legitimate diagnostic category, along with paranoia, dementia praecox, hysteria, and manic depressive insanity was hardly calculated to win him the plaudits of the medical profession. Possession or "obsession," as he termed it, was for most psychologists simply a recrudescence of primitive animism, hardly worth the effort to rebut. Still, for Hyslop the decisive question was not how others reacted to his claim, but the phenomenal data that, in his view, only obsession could encompass. Those few, like James, who troubled to look at the evidence were, in general, very much impressed; but, on this issue, even some of Hyslop's closest associates preferred to remain agnostic rather than embrace a notion so wildly outside what most were accustomed to deem possible. Hyslop could well understand their hesitancy, having himself resisted obsession for a full ten years after accepting survival (Hyslop, 1918a, p. 305), but he was confident that, in time, the particular facts that had overcome his own scruples would likewise overcome theirs. Assuming the trustworthiness of that evidence, Hyslop saw obsession as a possible meeting-ground for the interests of both psychical research and abnormal psychology. Whether due to influences from the terrestrial or transcendental worlds, occurrences like the Thompson-Gifford, the de Camp-Stockton (Hyslop, 1912a), and the Ritchie-Abbot

(Hyslop, 1913a) cases indicated that not all instances of mental illness could be exhaustively defined in purely psychiatric terms. Along with physiological and psychogenic factors must be reckoned the possibility of foreign and conceivably discarnate agents in the etiology of mental disease. These extraneous entities, Hyslop believed, were often "superposed upon secondary personality or dissociation, or interfused with it" (Hyslop, 1918a, p. 306), so that only a gifted sensitive could detect their presence, but by experience Hyslop found that, once identified, the obsessing agent(s) could be exorcised and the patient, in some cases, permanently cured.¹⁶ In making this claim, Hyslop did not always distinguish between the utility of a theory and its ontological reality, but generally he recognized that the validity of obsession depended less upon its therapeutic benefits than upon evidence that the alleged obsessors were the discarnate persons they claimed to be. Judging by the number of creditable scholars who have found, in McDougall's careful phrase, "that human personality does not always at death cease to be a source of influence upon the living" (McDougall, 1927, p. 162), Hyslop's hypothesis cannot be lightly dismissed as the groundless extravagance of an intellect itself obsessed with the idea of "spirits."¹⁷

Though Hyslop devoted the last years of his life to a close consideration of obsession, his work in the area constituted only a fraction of his larger labor on the problem of survival. Regarding this question, probably no investigator since Myers has done more to advance the study of human personality and its possible continuation after death. It was, however, not as a theoretician of survival that Hyslop distinguished himself, but as an experimenter whose special genius was for the amassing and weighing of facts. Hyslop did not neglect those wider aspects of the question that occupied Myers, being especially concerned with correcting what he perceived as deficiencies in that thinker's theory of the subliminal mind (Hyslop, 1913c), but his particular penchant was for the collecting of data that defied explanation in terms of fraud, malob-

¹⁶ This was not the chosen method of treatment in all instances of alleged obsession, however. In the Thompson-Gifford case, for example, the mere recognition on Thompson's part that he was obsessed, and not insane, so relieved his mind of anxiety that he was able to get on with his life without experiencing any disagreeable symptoms (Hyslop, 1917b, p. 153).

¹⁷ Hyslop's work on obsession was continued after his death by a number of investigators, most notably Titus Bull and Elwood Worcester (Anderson, 1981). In recent years, a few respected psychiatrists have also advanced obsession as a possible explanation for certain types of dual and multiple personality (e.g., Allison and Schwarz, 1980), though their reasons for doing so seem, on the whole, far less adequate than Hyslop's own.

servation, hyperaesthesia, wishful thinking, misrecording, or chance coincidence. For much of this data, survival seemed to provide the readiest interpretation, being consonant not only with the evident meaning of the facts, but also preferable with regard to elegance and simplicity of explanation. While not all subsequent scholars who have viewed the evidence without prepossession have concurred with this assessment, nearly all have agreed that the evidence Hyslop offered is worth the most serious and careful consideration. The so-called "Mother of Doris" case (Hyslop, 1917a), for example, has been judged unusually rich in correct and appropriate information bearing upon the personal identity of deceased persons (e.g., Estabrooks, 1947). Other incidents, like the Tausch case (Hyslop, 1919b, pp. 186-196), have struck a number of investigators as particularly evocative of survival, insofar as they seem incomprehensible on any assumption of present-person telepathy, cryptomnesia, or deception on the part of the medium (e.g., Barrett, 1917, pp. 225-229). If, by such concrete examples, Hyslop failed to create a case for survival capable of carrying conviction to all fair-minded persons, he at least succeeded in making a reasonable argument based upon evidence rather than faith. It cannot be claimed, therefore, that Hyslop's long inquiry into the problem of survival got him nowhere; on the contrary, as H. H. Price (1960) has observed, the persistent efforts of early researchers like Hyslop got them somewhere quite important, by showing that the chance of survival is not the vanishingly small thing that most educated people are wont to assume. What precise degree of probability we assign the hypothesis may never be capable of exact formulation, owing to the number of imponderable considerations that cluster about the subject, but no longer can the possibility be dismissed out of hand as a wishful hope or maudlin rationalization of immortal yearnings. Despite his own overwhelming confidence in the reality of survival, this really about encompasses all that Hyslop set out to do. As he wrote in his first report on Mrs. Piper, "I am satisfied if the evidence forces us in our rational moods to tolerate the spiritistic theory as rationally possible and respectable" (Hyslop, 1901, p. 291).

For Hyslop, however, merely establishing the respectability of survival was not sufficient unless he could also explain why communications with the departed invariably assumed the peculiar form they did. Any theory of the source of veridical communications, whether fraud, chance, secondary personality, telepathy, or spirits, had to take account of the psychological peculiarities of the phenomena observed, particularly the confusions and limitations that occupy such a large place in even the best communications. The preponderance of this seeming "bosh," Hyslop maintained, is

less an objection to the survival hypothesis than a perplexity in our understanding of it—one that, indeed, must be accommodated, if survival is to be made intelligible in its range of application to the observed facts, but not one that would invalidate the initial assumption of survival as the best means of explaining all the evidence of personal identity. Part of the reason for Hyslop's judgment is that there are, assuming survival, many possible reasons for the oddly "diminished" appearance of most communicators and for why their messages so often fall short of perfect rationality. It may be, he speculated, that the act of "coming back" produces an effect upon the communicator not unlike amnesia, which even in life sometimes results from a shock or sudden interruption in the normal flow of consciousness. Another possible analogue is the disturbance of memory that accompanies certain kinds of dissociation, making it difficult—if not impossible—to recall in one mental state the events and experiences registered in another. Hyslop, in fact, found many earthly analogies for the mental peculiarities of most communicators, from the uninhibited and capricious association of ideas that occur in dreams to the confusions about personal identity that sometimes accompany delirium, but Hyslop was always careful to maintain that this did not mean the communicators were simply subliminal fabrications reflecting all the characteristics of disordered consciousness. To a certain extent they may be this, but the veridical messages that sometimes occur amid all the chaff and confusion point to something more. If the information conveyed by the medium represents facts once known to the deceased person purportedly communicating, and if these facts are not accountable on any normal theory or known form of telepathy, then it is reasonable to suppose that the extraneous source for the messages is the person claiming identity. Assuming this, the multiple vagaries associated with the phenomena are due to the mental condition of the communicator and/or difficulties in the process of communication itself. Hyslop had much of value to say about both of these potential sources of confusion in the construction of mediumistic communications, but he concentrated especially upon the process of paranormal intercourse, the conveyance of ideas without reliance upon normal means of transmission. By paying particular attention to the phenomenological configuration assumed by the data, the remarks made by various communicators regarding process, and the generic similarity of the phenomena despite different mediums, Hyslop gradually formulated a theory to meet both the evidential and nonevidential requirements of the case. This theory he called the "pictographic process," meaning the method whereby the communicator "manages to elicit in the living subject a sensory phantasm of his thoughts, representing, but not neces-

sarily directly corresponding to, the reality" (Hyslop, 1919b, p. 111). As in the parallel case of veridical apparitions, Hyslop believed these "sensory phantasms" actually to be hallucinations constructed in the mind of the beholder from information obtained by means of ESP, but he saw the process in mediumistic communications as even more complex and involved. From the original source, presumably the agent, a thought, image, or other mental construct is passed to an intervening personality known as the "control" or "guide," which may be either a discarnate entity or subliminal personification. The message is next conveyed to the medium, where it is received in terms of visual, auditory, or motor stimuli, the specific sense modality depending upon the subject's dominant mode of perception, then construed according to the apperceptive or interpreting functions of the sensitive's mind. A mediumistic communication is therefore a composite of at least three, and possibly more, personalities communicating by means of telepathic hallucinations. In this melee of rapidly passing images between various minds, some incarnate and some discarnate, each with its different memories, habitual trends of thought, mental associations, etc., the wonder is that any message could run the gauntlet without undergoing more distortion than is evident in the better veridical communications.¹⁸

It would be quite impossible to list here the many practical and theoretical achievements of the man who, above all others, "seemed to live and move and have his being in psychical research" (Barrett, 1926, p. 17n). Activities that would have felled a less vigorous personality were accomplished with aplomb by Hyslop, whose list of publications alone would fill a sizable booklet. In addition, however, to founding and guiding the second ASPR for its first fifteen years of existence, conducting literally thousands of seances, and leaving a multitude of bulky volumes filled with studies of mediumship, abnormal psychology, and survival, Hyslop also managed to contribute something of worth to other areas of psychical research not commonly associated with his name. Early in his career, for example, he had reported to the British Society on a series of crystal-gazing experiences of a certain Mrs. D., concluding that her visions mainly represented mosaics of lapsed memories (Hyslop, 1896). Unconscious fraud as a factor in the production of physical phenomena he examined at unprecedented

¹⁸ The above summary of Hyslop's theory of the *modus operandi* of spirit communication does scant justice to the range and richness of his observations on the subject, which can only be adequately appreciated by consulting his reports themselves. Major treatments can be found in his two reports on the Piper case (Hyslop, 1901, 1910) and in four of his books (Hyslop, 1905b, pp. 306-340; 1914a, pp. 119-134; 1918a, pp. 206-232; 1919b, pp. 104-121).

length in his monumental study of the Burton case (Hamilton, Smyth, and Hyslop, 1911), a topic to which he would later return in a report on a case of alleged poltergeist activity (Hyslop, 1913b) and in his study of the trumpet medium, Elizabeth Blake (Hyslop, Guthrie, Abbott, Clawson, and Clawson, 1913). During his lifetime, he published two seminal studies of deathbed visions (Hyslop, 1907d, 1918c), suggesting a plan of research that half a century later would be used to good effect by Osis (1961). Reports of apparitions he assiduously investigated whenever the opportunity arose, including one remarkable veridical case (Thacher, 1911), and another wherein the phenomena were due to a mixture of hoax and hallucination (Hyslop and Carrington, 1907). Besides projects such as these, Hyslop also carried out original work in medical clairvoyance (Hyslop, 1908a), telepathy (Hyslop, 1914c), psychic photography (Hyslop, 1914b), and psychokinesis (Hyslop, 1920), though these were minor efforts compared to his mammoth studies of mediumship and survival. As a philosopher, Hyslop did not wish to lay waste his substance by concentrating on matters that promised less than a central insight into the question of human destiny.

CONCLUSION

If a life well spent assures a happy death, as Leonardo da Vinci once remarked, Hyslop's life was well spent indeed. During his final illness, when he consciously faced his approaching end, Hyslop impressed everyone with his fortitude and cheerful resignation, his only regret being that he would no longer be able to continue the work to which he had devoted the last twenty years of his life. Ever the scientist, he saw his own demise as a unique opportunity for observation and experimentation. In illustration, after suffering a stroke, Hyslop found himself unable to pronounce certain words, the name Prince, for example, coming out successively as Senth, Chintz, Crinz, Prinz. Hyslop was impressed by how similar was his plight to that of the typical communicator, who seemed to have similar difficulties in conveying proper names. After one particularly trying effort finally met with success, he exclaimed, "Do you see, I knew it all the time . . . tried to say it, and couldn't make myself clear. . . . And this is my own organism. . . . What if I had been a poor medium? . . . Tell them that, tell them that! It's a pretty illustration" (Tubby, 1925, p. 74). In addition to supplying researchers with another possible analogy for the difficulties of spirit communication, Hyslop, in the opinion of many friends, had also used the occasion of his death for a final demonstration of the survival hypothesis. On the morning of his passing, one of his daughters was in the kitchen, timing the boiling of an egg, when she

noticed that her watch had stopped. She shook her wrist, and the watch started again, but not before she had carefully noted the time, in case the incident should have anything to do with her father, who lay comatose in an upstairs room. Some hours after her father's death, she asked the physician who had been in attendance at what time he had died. Allowing for three minutes' difference in the two watches, his answer corresponded precisely to the moment her own watch had stopped. A few days later, Gertrude Ogden Tubby, knowing nothing of the watch-stopping incident, attended a seance with Mrs. Louise M. Chamberlaine, a trance medium whom Hyslop had never met. During the sitting, Mrs. Chamberlaine reported that Hyslop had "tried to stop the watch. It may be a clock—but he says, No, tried to stop the watch" (Tubby, 1931, pp. 14–15).¹⁹ It cannot, of course, be positively affirmed that this and other reported contacts with the deceased investigator represent the posthumous activities of the real James H. Hyslop, but that the possibility cannot be dismissed out of hand is due in no small part to the persistence, patience, and precision with which he sought to establish the survival hypothesis. If he survived death, the man whose motto in life was to "keep everlastingly at it" could hardly be expected to rest in peace.

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¹⁹ A confused version of the watch-stopping incident was later reported by Worcester in his *Life's Adventure* (Worcester, 1932, pp. 332–333), where he apparently related the story from memory. Unfortunately, subsequent commentators have, almost without exception, followed Worcester's muddled but more dramatic account.

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