SIR,—In view of the point at issue between yourself and Mr. A. R. Wallace, on the one hand, and Mr. Paice, on the other, I should like to recall attention to a consideration I urged in "Light" of August 17th of last year, upon the same subject, as it has been quite ignored, and yet seems to me to deserve an answer. It is, that upon those who believe in a "soul," as distinct and separable from the body, rests the onus of proving origination with the body, and not upon those who uphold the doctrine which Lessing described as "the oldest, and one which the human understanding, before sophistation had distracted and weakened it, immediately adopted." For every logical Spirituall, I submit that the a priori presumption must be decided against origination of the human soul or individuality at birth, because directly we recognise the soul, or principle of conscious individuality (however else we choose to name it), as distinct and separable from the physical body, we have to show cause why an association which does not imply dependence of the psychical upon the physical, nevertheless does imply origination of the former in or by the latter. The reason why the presumption has been reversed is perfectly simple and obvious. It is the old and almost universal mistake of confounding manifestation with existence, and condition with cause. The individual consciousness is first manifested to us at birth; we see its subsequent manifestations as growth pari passu with organic development, and its mature expression as consequent on physical maturity. It requires an unusual effort of reflection to conceive the lisping infant, just learning to name the commonest objects, as masking an individuality itself the moulding principle of the organism which is to relate it to this earthly stage of thought and action, and which it informs as the operation proceeds. What we see is for a long time predominantly physical, or related to the physical life, and undoubtedly as it seems to me, we make the psyche totally identical with the earthly personal consciousness, we should postpone the moment of its independent essentiality, and therefore the power of surviving physical death, to a period of marked differentiation from mere human animality. But if defect of manifestation is no proof of defect of existence, I am at a loss to understand why the beginning of manifestation should be assumed to be the beginning of existence.

For Spiritualists there is no other reason, except the crude and easily answered one (first advanced by Tertullian) of want of memory of a former existence, for assuming psychical origination at birth, than just the unavoidable dependence of mental powers and character for manifestation, upon familiarity with the material and experience which those powers have to use, and upon which that character has to react—a familiarity only to be obtained in time and by organic facility. And if anyone will ask himself honestly the question, why he believes in the origination of psychical individuality at physical birth, he cannot but answer that it is just because of certain physical conditions of manifestation, and yet he must see upon the least reflection that those conditions, that early imperfections, and gradual growth of manifestation, must be precisely the same on the supposition that behind them is a mature spiritual potentiality struggling into expression in this world, and building up its organism for such expression, as on the supposition that "the soul" is a product of parental organisation. I do not exaggerate the importance of laying the onus probandi on the right shoulders. The doctrine of pre-existence has too long been prejudiced by an illegitimate demand for extrinsic proof, as if it were a non-natural or extravagant conception. Its great offence really is that to modern Western Spiritualists it is still a novelty. As long as we accepted human immortality merely upon the authority of supposed "revelation," it was natural that the testimony of mere appearance as to psychical origin should remain unquestioned, though a similar appearance as to our end was contradicted by the doctrine. Spiritualists believe that they have now independent proof of the fallacy of the appearance at one end of the earthly life; is it not rather strange, logically, that they cannot reverse a presumption due only to appearance at the other end? And is it not still more strange, that having, as they believe, positive evidence of materialisation by the plastic power of already existent and independent spirit, they should be unable to recognize in the phenomenon of birth just a normal and regular case of such materialisation?

Thus much as to the mere a priori presumption applicable to the inquiry when we enter upon it. I claim that we who uphold the doctrine of pre-existence have shifted the burden of proof
upon you who maintain the origination of the soul—the surviving principle—at birth. The meaning of this is that you are not entitled to ask us for positive evidence of pre-existence till you have adduced positive evidence to the contrary. You are the plaintiff, we are the defendants in the argument. It is your case, if you are Spiritualists—who are traversing the apparent presumption afforded by facts which you admit—nay, claim—to be positively proved. And you have formidable authority against you. Authority, it is true, must not decide for us; but as far as you are Spiritualists—who are traversing the apparent guished contemporary, Glanville, who has argued the question you, sir, contend against the abstract proposition that what­ Constantinople, 553), which anath.matised our opinion. It may not be irrelevant again to remind disputanta of the state­ you, Mr. Wallace, that psychical growth or development implies a beginning at ita apparent point—physical birth—as at some far­ removed period prior to it. Mr. Wallace was contending—as of Mr. Wallace, that psychical growth or development implies a beginning and ending in time, by th.se .xpr .... ion. The transcendental identity is to be conceived, I submit, as we CAn only intend changes of modality. To the metaphysical Spiritualist the question of temporal origin cannot concern essen­ tiality, and belongs only to mode and manifestation. The transcendental identity is to be conceived, I submit, as taking up and transmitting its successive phenomenal modes of consciousness, and its growth, progress, or development is not to be conceived in esse, but only as a realisation in the experi­ ence which belongs to time. That a mode of consciousness originates at birth is unquestionable—if we understand that all "origination" is only relative to the phenomenal order, and particular plane in that order—and every mode, as such, is also perishable in the same sense in which it originates. It is only the objective aspect of the soul of which evolution postulates origination. Now I can quite suppose either Mr. Wallace or you replying:—"Your meaning is very obscure, but adopting your obscure language, the argument against you is equally valid, for what you call the objective aspect of the soul—which seems to be equivalent to its consciousness—may just as well originate in this physical life as in any previous one." The answer is that this would be an assumption opposed to the new conception of evolution necessitated by the hypothetical admission of pre­ existing spirit, even as mere potentiality. For then evolution is merely a maimed and one-sided doctrine, if it does not take into account the correlative realisation of spirit at every point of the material advance, not only from species to species, but by variation within the specific difference. The transcen­ dental doctrine, to which that of individual pre-existence belongs, attributes to the urgency of spirit seeking adequate ex­ pression all the subjective laws, the furthering variations, and the phenomena of physical evolution. If you admit the transcen­ dential for a single moment, at that moment you admit pre­ existent spiritual forms and forces, and you introduce spiritual agency into—nay, as the very motive power of—your physical process. And when you have made that admission and introduced that agency, you have made it simply impossible to suggest that individual humanity starts at one and the same time upon its lowest and upon its highest levels of earthly attainment. Such an assumption would then be too evidently seen to be utterly perverse and at variance with the physical analogy and relation. Mr. Wallace, at the close of his letter, says of the theory of Re-incarnation, that it "is unsupported by any facts or analogies either in the material or the spiritual universe." Well, I con­ fess I do not know much about the spiritual universe; but I do know that the striking analogies to this doctrine which I find in the material universe were just what first directed my own attention to the doctrine in question. But those analogies can only be appreciated by such as are conversant with the great truth—itself abundantly illustrated by physical analogies—that whatever in nature happens on the small scale happens also on the large one, and vice versa. Then we shall understand the