

To the Editor,

I am puzzled as to the reasonableness — and the possibility — of Michael Thalbourne arriving at a negative conclusion about “The Evidence for Survival from Sir Oliver Lodge’s *Raymond*” (October *Journal*) in four pages, including a photograph. The published book is of four hundred pages; exactly half a detailed account of the numerous sittings with the most capable of mediums undertaken by Sir Oliver and his wife, with a stenographer present or Lodge taking verbatim notes. Nevertheless, after an uncertain note from p.386, Thalbourne claims to “bring forward this book’s most evidential material and re-evaluate it in the light of modern thinking”. It is earlier said to be “modern parapsychological thinking” but apart from the almost required negation of survival evidence I see no evidence of it.

Three ‘exhibits’ are looked at. The Faunus Message is a classical allusion believed to come from F. W. H. Myers. It could be read as prevision (Lodge) or precognition (Thalbourne) but it has nothing to say about Raymond’s coming death that is in any hard sense evidential. It is of interest but no more. The second exhibit is said to be “Sittings with ‘Raymond’”. Three very brief quotations from six pages of verbatim dialogue (130–135) from a lengthy sitting Lady Lodge had with Vout Peters are said to “point at the very least to clairvoyance or telepathy between the living”, without a word in support of that view.

Greatest emphasis is properly placed on “The Group Photograph Incident” as Exhibit C. This is remarkable evidence by any standard, as the Lodges knew nothing of it until it was mentioned in Lady Lodge’s sitting. Lodge devotes a whole chapter to it (105–116), yet this is not referred to by Thalbourne. I cannot re-examine it here but in the terms of reasonable doubt — which is all we have in human affairs — it is an outstanding example of survival evidence. And that is to ignore the whole book.

The survival question, it seems, is now back on the Society’s agenda and it deserves to be after forty and more years of neglect. Archie Roy makes the case for it well in the current *Proceedings*. If, however, it is to be examined objectively and outside of a fog of confusion and rancour — for, like it or not, it is a sensitive subject — we would do well to avoid broad-brush dismissals (and anecdotal trips into Wonderland) and treat a serious subject with the seriousness it deserves.

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TOM CROSS

To the Editor,

In a recent Note (Fontana, 1998) David Fontana argues that Gustave Geley “clearly recognized that human hands could produce convincing wax moulds”. He bases his argument on a partial quotation from Geley’s book (1927, p. 231):—

Any reader can verify for himself that it is possible to withdraw a partially immersed hand from a paraffin glove.

But Fontana’s argument ignores the word ‘partially’ in this quotation.